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

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THE ACTS.

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THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

CHAPTER IX.

VERS. 1–3. **And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples.**—*Saul, a persecutor:*—Saul was an educated young man, and that he should engage in the work of persecution strikes us as anomalous and unnatural. In young men we naturally expect a frank concession of freedom to think and generous and chivalrous impulses. We are not much surprised when we find intolerance as men advance in life, for age is conservative, and may be narrow and bigoted. Young men are often sceptical and unsettled in their notions; they question the correctness of opinions long held to be true, and employ themselves in adjusting new discoveries to received truths. But the very nature of this process tends to make them liberal, for they cannot deny to others the liberty they claim for themselves. Old men, however, are confirmed believers or unbelievers; and hate to be opposed or unsettled. Hence we are not surprised that the Sanhedrin should be composed in a great part of "elders," nor that the principal functionaries of the "holy office," should be men of advanced years. Yet few men, young or old, have been so furious in persecution as was Saul (chaps. viii. 3; xxii. 4; xxvi. 9–11; Gal. i. 13; 1 Tim. i. 13; 1 Cor. xv. 9). I. THE PREVALENCE OF PERSECUTION. The manner in which new views have been received is one of the most remarkable things in history. The public tears of Pericles were necessary to save Aspasia, suspected of philosophy; but all his eloquence could not save Anaxagoras for having taught that there was an intelligent cause of all things. Socrates was put to death for teaching the same thing. Aristotle only saved his life by flight in order, as he said, to save the Athenians a new crime against philosophy. Plato was twice thrown into prison, and once sold as a slave. Galileo was imprisoned for maintaining that the sun is the centre of the universe. The Saviour was crucified, and in almost every country His religion has encountered opposition and secured a triumph only as the result of a baptism of blood and fire. II. ITS CAUSES. 1. The war of opinion. A man's opinions are a part of himself, and become as dear as life or liberty. They are the measure of his reputation and influence, and are the result of all his experience and studies. To attack them is, therefore, to attack him; to overthrow them is to take away all that constitutes his claim to notice while living, or to remembrance when dead. This remark has additional force, if the matter is connected with religion. To attack this is to assail that which must be dearest of all to the heart of man, inasmuch as it may leave man in a world indisputably wretched with no hope of a better. Religious opinions, therefore, have been among the slowest to make progress; the strife in regard to them has been the most bitter; and freedom of religious speech has been among the last of the victories secured by the conflicts of past ages. 2. Vested interests. There are institutions, endowments, orders of men, customs and usages, that grow out of forms of doctrine. All the religions of ancient and most of modern times were sustained by law. Rome indeed recognised those of other nations, but then it was a principle that while each country recognised the rest, it allowed no attack on its own. When, therefore, Christianity attacked all forms of idolatry, it arrayed against itself all the malice of a mighty priesthood, and all the power of the State; and the result is well known. 3. The sanction given by religion to the corruptions of the human heart. The plan of the Prince of darkness has been to

secure this for the indulgence of passion. Hence to attack vice, as true Christianity always does, and to carry a pure morality over the world, was to array against itself the power of all the religions of the earth. 4. The fixed aversion of the heart by nature to the holiness which God requires of man; to the scheme of salvation by the Cross, which is an "offence" to one class, and a "stumbling-block" to another; to the doctrines of human depravity and of a just and changeless retribution, which grate hard on the natural feelings and are repulsive to human pride. III. ITS EFFECTS. 1. It has become, as the result of these trials, a settled principle that nothing which is good and true can be destroyed by persecution, but is established more firmly and spread more widely. It has led men to look with favour on what is persecuted; created a conviction that a right has been violated; awakened sympathy, stimulated inquiry in regard to the persecuted sentiments; and made the persecuted more firmly attached to their principles, and more eloquent in their defence. It has long since passed into a proverb that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." Imperial power and every device of human ingenuity has been resorted to in order to extinguish it; and it may be assumed now that if Christianity is to become extinct in the world, it must be by some other means than by persecution. 2. In like manner, persecution becomes a test of the reality of religion. It is not, indeed, a direct demonstration of its truth. The advocates of other systems have borne persecution patiently, but although this does not prove that they were suffering for the truth, yet it may be still true that the mass of men will somehow see in the endurance of Christian martyrs an argument for the Divine origin of their religion. The number has been so great—they have borne their sufferings so patiently—they have met death so calmly—so many of them have been distinguished for intelligence—and so many of them were witnesses of what they affirmed to be true, that the general impression on mankind is that sufferings so varied, so protracted, so meekly borne, could be only in the cause of truth. 3. The results of persecution are worth all which they cost. The results of the imprisonment of Galileo, of the sufferings of Columbus, &c., are more than compensated for. And the happiness which has been conferred on the world by Christianity since the fires of persecution were first kindled, and that which the world will yet enjoy when it shall be diffused over all the earth have been and will be more than a compensation for all the sufferings of all the martyrs. (*A. Barnes, D.D.*) *The conversion of great men:*—As it is in the exquisite mystery of printing, the great difficulty lies in the composing and working of the first sheet, for by that one many thousands are easily printed; so the work of the ministry is to convert great men. *In uno Cæsare multi insunt Marii.*—In one great man are many inferiors contained. When the great wheel of the clock is set a-moving, all the inferior wheels will move of their own accord. How zealous was St. Paul about the conversion of Sergius Paulus, the deputy of the country! He knew well enough that to take such a great fish was more than to catch many little ones, though the least is not to be despised. (*Calamy.*) *A remarkable conversion:*—This incident occurred many years ago in the heart of the Black Forest in Germany. It was at the dead of night. The place was lighted by torches, which cast a ghastly glare through the surrounding gloom. Savage looking men, fully armed, were sitting round in a circle. One of their number was holding up something in his hand. These men were robbers. That evening they had robbed a stage-coach. According to their custom, they were now engaged in selling by auction among themselves the articles that had been stolen. Travelling bags, different articles of clothing, and various other things had been disposed of in this way. Last of all a New Testament was held up. The man who acted as auctioneer introduced this "article" with some wicked remark, which threw the company into a roar of laughter. One of the company suggested, as a joke, that the auctioneer should open the book and read a chapter, as he said, "for their edification." This motion was seconded, and carried unanimously. Opening the book at random, he began to read with an air of mock solemnity. As he went on reading, laughs and jokes were heard all round. While this was going on one man in the company, the oldest member of the gang, and who had been their ringleader in all that was evil, became silent. He sat with his hands clasped on his knees, lost in deep thought. It happened that the passage the auctioneer had just read was the very one he had heard read thirty years before, at family prayer in his father's house, on the morning of the day when he left that home for the last time. In a moment all that scene came back to his memory. He thought of his father and mother, and brothers and sisters, and all that had made that home so sweet and happy to him then. Since leaving home he had never opened a Bible,

never offered a prayer, and never had a thought of God or of eternity. But now, in a moment, his soul seemed to wake from that long sleep of thirty years. He thought of God; he thought of his wicked life, and was filled with sorrow and shame and fear. He was so occupied with these thoughts and feelings, that he took no notice of what was going on around him, till one of his comrades clapped him rudely on the shoulder, and said, "Now, old dreamer, what will you give for that book? you need it most of all, for you have been the biggest sinner among us." "That's true," said the startled robber. "Give me that book, I'll pay you the full price for it." The next day the robbers scattered, and went into the neighbouring towns and villages to sell what they had got by robbing. The man with the Testament also went away. But he did not wish to sell anything. He sought a quiet, lonely place. There he remained for several days, reading that wonderful Book of God, shedding bitter tears over his sins, and earnestly praying for God's pardoning grace. God heard his prayer. He found pardon and peace in believing, and became a new man. After awhile he went into one of the nearest towns to see a minister of the gospel. There he heard that the gang of robbers to which he had belonged had all been taken prisoners. He told the minister, whom he went to see, all about his previous life, and the change he had experienced. Then he gave himself up to the officers of justice. The rest of the gang were all put to death. But his free confession and evident repentance saved his life. He was put in prison, indeed; but, as he continued to behave like a truly penitent man, he was soon pardoned and released, and taken into the employment of one of the princes of that neighbourhood, and he proved a blessing to those about him all his days. (*Christian Age.*) "*Murder will out*":—In one sense, if not in the common understanding of that phrase. If hatred is in a man's heart, hatred will show itself in a man's words and acts; for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." And if hatred does show itself in a man's words and acts, it is because hatred is in his heart. It is of no use for a man to say that his harsh and bitter words don't mean anything; that they are only on the surface. They do mean a great deal; they mean that under the surface he is fully as bad as he shows himself above the surface. And as it is with men so it is with children. When a child stamps and screams with anger, and "just wishes nurse or teacher was dead," that little one is breathing out the threatenings and slaughter which are in that little one's heart. Parents and guardians ought to have this truth in mind in dealing with the children of their charge. (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) **Went unto the high priest and desired of him letters to Damascus.**—*Soul's commission*:—We learn from 2 Cor. xi. 32, 33, that Damascus was at this time under the government of Aretas, the king of Arabia Petræa. How it came to be so, having been previously under Vitellius, the Roman president of Syria (Jos. "Ant." xiv. 4, § 5), is not clear. It is probable, however, that in the war which Aretas had declared against Herod Antipas, in consequence of the Tetrarch's divorcing his daughter in order that he might marry Herodias (see Matt xiv. 3; Luke iii. 14), he had been led, after defeating the Tetrarch (Jos. "Ant." xvii. 6, § 1), to push his victories further; and, taking advantage of the absence of Vitellius, who hastened to Rome on hearing of the death of Tiberius (A.D. 37), had seized on Damascus. In this abeyance of the control of the Roman power, Aretas may have desired to conciliate the priestly party at Jerusalem by giving facilities to their action against the sect which they would naturally represent as identified with the Galileans against whom he had been waging war. The Jewish population at Damascus was, at this time, very numerous. Josephus relates that not less than ten thousand were slain in a tumult under Nero ("Wars," ii. 25), and the narrative of the Acts (ver. 14) implies that there were many "disciples of the Lord" among them. Many of these were probably refugees from Jerusalem, and the local synagogues were called upon to enforce the decrees of the Sanhedrin of the Holy City against them. (*Dean Plumptre.*) **If he found any of this way.**—*The way*:—We have here the first occurrence of a term which seems to have been used familiarly as a synonym for the disciples of Christ (chaps. xix. 9, 23; xxii. 4; xxiv. 14, 22). It may have originated in the words in which Christ had claimed to be Himself the "Way," as well as the "Truth" and the "Life" (John xiv. 6); or in His language as to the "strait way" that led to eternal life (Matt. vii. 13); or, perhaps, again, in the prophecy of Isaiah (xl. 3) cited by the Baptist (Matt. iii. 3; Mark i. 3) as to preparing "the way of the Lord." Prior to the general acceptance of the term "Christian" (chap. xi. 26) it served as a convenient, neutral designation by which the disciples could describe themselves, and which might be used by others who wished to speak respectfully, or, at least,

neutrally, instead of the opprobrious epithet of the "Nazarenes" (chap. xxiv. 5). The history of the term "Methodists," those that follow a distinct "method" or "way" of life, offers a partial but interesting analogue. (*Ibid.*) *The way*:—I. The way is FOR LOST WANDERERS. The very expression suggests man's need of a way, *i.e.*, of salvation. This need arises out of—1. Men's ignorance, errors, sin, danger. Men are lost, and no created power or wisdom can recover them and make them safe. 2. Men's practical progressive nature put them in the right way, and then they need leading and keeping in it. A religion adapted to mankind must not only restore the wanderers, but further them on the right road. II. This Way is CHRIST. "I am the Way," "the new and living Way." 1. Every way leads from some place. Christ leads from the land of bondage darkness, death. He both makes and shows a way out of a state of sin and condemnation. 2. What is the Way? The Lord, who delivers and conducts His emancipated ones in the way of obedience and righteousness by His Spirit. The new way of life adopted by the first Christians impressed beholders, who hence gave them the title of the people of "the Way." 3. To what end? (1) To God. (2) To heaven. There is fulness of satisfaction in this provision and prospect. III. THE WAY IS WISELY PLANNED AND MADE. It is—1. Clear and plain, not to be mistaken by those who are resolved to find it. 2. Straight and narrow. It is the one only way from which the traveller must not deviate. 3. Safe. Narrow, but not too narrow for him who will keep it. IV. The way is for ALL MEN. Then—1. Discover it. It is not hard to find it. Be not misled. Take no other. 2. Walk in it. It is one of two. It leads to life, the other to destruction. It is in vain to praise it unless you make it yours. 3. Perseverance in it. Only such as continue in it can reach the goal. 4. Point it out to others. All true Christians live for this. (*J. R. Thompson, M.A.*) **And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus.**—*Damascus*:—The city has the interest of being one of the oldest in the world. It appears in the history of Abraham (Gen. xiv. 15; xv. 2), and was, traditionally, the scene of the murder of Abel. David placed his garrisons there (2 Sam. viii. 6; 1 Chron. xviii. 6), and, under Rezon, it resisted the power of Solomon (1 Kings xi. 24). Its fair streams, Abana and Pharpar, were, in the eyes of the Syrian leper, better than all the waters of Israel (2 Kings v. 12). It was the centre of the Syrian kingdom in its alliances and wars with those of Israel and Judah (2 Kings xiv. 28; xvi. 9, 10; Amos i. 3, 5). Its trade with Tyre in wares, and wine of Helbon, and white wool is noted by Ezekiel (chap xxvii. 16, 18). It had been taken by Parmenion for Alexander the Great, and again by Pompeius. It was the birth-place of Nicolaos of Damascus, the historian and rhetorician who is conspicuous as the counsellor of Herod the Great (Jos. "Ant." xii. 3, § 2; xvi. 2, § 2). At a later period it was the residence of the Ommiyad caliphs, and the centre of the world of Islam. The beauty of its site, the river which the Greeks knew as Chrysorrhoas, the "Golden Stream," its abounding fertility, the gardens of roses, made it, as Lamartine has said, a "predestined capital." Such was the scene which met the bodily eye of the fanatic persecutor. The historian does not care to dwell on its description, and hastens to that which met his inward gaze. Assuming the journey to have been continuous, the approach to Damascus would come on the seventh or eighth day after leaving Jerusalem. (*Dean Plumptre.*) *St. Paul on the way to Damascus*:—How many thoughts have been awakened by the approach to the most ancient of existing cities! Abraham, as he journeyed from the far East, drew near to Damascus, and Elisha, as he journeyed from Samaria (2 Kings viii. 7), and Ahaz when he went to meet the king of Assyria (2 Kings xvi. 9), and Mahomet who, as he approached it, exclaimed, "Man can have but one Paradise in life—my Paradise is fixed above"; and turned away lest that glorious city should tempt him from his mission. But of all the travellers who, "as they journeyed came near to Damascus," there is none who has such an interest for us as the great apostle. Let us consider—I. PAUL'S CONVERSION. Conversion—*i.e.*, "a turning round" from bad to good, from good to better, is necessary for us all. We are sometimes inclined to think that our characters, once formed, can never be changed. This is not true. Our natural dispositions and faculties rarely change; but their direction can be changed; and the difference between their upward and their downward direction deserves the name of conversion. Paul, in great measure, remained the same as before—he retained his zeal, his power, his energy; but the turn which was given to these qualities gave a turn to his whole life, and, through him, a turn to the life of the whole world. He approached Damascus a furious persecutor; he entered it a humble penitent; he left it a great apostle. So is it with us. Much about us never can be changed; but much about us can and ought

and, with God's help, will be changed. We are all on the road, not to Damascus, but to some end or object. To every one of us, as to St. Paul, that end or object will at last appear in a light totally different from what we now expect; and on that changed light may depend our happiness or misery, our usefulness or uselessness. II. How IT WAS BROUGHT ABOUT. 1. By the vision of Christ. How this entered into his soul we know not; but that it did enter there is sure from all that he afterwards did and said. And it is this same communion with Christ which still is the most powerful instrument of making every human soul better, and wiser, and nobler than it was before. 2. By calling to his mind the true knowledge of what he was doing. He thought that he was doing God service by trampling down an heretical sect. That voice from heaven told him that in those poor Christians he was persecuting the Great Friend and Deliverer of the world. So it is still; often we think that we are all right; that no one can find fault with us. And yet all the while, as God sees us, we are injuring the very cause we wish to promote; those of whom we think so little may be the very likenesses and representatives to us of Christ. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." 3. By the appeal to the best part of his own heart. "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks"—against the goad, against the stings, of conscience. He had doubtless already had better feelings stirring within him from what he had seen of the death of Stephen and of the good deeds of the early Christians. In this way his conversion, sudden as it seemed at last, had been long prepared. His conscience had been ill at ease; and in this perplexity it needed only that one blessed interposition of his merciful Lord to recall him to a sense of his better self. And each of us has a barrier against sin set up within him, against which we may kick, but which will, thanks to the mercy of God, long resist our efforts. III. WHAT RESULTED FROM IT. This is too great a subject to be spoken of here in all its parts. But one single point is put before us by this morning's lesson (chap. xxiv. 25). If we wish to make St. Paul's conversion and doctrine anything more than a mere name, we shall try to bear away from the road on which it took place the thought of at least these three things—the duty of justice, and self-restraint, and the certainty of a judgment to come. (*Dean Stanley.*)

Vers. 3–19. **And suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven.**—*The heavenly light:*—As the supernatural reflects the moral in all the miracles of the Bible, so in the conversion of St. Paul. We have here—I. AN EMBLEM OF THE GOSPEL—"a light from heaven." All knowledge is light. But as the light here was peculiarly dazzling, so the gospel is a special revelation of God's will. It is heavenly light, because—1. Of its Divine origin. The apostles denied that they preached "cunningly devised fables." As the eye is made for the light, so the soul is made for Divine truth. The gospel speaks with so much clearness and authority, that conviction is carried home. Would any one have convinced Saul that he saw merely the blaze of a torch. Nor can any one persuade the believer that he is only influenced by the words of man? "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." 2. Of its benign influence. The light and heat of the sun come like every good and every perfect gift, from the Father of lights. As heaven is bright and loving, so the gospel is the good news of salvation to men. It brings the peace and smile of heaven. There was darkness before, but now God hath shined in our heart. 3. It leads heavenward. Christians are not pilgrims because they are forced by time to move on, but because they have the light, and move in the right direction. II. AN ILLUSTRATION OF DIVINE METHODS. "Suddenly there shined a light." 1. The sovereignty of the Divine will. God has no need of consultations with His creatures. His wisdom is infinite, and His tender mercies are over all His works (Rom. xi. 33–36). How unexpected the scene near Damascus. You ask, why God has done this? and the only answer is, "I am that I am." You must accept the Saviour on this ground: it is the will of God. 2. The decisiveness and finality of the Divine acts. The appearance to St. Paul was as emphatic as it was sudden. There was no mistake as to the source of the communication. Jesus met with Saul, not to parley with him, but to acquaint him with the *ultimatum* of the court of heaven. You perceive this in Paul's answer. The gospel is of none effect unless it carries with it its final appeal and authority. 3. The mercifulness of the Divine purposes. God comes to save, and not to destroy our souls. (*Weekly Pulpit.*) *When need is greatest God is nearest:*—Proved—I. TO SAUL. When sin rose highest the Lord snatched him back. II. TO THE CHRISTIANS AT DAMASCUS. When the enemy was even before the gate, the Lord called, "Hitherto shalt thou

come, but no farther." (*K. Gerok.*) *Saul's conversion:*—I. SAUL BEFORE CONVERSION. He seems to have been aroused to supreme violence by the martyrdom of Stephen. Like some beasts of prey which grow uncontrollable the moment they taste blood, this restless zealot "breathed out threatenings," a metaphor which reminds one of pictures of war-horses snorting fire from their kindled nostrils. We see then—1. That a young man can be thoroughly moral and yet be anything but a Christian. Compare what Paul said of himself about this period of his life (Acts xxiii. 1) with what he writes about his correctness according to the standard of those times (Phil. iii. 4–6). 2. That a young man can be very conscientious and honest, and yet not be a Christian (Acts xxiv. 16). Everybody admitted that Saul acted up to his convictions. What he thought to be right, that he did swiftly and fearlessly (2 Cor. i. 12; Acts xxvi. 9–11). 3. That a young man can be very zealous in religion, and yet do more injury than good. What our Lord thought of the Pharisees we know, but He never credited them with indolence (Matt. xxiii. 15). But Saul prided himself on being one of the "straitest" of them (Acts xxvi. 4, 5). There is a zeal not according to knowledge: and it makes a vast difference what a man believes, even if he is sincere; for the more sincere he is, if he be wrong, the worse it is for him and everybody else. 4. That when a young man becomes a true Christian he perceives the sorrowful mistake he made before (Gal. i. 13; 1 Tim. i. 12–16; 1 Cor. xv. 9). II. SAUL'S CONVERSION. Observe here—1. How surely fixed is the unseen limit beyond which rebellious sinners are not permitted to go. God sometimes suffers a bad man to succeed in a bad cause, so as to make his arrest more abrupt, and his final failure more overwhelming. He did not stop Saul at Jerusalem; He let him prance his proud steed across Palestine; then He interposed, and with one flash of His presence He ended that high career. 2. How surely fixed is the Divine grace within which a penitent sinner can find safety. The issue is always narrowed down to two persons, God and the human soul; that is the reason why God takes conversion sovereignly into His own hands, and that is the reason why we cannot repent or believe for each other. Mark the words "thou" and "me" at the beginning and at the end of the conversation. It was as if Christ had told Paul, the conflict is between Me and thee; and then it was as if Paul told Christ he admitted it, duty is from me to Thee. When that supreme point in a soul's history is reached, and never before, it is easy to find peace; for the soul stands before a merciful God at last. Conclusion: The lesson leaves this proud persecutor in a pitiable condition of humiliation. But Saul is happy; he has become Paul. He takes a new commission; he is a "chosen vessel" now (chap. v. 15). (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Conversion of St. Paul:*—The festival of the Conversion of St. Paul falls aptly near the end of the Epiphany season, for it was brought about by a manifestation of Christ, and that vouchsafed to one who, though himself a Jew, was chosen to "be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles." The manifestation on the road to Damascus was of Christ glorified. St. Paul alludes to this distinction in the Epistle to the Galatians (Gal. i. 1). The apostle, like the original twelve, was called by Christ Himself; but it was his special and solitary honour to have been "commissioned by the risen and glorified Lord." There are three manifestations of Christ in glory, or rather three to whom these epiphanies were vouchsafed—St. Stephen, St. Paul, and St. John. Over and above their special purposes in relation to the persons to whom our Lord appeared, these unveilings of Christ, since the "cloud received Him out of our sight," help us to realise the continuity of His work in heaven. St. Paul was drawing near to Damascus. It was about noon. The city may be seen from afar. The desert is passed. The eye feasts itself upon the green avenues through which the ancient capital is approached. In the distance may be descried the faint outline of its white buildings standing out against the azure sky. Saul catches already the murmurs of "the rivers of Damascus," and the ripple of the rivulets which glisten and sparkle and leap amongst the tangled brushwood. The perfume from the Syrian gardens, in which shrub, and fruit, and flower, are intermingled in wild profusion, which refresh the weary traveller, have little charm for him. He is "breathing out" slaughter. His mind is filled with the thought of how many disciples of Christ he may lay violent hands upon, and bring "bound unto Jerusalem." There is, however, another image which will rise up before his memory. There is the face of a young man, his eyes uplifted towards heaven. Saul hears again his dying prayer, and the thuds of the stones which are falling around him; he cannot shake off the remembrance—the courage and the forgivingness of the youthful martyr—"Thy martyr Stephen" (chap. xxii. 20), what was it sustained him? When—

"suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? And he said, Who art Thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." The Church usually celebrates the martyrdom of the saints, the end rather than the beginning of their spiritual course. But, as she marks in her Calendar the conception and nativity of our Lord's mother, and the birth of St. John the Baptist, so she keeps a festival to commemorate the conversion of St. Paul. It is the great turning-point in Saul's history, a change somewhat out of the range of the ordinary operations of grace. We call it in our collect a "wonderful" conversion. Let us inquire into the cause of Saul's conversion, and secondly, note what is marvellous about it. I. The narrative of St. Paul's conversion is three times told in the Acts of the Apostles, besides the apostle's allusions to it in several Epistles. From all we gather that THE GREAT CHANGE IN SAUL'S CONVICTIONS WAS BROUGHT ABOUT BY A VISION. It was the result of grace, though two factors, as we shall presently see, combined to produce it. Grace may come to us from without or from within. Grace in both these ways moved the soul of Saul of Tarsus. God appeals to us both through outward objects, and by His voice within. By the preaching of the gospel, by the working of miracles, by the events of Divine Providence, by the influence and power of good example, He can speak to us. He spoke to Saul in a vision. There are those who deny, or at least doubt, the supernatural character of the event. Saul "fell to the earth," they say; but this might have taken place through natural causes. The whole might have been the result of a thunderstorm, a sunstroke, a fit, or simply might have arisen from mental hallucination. But Saul's companions in travel also heard the "voice," though they saw not the Form, nor caught the words. They "saw indeed the light, and were afraid." The light "above the brightness" of the midday sun, St. Paul says, when standing before Agrippa, not only encircled himself, but "them which journeyed with" him, and all fell to the earth together. It was at noon when all in Eastern climes is hushed and still, and beneath a cloudless sky, that this happened. All Saul's prepossessions, all Saul's interests from an earthly point of view, his reputation and his honour, are against the change which at that moment was wrought. St. Paul is no visionary, but a man of masculine mind and clear judgment. Intellect appears to predominate over the imaginative faculty in the apostle, if we may judge from his Epistles. God speaks sometimes in visions to His saints. These visions are of different kinds; some addressed to the mind, others to the imagination, some to the eye of sense. St. Paul's was of the last kind, like the burning bush which Moses saw, and from the midst of which the voice of God was heard; so Saul saw with his eyes, and was blinded by the glory which he beheld. But grace from without is not enough. The fact that only one of the two thieves who were crucified with Christ repented will be sufficient to show that man may have the grandest opportunities and neglect them. The vision was rich, indeed, in revelation upon which St. Paul gazed—Jesus glorified—"I am Jesus of Nazareth," not only "I was." The memories of earth will not be expunged by the waters of Lethe from the soul as it passes into the eternal world. Jesus is still "Jesus of Nazareth." His history is a part of Himself. Saul, as he was persecuting the Christians, looked back to Christ, thought of Him only in reference to His mortal life in the past. Now he realises a present Christ—that which some who have been brought up as a Christian fail to do—and, moreover, learns the truth that Christ is one with His members, and that in persecuting them he was persecuting Him. It was, then, a rich external revelation of truth to Saul, but it needed inward grace that it might become victorious. The soul must be illumined also from within. The inspirations of that Spirit whose work it is to "receive of" Christ and reveal Him unto us, must be vouchsafed. And this also was granted. "It pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me" (Gal. i. 15, 16). The cause, then, of St. Paul's conversion, as of all others, is the grace of God. But there is another factor which has ever its share in the work of conversion—the human will. God does not destroy our moral accountability. Even in the case of St. Paul, whose conversion was in many ways "wonderful," it rested with himself whether he would or would not yield to the grace which was given him. He distinctly asserts that he was "not disobedient unto the heavenly vision" (chap. xxvi. 19). It was a moment not only of rich revelation, but also of entire self-surrender, when Saul exclaimed, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" II. We have considered how the grace of God, from without and from within, and the co-operation of the

human will, changed Saul into Paul, the persecutor into the apostle. Now look at THE GREATNESS OF THE EVENT; IN WHAT RESPECTS IT WAS WONDERFUL. The justification of a sinner is ever a great event. St. Paul's conversion was wonderful because of the sharp antagonism between his previous and subsequent life. This antagonism is common when of a moral kind. Such a sharp contrast may be traced between the life of St. Mary Magdalene or St. Matthew, before their conversion and after. But it was the strength and violence of St. Paul's religious opinions which underwent this remarkable change. He was blinded by prejudice and passion. 1. It was wonderful, in that the grace of God overtook him in the very act of sin, as he was drawing near to Damascus, in the very acme of opposition and of violence. Souls sometimes prepare the way for God's grace by outwardly ceasing from sin. The stone of evil habit is removed from the door of that sepulchre before the voice of Christ penetrates into the realms of the dead. But St. Paul's experience is an illustration of the mission of God the Son to mankind—"While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." 2. The change was "wonderful" too, in its suddenness. Conversions may be suddenly or gradually effected. St. Peter's is an instance of a spiritual evolution, the gradual development of a vocation: St. Paul's of a sudden and more violent change. The former is a type of what is normal; the latter, of what is wonderful or extraordinary. God turns water into wine at Cana in a moment, but this was a miracle. He brings wine regularly out of the vine by means of the natural processes of growth and culture. Nor again, must we exaggerate the suddenness of St. Paul's conversion, though we admit that it was wonderful. St. Stephen's martyrdom had made an ineffaceable impression on his mind. Revolutions do not take place in history without a long series of events which lead up to them, though they seem to burst upon the world in a moment: so with the great apostle, though sudden was the change, there were doubtless preparations of grace going before it. 3. Lastly, it was wonderful in its completeness. There is usually the gradual growth, oftentimes the fluctuations or relapses. The new life has "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." But in St. Paul's case, as in the miracle of Cana, which we have already alluded to as in some sense its analogue—the miracle of turning water into wine, "the good wine" surpassed the ordinary produce of the grape; so the operations of grace seemed to have been so condensed in the soul of St. Paul as to bring fruit to perfection at once. He seems not to pass through what spiritual writers describe as the stages of purgation, illumination, and union with God, but attains at once to a vigorous spiritual life and a burning love for Christ. (*W. H. Hutchings, M.A.*) *Conversion:*—To consider, then, the circumstances of St. Paul's conversion as an outline of our own. "He fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying to him." It is, accordingly, mostly amid terror and amazement that men are restored to God. God has impressed a law on the natural world also, that healthful cure can, for the most part, only take place through bitterness and suffering. The cures of our bodies picture to us the cures of our souls. The progress may be more or less painful; but bitterness is mixed in all. Those who have felt it say that the restoration of suspended life is far more suffering than apparent death. Restored circulation has pain; every touch of our body, whereby health is given back, has pain; well-nigh every healing medicine is bitter or revolting to our taste. By this universal law God would reconcile us to those merciful bitternesses, whereby He corrects our vitiated love for the destructive sweetnesses of this world, and cures our sickly tastes and appetites, teaching us to find no sweetness but in Him. So He prepares us beforehand to look to them as healthful, and find therein our health. Yes! sorrow, sickness, suffering, loss, bereavement, bring with them precious hours. God blinds us, like Saul, to the world, that, like Saul's, He may open our eyes to Him. He strikes us down, that He may raise us up. We should not be eager to escape sorrow, but only, through sorrow, to escape death. But pain of body, and sorrow of heart, have their end; if not sooner, yet in the grave: terror of soul has of necessity no end. Time, if it does no more, reconciles to sorrow, but not to fear. Man can endure the past, because it is past; the present, because it must end: but fear for the future, when the future is eternity, has no end. Yet it was through fear that God brought St. Paul to Himself; "and he trembling and astonished said." Nay, so wrapt up in this fear and awe did the heavenly voice leave him, that for three days and three nights he neither ate nor drank, but prayed. In fear He struck him to the ground; in fear and blindness, though with hope, He raised him. Fear, exceeding fear of hell, is one of the most usual ways in which God brings us back to Himself. It needs not that others have warned us of it. Children may hear of it, as it should

seem, when man intends it not to reach them. But God brings it home to their tender consciences. To "cease to do evil," and "learn to do well," is the whole of repentance, but such repentance is not learned without sorrow, sorrow, heart-searching in proportion to the sin. "God," it has been said, "willeth to save sinners, but He willeth to save them as sinners. If He saved them by a simple change of heart, without any repentance for their past life, He would save them as innocent. He wills that they should feel 'that it is an evil thing and bitter to have forsaken the Lord thy God.'" God Himself, in His miraculous conversion of His chosen vessel, St. Paul, kept him three days and three nights without relief. During that long space of fixed sorrow and humiliation, intenser than we have ever felt, He allowed not his mind to be ministered to by man. How much more may we be content to bear sorrow and fear, who, wherein we have sinned, have sinned against the light, not of the law only, but of the gospel; not against the light shining around us, but against the light, lightened within us; not against a revelation made without us, but grieving the good Spirit of God placed within us. Sorrow then and aching of heart, brought upon us by God, are mostly the means by which God brings back His prodigal children; sorrow or fear without us, to grow by His grace into a godly fear and dread within us. And as we cannot make ourselves sorrow, so we should beware how of ourselves we cease to sorrow, or use the promises of the gospel to heal our pain rather than our sickness. St. Paul lay there where he was stricken, until God said to him, "Arise." It is a fearful thing to see how people, on an imagined conversion, contrive to forget what they have been, or remember it only to thank God that they are not now such. Yet the sorrow is not to end in itself. St. Paul had to arise and do God's bidding; and we must arise, and with him ask, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" With him too we must do it; keeping back nothing when we ask, and shrinking from nothing which is laid upon us. Such was St. Paul's conversion. He freely offered up all, and took all. All he had been he gave up; what he was not he, in God's hand, became. He was a ravening wolf, he became a lamb; the persecutor, he became persecuted. So was he in all things, and that exceedingly, transformed into the opposite of what he was before. And this is the most hopeful sign of a real healthful change wrought in us, when we become in life other than we were before; if we, like him, become blinded to the world, and see only in the world Him who was crucified for us, and "with Him" are ourselves "crucified to the world"; if for ambitious, we become lowly; for proud, humble; for angry, meek; for impatient, patient; for self-indulgent, self-denying; for covetous, liberal. Nor, again, are we to hope to have all our way plain before us, or to see His face equally clearly, as when He first by His merciful severity checked our wayward course, and recalled us to ourselves and to Him. By merciful interpositions, if we heed them, He sets us, from time to time, in a right course, but then He leaves us to the ordinary channels of His grace, and the guidance, which He has provided in His Church. Even to St. Paul He declared not at once, all He had in store for him. (*E. B. Pusey.*) *Saul of Tarsus converted*:—This event, which happened on the Damascus road about the year 37 A.D., was truly one of the most momentous of history. The meaning of this remarkable occurrence reaches out a long way. Indeed, since the New Testament is the final revelation for the Christian Church on earth, the power of Saul's conversion must be felt to end of time. I. Its meaning first, of course, CONCERNED HIMSELF. 1. He was convinced of the truth of Christianity. By Christianity we mean the doctrine that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. By what sort of an argument was Saul convinced of the truth of Christianity? The reasons for his becoming a Christian were both external and internal. The miracle was double, and whatever any one of any school of thought might require as a sufficient ground for such a tremendous change as was brought about in Saul is actually supplied in his case. He became a Christian really and rationally. 2. By this change Saul was led into an entirely new kind of life, not only in his heart, but in his work. Christianity was not only his creed, it was his business. Saul was to abolish Judaism as a half-way step to Christianity; he was to preach salvation to the Gentiles as Gentiles. To this change, planned by God to be brought about through Saul, our conversion is due. This work was to be done through a life of unusual obedience to Christ. Its type is presented to us at the very opening of Saul's Christian career in the question, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" 3. And how was all this brought about? Wholly of the grace of God. Saul did not convert himself, did not designate his work to himself, did not characterise it with suffering, did not furnish his own spiritual equipment for it. All was from

God. II. Saul's conversion had A GREAT INFLUENCE ON THE CHRISTIANS OF HIS DAY. 1. It showed them that God's care was over them. 2. It showed that God's power was behind His care. It is not enough to watch unless one is able to help. God knew and God was able. If He could make a man like Saul of Tarsus over into a follower of Jesus He could do anything; for this was the impossible, ordinarily speaking. 3. Saul's conversion showed the early Christians that God would use means for their blessing and the furtherance of His work such as they had not expected. III. To CHRISTIAN TRUTH ALWAYS SAUL'S CONVERSION HAS ESPECIAL VALUE. 1. In the line of Christian doctrine it has force. Saul's experience was not in a dream or in a vision. It was in broad daylight, under normal conditions. Thus he beheld Christ in glory. Christ then is alive, He is glorified, and His glory is not spiritual alone, but of such a kind that it can be apprehended by other ways than by thought upon His character. He can be present wherever He chooses in His glorified body, and can reveal Himself when He likes. The doctrine of the existence and work of the Holy Spirit is touched upon in the story of Saul's conversion. 2. Saul's conversion has immense value in the department of apologetics—the defence of Christianity. There is a problem here which mere naturalism has never been able to solve. Saul presumably was able to know either a stroke of lightning or a sunstroke if he had experienced it. An attempt has also been made to explain Saul's conversion on psychological lines. Because at once (ver. 5) he addresses Christ as Lord (*Kyrie*, which in this place is nothing more than the ordinary word of salutation to a superior), and because Christ (ver. 5) says it is hard for him to kick against the pricks (which means only that opposition to Christ is useless), it has been thought that Saul's conscience had been troubling him and making him wonder if perhaps Jesus were not the Christ, and so preparing him to be converted on a slight occasion. But the record gives not a hint of any such psychological preparation. Out of deliberate and bitter antagonism Saul was converted to Christ. The conditions were as unfavourable to his conversion as they could be made. No stronger evidence for the miraculous, supernatural character of Christianity could be offered. If Saul did not see Christ, then the strongest convictions of the clearest minds cannot be respected, and no thinking whatever is ever worth anything. 3. Saul's conversion has an especial relation to Christian mission. There are some special notes worth making in addition to these, in connection with the conversion of Saul. (1) All men need conversion. Saul was a good, moral, even godly man before he became a Christian. (2) No one is too hard a subject for a possible future Christian. (3) The outline of the soul's progress in conversion is the same for all. (4) Grace is the only means of our salvation. All is from God. (5) There is a work for every one who is made Christ's. We are elected to work. (6) Our work is accomplished through suffering. What we gain we pay for. Let us not grudge the cost. (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*) *The conversion of Saul:*—I. THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY. II. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD IN THE CONVERSION OF MEN. What has he, in regard to his salvation, which he did not receive? It is needful, in this connection, that we should be cautioned in regard to two points. 1. The conversion of Paul, while it illustrates God's sovereignty, does not exhibit any uniform plan as to the exercise of that sovereignty. He saves men by different ways. 2. We need to be reminded, by way of caution, that the sovereignty of God in the conversion of men gives no encouragement to continued impenitence. Therefore, harden not your heart. Reply not against God. Presume not on His forbearance. III. THE RICHES OF DIVINE MERCY towards the chief of sinners. (*H. J. Van Dyke.*) *Saul's conversion God's glorification:*—God is such an Artificer, that He has pleasure only in difficult masterpieces, and not in trifling pieces of work. Also He works with special pleasure from the block. Therefore He has from of old selected especially very hard wood and stones in order to show His skill in them. (*M. Luther.*) *The conversion of Saul:*—The three greatest facts in redemptive history in the order of time and importance are the advent of Christ, the outpouring of the Spirit, and the conversion of Saul. Consider Saul—I. AS AN ENEMY TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST. His enmity was—1. Intense, as we gather both from the narrative (ver. 1) and the man's character. He was a man of—(1) Strong intellect, which gave power to his passions. (2) Strong impulses, which gave force to every purpose. (3) Invincible conscientiousness, which led him to the greatest cruelty without flinching. 2. Practical. (1) He gets his persecuting plans legalised (ver. 2). (2) He prosecutes his commission. (*a*) Promptly. (*b*) Thoroughly (chap. viii. 3). II. AS CONQUERED BY THE REVELATION OF CHRIST. 1. The nature of this

revelation. (1) By symbol. "A light from heaven"—probably the Shekinah glory—not recognised as such by his companions, but seen by Saul to be the garment in which He clothed Himself whom Saul was persecuting. (2) By words. (*a*) In the same tongue in which He had conversed during His earthly ministry. (*b*) Emphatic. Jesus often used such repetitions, to fix attention. "Martha, Martha." "Simon, Simon." (*c*) Most exciting. "Why persecute Me? What injury have I done to thee?" 2. Its effects. It brought him—(1) Into conscious contact with Christ. (2) To a complete submission to the will of Christ. III. As EXHIBITED IN THE SERVICE OF CHRIST (ver. 20). What a change is this! The messenger engaged to enlist Saul is here introduced. Ananias was especially selected and especially directed. Note here—1. The reason assigned for the message received. Paul's prayer, which reached the heart of Christ, was answered in the mission of Ananias. 2. The manner in which the message was at first received. Reluctantly (vers. 13, 14). 3. The Divine argument with which the message was again urged (vers. 15, 16). Saul's subsequent history realised all that is here stated (chaps. XXV.–XXVII.; 2 Cor. xi. 23–28). 4. The manner in which the message was carried out. (1) Affectionately. "Brother Saul." (2) Faithfully. Ananias does not go in his own name, but in Christ's. (3) Effectively. No remedies were applied, but the cure was perfect. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The conversion of Saul:*—Look at the conversion of Saul—I. AS ILLUSTRATING THE GREAT MORAL CHANGE WHICH IS ESSENTIAL TO THE SALVATION OF EVERY SINNER. Note—1. The feelings developed in connection with it. (1) A vivid consciousness of Christ. (2) Anxious inquiry. (3) Profound contrition. (4) Earnest prayer. 2. The display of human and Divine in effecting it. (1) There is the human in Saul. The Divine is not sufficient to account for Saul's conversion; for it was as strikingly displayed in the cases of Pharaoh, Balaam, and the witnesses of the crucifixion. God created us without our consent, but cannot save us without it. There was something in Saul that made him susceptible to the Divine influence. He was conscientious, and reverenced the Divine will as far as he knew it. (2) There is the human in Ananias. God usually converts man by man. 3. The thoroughness of the change. How vast the difference between the man of ver. 1 and the man of ver. 20. II. As SUPPLYING A COGENT ARGUMENT IN FAVOUR OF THE DIVINITY OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH. Lord Lyttleton has ably demonstrated this. The argument may be thus shaped: 1. If the testimony of Paul concerning Christ be true, Christianity is Divine. Jesus was the grand theme of his ministry—Jesus the promised Messiah, the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world. If you believe Paul, you must believe in Christ. 2. If the conversion of Saul is a reality, his testimony must be true. This conversion shows that he had all the qualifications necessary to bear a credible testimony. (1) The necessary intelligence. He was no blind fanatic, but saw, heard, and felt Christ. (2) The necessary candour. If a witness is prejudiced, his testimony is vitiated; but Paul's prejudices were all against Christ. (3) The necessary disinterestedness. He had everything to lose, and nothing to gain. III. As AFFORDING HOPE OF MERCY TO THE GREATEST SINNER (1 Tim. i. 16). (*Ibid.*) *The conversion of Saul:*—1. Philip was sent to the eunuch of Ethiopia, and he made excellent work in that direction. Why was not Philip sent to the next man? He also rode in a chariot, and he also was deeply interested in religious questions. As well have sent a lamb to a lion! Is there no method in these providences? Does success in one case mean success in another? Will one kind of preaching do for every kind of hearer? Who will go to Saul? Not a man. Saul must be struck with lightning Divine. The thunder must take him in charge! 2. Christianity wrought a marvellous change upon a man of conscience. Saul was in a singular sense a most conscientious man. He was not a ruffian. He was a Pharisaic saint. He was a sincere man. There is nothing in all human history so terrible in opposition as conscience that is not based on reason. 3. Every man is born into the family of God by what may be called a miraculous conception. The new birth is always a miracle. Saul was converted miraculously. You were converted miraculously. We approach some mountain heights so gradually, that we are hardly aware that we have been climbing until we find ourselves without any further height to ascend. So it may be with many conversions. The great question for us to settle is, Are we really in Christ? 4. Christianity always creates the most marked experience of the individual mind. In the eunuch the experience was one of joy. In Saul it was one of thoughtfulness and prayer. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The conversion of Saul:*—We have heard opinions about what we term sudden conversions. Some persons do not believe in them. But here is the very word that is objected to! It

is an Old Testament word. Suddenness was approved by the Lord of the Jewish Church. "The Lord shall suddenly come to His temple." Mark the harmony of that particular feature of the incident with the Divine purpose. A slow, deliberate, intellectual transformation would have been a moral violence under circumstances so peculiar. What could be more harmonious in all its particulars and relations than the conversion of the eunuch? A man quietly reading in his chariot and filled with wonder as to the meaning of the mysterious Word, what more seemly than that a teacher should sit beside him and show the meaning of the sacred mysteries? But here is a man "yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter"; with such a man you cannot reason; God therefore suddenly strikes him to the ground. Let us admire this providence of arrangement and this inspiration of incident, as well as the stupendous conversion itself. Do not reprove the suddenness until you understand all the circumstances. The very suddenness may itself be part of the occasion. Now, look at the incident as showing—I. SAUL'S RELATION TO JUDAISM—*i.e.*, to his past life. Does Jesus Christ condemn Judaism? No. He Himself was a Jew. There is not a word of chiding in all the speech. The only thing that was being done was that Saul was hurting himself. "Why kick against the pricks?" The persecutor only hurts himself. The bad man digs a hell for himself. Christ did not condemn the personal attitude of Saul. Saul was a man of the Old Testament, which says "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." The heretic and blasphemer must be stoned. Saul was therefore keeping strictly within historic lines and constitutional proprieties when he said, in effect, "This novel heresy must be stamped out with force." Christianity does not condemn Judaism; it supersedes it. Christianity takes it up, realises all its types, and symbols, and ceremonies. Judaism is the dawn, Christianity is the full noon-tide. Christianity brings to maturity and sweetness all the roots and fruits of the Judaism. The Jew is simply a man who has not come on to the next point in history. But for Judaism, there could have been no Christianity. We are debtors to the Jew. The Gentiles never converted themselves. The Jew was sent to the Gentile. The most stubborn prejudices were turned into the most anxious sympathies, and this is the crowning miracle of the grace of Christ. II. HIS CONVERSION AS THE GREATEST TRIUMPH WHICH CHRISTIANITY HAS ACCOMPLISHED. This was the master-miracle. Who is this man? A Jew, of an ancient and honourable pedigree; a student, a scholar, a man of high and influential station. There lay within him capacity to do anything that mortals ever did. His hand once upon the prey, the prey was dead, unless the fingers be unloosed by Almightiness. Jesus Christ Himself directly undertakes his conversion, and works thus His supreme spiritual miracle. When Saul was converted, there was more than one man changed. There is a conversion of quality, as well as a conversion of quantity. Statistics cannot help you in this matter. Let a Saul of Tarsus be converted, and you convert an army. He will not let the world allow him to travel through *incog.* We can go through the house, the market, and the exchange, without anybody identifying us! Saul of Tarsus will never pass without recognition, and no town will he be in without setting up his holy testimony. Conclusion: 1. The Lord uses a remarkable expression in ver. 11. "Behold, he prayeth." Had he not been praying all his life-time? In a certain sense, yes; but whilst saying prayers, punctilious in ritual, exemplary in all the outward observances of his Church, Saul had yet, in a Christian sense, never prayed. Prayer is a battering ram which only a Christian arm can work. 2. Another remarkable expression we find in ver. 16. "I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake." Mark the harmony of this arrangement. God knows what we are doing, and He pays to the uttermost. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked," &c. Adonibezek said, "As I have done, so God hath requited me." Samuel said to Agag, "As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women." Saul was in this succession, a student in that school of compensation. Saul was now made to feel how exactly true these terms were (*cf.* chap. viii. 3 with chap. xiv. 9; chap. ix. 1 with chap. xxiii.; chap. xxvi. 10 with chap. xvi. 26). Do not suppose you can escape God. (*Ibid.*) *The conversion of Saul*:—I. AS ILLUSTRATING MORAL CONTRASTS. Saul, who went out to persecute, remained to pray (vers. 1, 11). 1. He breathed hotly. How changed in a little time! for his face is turned upward to heaven, and its very look is a pleading supplication. What has occurred? These effects must be accounted for. Have they any counterpart in our own experience? Have any of us passed from fierceness to gentleness, from drunkenness to sobriety, from darkness to light, from blasphemy to worship? Then we understand what is meant by

this most startling contrast. This is precisely the work which Christianity undertakes to do. It undertakes to cool your breath, to take the fire out of your blood, to subdue your rancour and your malignity, and to clasp your hands in childlike plea and prayer at your Father's feet. Such is the continual miracle of Christianity. Jesus makes the lion lie down with the lamb, and He causes the child to hold the fierce beast, and to put its hand with impunity on the cockatrice den. Other miracles He has ceased to perform, but this continual and infinite surprise is the standing testimony of Christ. 2. When Saul was a Pharisee he persecuted; when Saul became a Christian (ver. 22) he "proved." As a Pharisee, he said, "Destroy Christianity by destroying Christians." Having seen Jesus, and entered into His Spirit, does he now say, "The persecution must be turned in the other direction; I have been persecuting the wrong parties"? No! Standing with the scrolls open before him, he reasons, proving that this is the Christ. When he was not a converted man, he never thought of "proving" anything. Now he stands up with an argument as his only weapon; persuasion as his only iron; entreaty and supplication as the ouly chains with which he would bind his opponents. What has happened? Is there not a counterpart of all this in our own experience, and in civilised history? Do not men always begin vulgarly, and end with refinement? Is not the first rough argument a thrust with cold iron, or a blow with clenched fist? Does not history teach us that such methods are utterly unavailing in the extinction or the final arrest of erroneous teaching? Christianity is a moral plea. Wherein professing Christians have resorted to the block and the stake, they have proved disloyal to their Master, and they have forgotten the spirit of His Cross. You cannot make men pray by force of arms. You cannot drive your children to church, except in the narrowest and shallowest sense of the term. You may convince men of their error, and lead men to the sanctuary, and, through the confidence of their reason and the higher sentiments, you may conduct them to your own noblest conclusions. How far is it from persecuting to praying? From threatening and slaughter to proving? That distance Christ took Saul, who only meant to go from Jerusalem to Damascus, some hundred and thirty-six miles. Christ took him a longer journey; He swept him round the whole circle of possibility. It is thus that Jesus Christ makes us do more than we intended to do. He meets us on the way of our own choice, and graciously takes us on a way of His own. 3. In the opening of the narrative, Saul was a strong man, the chief, without whose presence the band would dissolve. And in this same narrative we read of the great persecutor that "they led him by the haud." What has happened? We thought he would have gone into the city like a storm; and he went in like a blind beggar! We thought he would have been met at the city gate as the great destroyer of heresy; and he was led by the hand like a helpless cripple! Woe unto the strength that is not heaven-born! When we are weak, then are we strong. You are mightier when you pray than when you persecute. You are stronger men when you prove your argument than when you seek to smite your opponent. Saul led by the hand; then why need we be ashamed of the same process? Who will despise the day of small things? Presently he will increase in the right strength; not the power of transient fury, but the solid and tranquil strength of complete repose. II. As GIVING US GLIMPSES OF CHRIST. He is—1. Watchful. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age." He left, yet did not leave. He is invisible, yet watchful; looking upon Saul every day, and looking at the same time upon His redeemed Church night and day. Events are not happening without His knowledge. He knows all your antagonistic plans. As for you Christians, He knows your sufferings, and oppositions, and through how much tribulation you are moving onward to the kingdom. 2. Compassionate. "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." He pitied the poor ox that struck its limbs against the sharp and piercing goads. This expostulation repeats the prayer of his dying breath. He does not bind Saul with his own chain; He throws upon him the happy spell of victorious love. 3. Consistent. "I will show him what great things he must suffer for My name's sake." When Jesus ordained the disciples to go out into the world, He laid before them a black picture, and told them that they would be persecuted; and now, when He comes to add another to the number, He repeats the ordination charge which He addressed to the first band. III. As SHOWING THE NATURE AND PURPOSES OF SPIRITUAL VISION. All these things were seen in a vision. Say some of you, "We have no visions now." How can we have? We may eat and drink all visions away. The glutton and the drunkard can have nothing but nightmare. A materialistic age can only have a materialistic religion. We may

grieve the Spirit, quench the Spirit; we may so eat and drink and live as to divest the mind of its wings. It may be true that the vision has ceased within a narrow sense, but not in its true spiritual intent. Even now we speak about strong impressions, unaccountable impulses, uncontrollable desires, unexpected combinations of events. What if the religious mind should see in such realities the continued Presence and Vision which gladdened the early Church? IV. As DEMONSTRATING THAT CHRISTIANITY DOES NOT MERELY ALTER A MAN'S INTELLECTUAL VIEWS OR MODIFY A MAN'S MORAL PREJUDICES. Christianity never makes a little alteration in a man's thinking and action. Christianity makes new hearts, new creatures. Other reformers may change a habit now and again, may modify a prejudice, attemper a purpose with some benign and gracious intent; but this Redeemer wants us to be born again. "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature; old things have passed away, and all things have become new." There drop from his eyes "as it were scales," and, with a pure heart, he sees a pure God. *(Ibid.)* *Saul's conversion*:—Three distinct lines of thought appear in this lesson, each concentered in a person—Saul, Ananias, and Christ. I. Let us notice the STEPS IN SAUL'S CONVERSION, and find in them the story of every seeking soul. 1. Sin. We see in Saul an open, active, determined, and cruel enemy of Christ. We see a persistent enemy resisting the convictions of the Holy Spirit, kicking against the pricks of his own conscience, yet an honest, sincere enemy. "I did it ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Tim. i. 13). 2. Conviction. Saul's conviction was sudden, yet gradual. Gradual, for he had been striving against the influences of the Spirit (ver. 5) ever since he had seen the transfigured face of Stephen; sudden, when the culminating instant came. In a moment he awoke to the consciousness of his guilt. 3. Decision. "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" That sentence marked the crisis of a life, when Saul chose Jesus as his Master. What mighty results followed that instant's decision! 4. Seeking. For three days Saul was in an agony of prayer, seeking the Christ whom he had persecuted. The delay was not because God was unwilling, but because Saul was not yet in the right condition to receive the blessing. 5. Salvation. At last the scales fell from his eyes, and Saul saw Christ, not as his enemy, but as his forgiving Saviour. II. Another line of thought is suggested in ANANIAS, THE HELPER IN SAUL'S CONVERSION. 1. He was a man. God uses men, and not angels, to point souls to salvation. Even Saul of Tarsus, though called by Christ Himself, is taught the way of faith by a fellow-man. 2. He was a believing man. Saved himself, he was able to show others the way of salvation. Only the man who has himself seen the Lord can show Him to others. 3. He was a man of character. Notice what is said of him in chap. xxii. 12. Those who win souls must be men of good report. 4. He was in close and complete communion with Christ, enjoying direct revelation and holding familiar converse with his Lord. He who would have power with men must have power with God. 5. He was an obedient worker, fulfilling the Divine command, even when it sent him into danger; for it seemed perilous to visit a persecutor with the message of the gospel. III. There is also a suggestive subject in CHRIST AS REVEALED IN SAUL'S CONVERSION. 1. A living Christ. Only a little while ago Jesus died on the Cross, and was buried in the sepulchre. Yet now a living form stands forth, saying, "I am Jesus!" 2. A Christ with individual notice. He saw Saul's journey, knew his purpose, and recognised his character. He knew how Saul had striven against the Spirit. He called Saul by name, and called Ananias by name also. Christ in heaven has knowledge of men and events on the earth. 3. A Christ of infinite sympathy with His people. "Why persecutest thou Me?" He felt the blow at His Church more keenly than the spear-thrust into His own body. In all our afflictions as Christians Christ is afflicted. 4. A Christ who sees the best in every man. Ananias saw in Saul only the enemy and the persecutor. Christ saw in him "a chosen vessel" and an apostle. He sees in every soul infinite possibilities. 5. A Christ with transforming power. He can transform Saul into Paul, Stephen's slayer into Stephen's successor, an enemy into a champion. What Christ could do with Saul He can do with any man. *The conversion of Saul*:—Let us regard this—I. As ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY. In the case of the apostle, nothing but evidence the most decisive could have effected such a change, in such a man, and at such a time. 1. He had the common prejudices of a Jew against Christianity and its Founder. 2. He was a Pharisee, and had the peculiarly inveterate prejudices of his sect. 3. He was a man of worldly ambition. 4. His very sincerity as a persecutor proves the power of that evidence which could convert such a man into a disciple. 5. The temper of his mind when the great event occurred which

led to his immediate conversion, was only calculated to indispose him for conviction. On this we remark—(1) That he could not be deceived, either in the light or in the voice; or, supposing that to have been barely possible with him, yet, surely, not with those who accompanied him, at the same time. Nor could he be deceived in the fact of his blindness, and of his supernatural healing by Ananias, who gave him instruction. (2) Nor was he a deceiver. St. Paul was a good man; and that is our security that he would not deceive. If he were not a good man, where shall we look for one? But if he were a good man, then is the account true, for he could not have been deceived; and Jesus did meet him in the way, and the religion of Christ is from God. II. As showing the power and grace of the Saviour. This was manifested—1. As to the Church—(1) By the conversion of its destroyer. (2) By the revelation of its oneness with Christ, and His intense interest in it. "Why persecutest thou Me?" 2. As to Paul himself, we see it in the illumination of his mind, in the extinction of his worldly temper, the conquest of the love of applause, the moral strength that was communicated. III. As furnishing important practical lessons. We are reminded—1. That love is the test of religion. 2. That our salvation is of God. 3. That true religion implies conversion—the change of the whole character. 4. That the end of a thing is better than the beginning of it. 5. Let us be thankful that God raised up this great light for His Church. Let us study his writings, and imbibe their spirit. Let us glorify God in him. (*R. Watson.*) *The conversion of Paul:*—I. Its circumstances. 1. It was without any preliminary preparation or special instruction. 2. It was without human instrumentality. 3. It was attended with a miraculous display of light and sound of words. 4. The physical effect of these displays: blindness and prostration. II. Its nature. A sudden and entire change in his views of Christ. 1. He had previously regarded Him as a mere man, as a bad man, unfaithful to His ancestral religion, and as an impostor, one falsely pretending to be the Messiah. Honestly, *i.e.*, really entertaining these views, he thought it his duty to persecute the followers of Jesus, and to arrest the progress of the new religion. 2. This was very wicked because—(1) His views of the Old Testament and its prophecies of the Messiah were due to a carnal state of mind. (2) The evidence of Christ's Divine mission was such that none but a wicked person could reject it. Hence Paul considered himself the chief of sinners—a clear proof that honesty of conviction does not exonerate. 3. These false views of Christ were instantly rejected. (1) He saw Him to be the Lord, *i.e.*, a Divine Person, the Son of God (Gal. i. 16). (2) He saw Him to be God manifest in the flesh. He believed that Jesus, a man, was the Son of God. (3) He saw that Christ was the promised Messiah. This was the truth that he at once preached (ver. 20). III. Its agency. 1. Not by the outward circumstances. 2. Not by the revelation of Christ to his sense of vision. The wicked at the last day shall see Christ and flee from Him. 3. But by the immediate power of God (Gal. i. 16). So our Lord said to Peter, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father." IV. Its effects. 1. Entire submission and devotion, a willingness to renounce anything, and to do anything that Christ required. 2. This supposes the recognition of Him as God. So Christ became at once the supreme object of worship, love, and zeal. 3. It made him one of the greatest, best, and happiest of men. 4. It secured for him a place among the redeemed in glory. (*C. Hodge, D.D.*) *Paul's conversion a type of the Reformation:*—I. Before both. Christ was persecuted and believers afflicted. II. At both. 1. The light from heaven. 2. Repentance of heart. III. From both. 1. Evangelical preaching in the Church. 2. Evangelical missions in the world. (*K. Gerok.*) *The conversion of St. Paul:*—1. That blessed war of aggression which Jesus Christ wages upon the evil one is a war which is made to maintain itself. Christ's soldiers are His captured enemies. Perhaps the most notable instance of this is the conversion of Saul. Jesus Christ never encountered a bitterer or an abler foe; never won a mightier captain for His army. This conversion brought to the Church immediate rest from persecution, and prepared for the ultimate extension of a free gospel to the world at large. 2. Now, the important fact, that such a man suddenly abandoned the Pharisaic theology and became the Church's foremost preacher, amply justifies the detail with which the story is here related. The immediate occasion of Saul's change of life was quite as exceptional as the change itself was eventful. It was no ordinary case of a man led to believe in Jesus Christ through the evidence of others, the testimony of the Church, or the force of spiritual need. It was quite unique—a case which has no parallel. The agent in this man's conversion was not a mortal man, his fellow. It was the Lord

Jesus Christ Himself, who called him personally. The apparition was not an inward vision such as appeared afterwards to Ananias. It was a veritable return of Him who went up from the Mount of Olives. And this personal manifestation of Him whom the heavens had received, is, I suppose, solitary in Christian history. The evidence is therefore exceptionally strong. Of course such a transaction cannot be compared with public events, like the death or resurrection of Jesus, to which many could testify. Here there could be no eye or ear witness but one. His evidence alone is to be had, and it is explicit. For it was upon the fact that he had personally seen his risen Master, as the other apostles saw Him, that Paul rested his claim to the privileges of apostleship. And the evidence of Paul was confirmed by the vision of Ananias, and was accepted as conclusive by the Church of Christ at the time. 3. Now, I suppose it may be due to the emphasis laid on this solitary appearance of Christ that so little has been told us of the internal history of the conversion. But who can tell the spiritual processes of any conversion? and why should we pry too curiously into the mysterious, secret place where, under cover of the darkness, the Spirit of God broods over the soul whom He will renew with His great grace into the likeness of the Eternal Son? The general nature of the change, however, which passed over Saul, is, I think, to be pretty well made out from what we know of the man before and after. Up to the moment when the glory smote him, this man was a Hebrew of the extremest type, and it needs no great insight to see that, to such a man, the preaching of repentance and faith in the Cross of a crucified deliverer from sin must have been simply gall and wormwood. So he flung himself into the work of stamping out this hateful heresy. Yet, all the while, I think it probable that Saul's mind was not quite at ease. I gather from the first words Jesus spoke to him, as he lay upon the road, that all had not been quite serene in the soul of the persecutor. Jesus had, ere this, been trying to get him into the right way. Some words heard in controversy, some meek victim's patience as he haled him to prison, some great craving of his own heart, some breath, in a quiet hour, from the Spirit of God—something must have stirred within this man, who looked, to other men, so resolute, and who told himself he was so right, a suspicion that, after all, the Nazarene might not be altogether wrong. And Saul had kicked against these pricks. Ah, which of us, from our own experience, cannot understand his case? To which of us has it never happened, that when we were well contented with our religious state, some ghastly doubt looked up all of a sudden and troubled us; some fear lest, after all, our standing might not turn out to be so very safe, and our religion so very real? But suddenly, in the glare of light that covered the scene at noon, a man appeared whom Saul believed to be a dead impostor. And the shock given to his whole being was as awful as it was sudden. Everything in the narrative speaks of instantaneous and utter collapse. We trace it in the few and timid words which he is able to stammer out. "Who art Thou, Lord? What shall I do?" If Jesus was the living God, then he, Saul, had always been rotten, hopelessly rotten. The old is shattered for ever; it lives no more. Gamaliel's pupil, the Sanhedrin inquisitor, the blameless Pharisee, the slayer of Stephen—this old man is dead. 4. What were the meditations which filled up these three days before he began to pray? We do not know. But I think we shall not err if we concede the grand discovery of these days to have been the discovery of a spiritual law which condemned his legal righteousness as being, in his own later words, loss and dung. He needed no man now to tell him that his way of pleasing God, as he thought, had been a hideous blunder, since he had absolutely laid persecuting hands on Christ, thinking he was doing God service. Back through all his past life, his memory must have gone, discovering, bit by bit, that what he had called righteousness became, to his astonished soul, pride, discharity, sin; what he had called gain became utter spiritual loss. And in the end, when the need of atoning blood to wash such sin away, and bring Divine forgiveness, grew up within his soul into clear consciousness, then, at last, indeed, he began to look up out of his prostration and collapse. God began to reveal His Son in him by giving him the first hint of the Spirit of adoption. His mind reverted for help, turned round about in his loneliness to the names of those very disciples down in his notebook that he had come to arrest, and now, in a sweet vision, he seemed to see one of these friends of Jesus come into the home where he lay helpless and in darkness, and give him light. See how Jesus Christ must smite down that He may lift up. He first came in person by the way and brought judgment, darkness, horror, and almost death. He came now, the second time, by the gentle words of His humble servant, came by the blessed sacrament of His Church, and so coming

He brought light, peace, and the hope and desire of a new and better life. Conclusion: St. Paul's conversion substantially is repeated in the history of ten thousand souls. 1. The same appalling discovery that the exterior observance of piety which one took for righteousness is no righteousness, but dead works, because not animated by the spirit of love to God, has been made times upon times since Paul made it. And if it is not often that God's disclosure of Himself bursts upon a man with such violent catastrophe as here, it will be your highest wisdom to see whether or not you have made the Pauline discovery, and learned the Pauline lesson. 2. One unexpected day has often revolutionised a life. We all live in the presence of spiritual forces, which may, at any moment, get unlooked-for access to us. A stray word, a new acquaintance, a book you open, some sudden disaster, may prove, before you know it, the very turning of your history. But let none be idle waiters on critical moments in Providence. "Seek the Lord while He may be found." (*J. O. Dykes, D.D.*) *The conversion of St. Paul:*—I. ITS CIRCUMSTANCES. 1. In the Bible proper names frequently had meanings. Now this Saul, or Shaul in Hebrew, and especially in Arabic, means not only asked for, but to seek diligently or to be sought out. And here you have in the very name the history of every sinner who comes to God; he is not one who is seeking God first, but one who is sought for. Was it not the case even with Abraham? "And He said, Abraham, Abraham; and he answered, Here am I." Did Moses call God first, or seek for God? Far from it; "Moses, Moses; and he said, Here am I." 2. In what state was this Shaul at the moment he was sought out? "Yet breathing out threatenings," &c. Such a man cannot have been in his sound senses. And you may see his own candid confession of that (chap. xxvi.). I "compelled them to blaspheme." I experienced something of this lately at Cairo. From eleven o'clock in the night till three o'clock I was with several Jews, who continually tried me to say "only once, only once, curse the name of Jesus." And why did he do this? "Being exceedingly mad against them." And it is said—"*yet* breathing out." Why yet? Something must have gone on before, which might have changed his opinions and his conduct. And many such things went before, but without use to him. The Son of God nailed on the Cross had fulfilled every prophecy regarding His sufferings. Here is Stephen praying amidst the shower of stones, "Lay not this siu to their charge"; a thinking mind, like Paul's, one should suppose would have been struck with this. And he "went unto the high priest." He had the approbation of the ecclesiastical authorities. We can have the approbation of the world and the orthodox churchmen, and yet be still far from God. He desired of him letters that if he found any of this way. I was often struck with this expression, when I heard the Arabs speaking about religion; they do not say "the religion of Jesus," but "I want to know your way"—"What is your way?" And do we not often find this the case in England? Speak to men about vital conversion, and they answer, "Oh! I am not of that way." 3. "And suddenly." We find often that the grace of God comes suddenly. And so we find frequently that genius is awakened. An Italian forty years of age lived at Rome, and went every day to St. Peter's, but he never was struck with the masterpieces of Raphael; but one day he went there, and suddenly struck with them his genius awakened, and he exclaimed, "I am also a painter"; and from that moment he became the great painter Correggio. So very often the grace of God comes. A man is journeying on and on carelessly towards eternity, when, suddenly struck by the grace of God, he exclaims, "I am also a sinner ransomed." Paul saw a light—that described Isaiah—"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light"—"the Sun of Righteousness." "And he fell to the earth." I had an exact illustration of this when I was brought to Turkisthaun in slavery. After I was ransomed, the dungeons of hundreds of slaves were opened; these poor people had not seen the daylight for many months, and when they so suddenly were brought into it, they were so struck that several were as if they were going to fall down; they were overpowered. "Oh!" they said, "we cannot see the light, it is too powerful." So it is with people, when they are so suddenly overpowered with this "light from heaven." It makes such an impression upon them, that they cannot bear it. "And he heard a voice, saying unto him." We see our Lord does not use much learning or much eloquence to put down a man, to bring him to Himself, but very few words. I read this chapter to a Persian several years ago, a man of great powers; and he said, "There is one thing I find in Christianity which I do not find in our religion; it is a religion of the heart, it speaks to the heart." And this he found in these very words, in which here our Lord asks of Saul—"Saul, Saul!"

—thou who art sought out, thou sought for, thou whom I am seeking like a mother her child, like a father his wayward child—"why persecutest thou Me?" What a striking contrast! In the first verse it is said, "Yet breathing out threatenings against the disciples"; but here the Lord asks, "Why persecutest thou Me?" Persecute the mother, the child will feel it; persecute the child, the mother will feel it. And for this reason only the Christian religion deserves the name of religion. What is religion? To bind again together man to God. "And he said, Who art Thou, Lord?"—at once confessing his ignorance, as every one struck by the grace of God will do. As long as we think ourselves wise we shall never come to the truth. But here—"who art Thou?" Very modest; he did not know Him, though he persecuted Him. But he felt His power, and therefore he called Him "Lord." "And the Lord said, I am Jesus"—Jehoshua, God the Saviour. This is very affectionate. "I am not come here to destroy thee, though thou hast persecuted Me; I am still Jesus." Whilst you may not yet believe in Him, it is Jesus, the Saviour, who came to seek those that were lost. "And he, trembling and astonished, said"—How natural this is! How little an infidel, however clever, knows or understands the Bible! Schiller says, "We are still in want of a kind of Linné for the human heart"—*i.e.*, in want of a person to give us a development of the human heart, as that celebrated Linné did of the natural kingdom. Now if he had only studied the history of Paul, he would have found a development of the human heart. A man who had stood for many days near a precipice, and never knew that he was near it, but had his eyes suddenly opened and was instantly snatched away from it—he must "tremble." But a real believer does not remain trembling. "And he, trembling and astonished, said"—not, "Now I will go and read the books of our Rabbis"; and a really awakened sinner would not say, I will go and read Paley, or Dr. Adam Clarke or other writers on the evidences; but like Paul, "Lord! what wilt Thou have me to do?" verifying those words of our Lord, "Except ye be converted and become as little children," &c. A little child does not say, I must speculate to get a thing from my father; but it asks him for it. Now see how the Lord takes him by the hand. "And the Lord said unto him, Arise." 4. Let us pursue this history. Here you will see how a real believer has to suffer, and from a quarter where he does not expect it—from believers. What has the Jew to expect when he once boldly confesses the name of Jesus? Mistrust from a quarter where he ought not to experience it—from believers. If Ananias had lived in our time, they would have called him a cautious and prudent man. Now let us hear the answer of the Lord: "Go thy way"—(for "His ways are not our ways, neither are His thoughts our thoughts"); that very Saul who was going about "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" is "a chosen vessel." In Arabic, Paul means an instrument; he was a Shaul, a sought-out—he is now a Paul, an instrument, "a chosen vessel to bear My name." And now Ananias at last was convinced. II. ITS RESULT. "And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales." At first he was like the blind man, who was receiving his sight; things were still indistinct to him, and he "saw men like trees walking"; but now that there fell upon him the Holy Ghost, he conceived what it is to be a Christian, was baptized, and joined the disciples. "And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues." When the believer enters a beautiful garden he invites others to enter. "Straightway"—no round-aboutery. And a believer is not ashamed; he preaches Him who had been "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence." III. THIS HISTORY IS A TYPE (1 Tim. i. 16)—1. Of the conversion of the Jewish nation. He was "one born out of due time." And so in every century one has seen Jews "born out of due time." In the middle ages there was Sixtus Senensis, a Jew at Rome, whose writings still exist, and from whom we may say that the most spiritual part of the Roman Catholic Church, the Jansenists, still derive all their Biblical knowledge. So De Lyra was the teacher of Luther. And so in our time. 2. Of the future conversion of the nation. He was a Saul, a sought-out; and to Jerusalem it is said, "Thou shalt be called sought-out, a city not forsaken." The light "shone round about him from heaven"; and to Jerusalem it shall be said, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." And as the Apostle Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, so my nation shall be the great national apostle to the Gentile world; "and Gentiles shall come to Thy light, and kings to the brightness of Thy rising." And as there was peace in the Church at the time of the conversion of Saul, so "thy walls, O Jerusalem, shall be called Peace, and thy governors Righteousness." (*J. Wolff, LL.D.*) *The conversion of St. Paul*:—I. THE CONVERSION ITSELF. 1.

It was an improbable event. 2. It was miraculous in its circumstances, and as such is a proof of the gospel. Because (1) No rational solution other than that he gives can be given for it. It was not a delusion, nor a deception. (2) It proves Christ's resurrection, and therewith the whole gospel. (3) It authenticates Paul's doctrine as a supernatural revelation from Christ. 3. Though miraculous in its circumstances it was normal in its essentials. (1) As to the nature of the change. (2) As to the means by which it is effected. (3) As to the evidences of its sincerity. II. THE STATE OF MIND EXPRESSED. It included—1. Entire abnegation of self. He sought not his own (1) Advancement; (2) Enjoyment; (3) Improvement. 2. Absolute submission to Christ's authority. (1) Not his own will. (2) Not that of friends, rulers, or the world. (3) But Christ alone had authority to determine and direct his course. 3. Entire consecration to the service of Christ. (1) Readiness to do His will. (2) Willingness that He should determine not only the service, but the field and the circumstances. III. THE MEANS BY WHICH IT WAS PRODUCED. 1. The revelation of Christ. This was—(1) External; but this was not all, for He was thus revealed to thousands. (2) To the reason. A rational conviction was produced. (3) Spiritual, effected by Christ's Spirit, and consisting in spiritual manifestation. 2. The truth revealed was the Divinity of Christ. Because—(1) He is called Lord. (2) Because in Gal. i. 16 he says, "It pleased God to reveal His Son in me." (3) Because of the analogy between this revelation and that on the Mount of Transfiguration. (4) Because Paul makes conversion consist in knowing Christ. (5) From its effects. (*C. Hodge, D.D.*) *The progress of St. Paul's conversion*:—I. THE FIRST IMPRESSION. The deep feeling of his spiritual inability (ver. 8). II. THE FIRST SIGNS OF LIFE (ver. 11). III. THE FIRST TESTIMONY (ver. 20). IV. THE FIRST EXPERIENCE (ver. 23). (*Jaspis.*) *Saul meets with Jesus*:—I. SPIRITUAL CRISIS. Saul had now arrived at his spiritual crisis. Such a crisis has occurred in the lives of most great reformers, and at these moments they become absorbingly interesting. Buddha waiting for the final illumination under his wisdom tree; Mohammed in the caves of the desert; Luther in the monk's cell; Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus—each in his own way was having that last desperate encounter with the past and its outworn traditions, which was to fit him to be the religious pioneer of the future. Such a passage from the old to the new may be fitly called conversion. Most of us may have known something like it. Not that every one must pass through an intellectual or spiritual convulsion. Some souls seem to grow like flowers; some leap like cataracts. There are halcyon as well as earthquake natures; there are neutral-tinted people who never seem to rise or fall very much; there are well-balanced people set in harmonious conditions who develop day by day, and never know the shocks of sudden change. II. HINDRANCES TO SPIRITUAL PROGRESS. In most of us there is a bar, and that bar has to be passed or the soul will languish. 1. Pleasure is one man's bar. Till he recognises something above pleasure he will make no way. A noble cause or enthusiasm at last lays hold upon him, and he counts pleasure lost for the first time that he may compass the new ideal. He postpones appetite, he learns self-sacrifice. The bar is passed. 2. Another drifts. Indecision, want of purpose, is his bar. The love of a pure, strong, tender woman delivers him; or the companionship of a high-minded friend steadies and directs his aims. 3. Another is an idolater of self. His horizon is hopelessly narrowed in, and there is no progress until you get out of that dismal, vicious circle. Responsibility, interests, loves and lives of others, sense of a spiritual world—in one word, God and religion in some form awakening Divine echoes, sounding undreamed-of depths within, such a revelation may come upon you with a shock. The expulsive power of a noble affection, the absorbing power of a good cause, the emancipating and illuminating power of a Divine sentiment may be the terms of your conversion. 4. Saul's bar was intellectual pride and self-sufficiency. In politics this obstinate habit breeds the State despot, the man who would sacrifice party, principle, country. In religion it produces the fanatic. The Son of God may hang on a tree; Stephen with the angel face may be stoned; Savonarola and Huss may be stoned. III. DIVINE LEADINGS. There came a day when Paul wept to remember how Saul had persecuted the Church of Christ. But at present he breathes nothing but threatenings and slaughter, and is off to Damascus on his cruel purpose. But on that lonesome journey Saul thinks—1. "'Tis an odious business, this. Is it a duty? *My* duty! My Master Gamaliel used to say, 'Let them alone,' &c. Ah! he was too mild. One must not tolerate insult to the Holy Temple and the Law." So Gamaliel was pushed aside. 2. Saul thinks: "This Jesus. Why did the people

hear Him? A magician of words it seems, mistaken at first for an eloquent Rabbi—most cursed perversion of talent. That He who spoke the story of the prodigal, which the very children now prattle, should have uttered that hateful tale of the vineyard—that was aimed at our holy rules; a poisoned tongue, an insidious, treacherous Rabbi that Jesus: His viper brood of disciples must be stamped out; 'tis the will of God." And so Jesus was pushed aside. 3. Then once again Saul thinks as the face of the murdered Stephen rises before him: "Such an one with the makings of a good Haggadist, but hopelessly tainted. Is it not written, 'The poison of asps is under their lips'? yet did not his looks belie his iniquity? We judged him, he seemed to be judging us. 'Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears.' Monstrous brazen-tongued heretic, or visionary—which? Yes, he saw a vision. I would that face had not been crushed in so bloody a death. But no, it was expedient that one man died for the people. We have stamped the thing out in Jerusalem by that stroke. Yet his smile, his prayer—last fraud of the tempter. Thou hadst Stephen in thy toils—thou shalt not take me so easily." And with this did Saul smite his jaded steed, as Balaam did his, and for a like reason. On! on! he fiercely spurred, and again his poor beast kicked against the pricks, as he was himself kicking against the pricks of a Divine Master, who sought to guide him whither he would not go. Suddenly his brain reels—like an over-bent bow gives in a moment—he staggers on horseback—the bolt seems to fall from the blue. Is it thunder? Is it a voice? Is it a light?—aye, "above the brightness of the sun," but it leaves Saul in darkness. Jesus has met him by the way. (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) *Conversion by the vision of Christ*:—In the middle of July, 1719, Colonel Gardiner, who was then leading a most licentious life, had spent the evening of a Sunday in some gay company, and had an assignation with a married woman at midnight. The company broke up at eleven, and while he was waiting for the hour of twelve, he took up a book to pass away the time. As he was reading, he saw an unusual blaze of light fall on the page, and looking up he saw before him, as it were suspended in the air, a representation of our Blessed Lord on the Cross, surrounded by a glory. At the same instant he heard a voice saying, "O sinner, did I suffer this for thee, and are these the returns?" The vision filled him with unutterable astonishment and agony of heart; and pierced by a sense of his ingratitude to God, he from that moment forsook his evil life. *The completeness of St. Paul's conversion*:—Is it not beautiful to see how Paul forgot all his old Pharisaism? All the hard words and bitter blasphemies that he had spoken against Christ, they have all gone in a moment. What strange changes will come over some beings in an instant! One of my students who has been a sailor has preached the gospel for some long time, but his English was far from grammatical. Having been in college some little time he began to speak correctly, but suddenly the old habit returned upon him. He was in the *Princess Alice* at the time of the lamentable catastrophe, and he escaped in an almost miraculous manner. I saw him some time after, and congratulated him on his escape, and he replied that he had saved his life but had lost all his grammar. He found himself for awhile using the language of two or three years ago; and even now he declares that he cannot get back what he had learnt. He seems to have drowned his grammar on that terrible occasion. Now, just as we may lose some good thing by a dreadful occurrence, which seems to sweep over the mind like a huge wave and wash away our treasures, so by a blessed catastrophe, if Christ should meet with any man to-night, much which he has valued will be swept away! You may write on wax, and may make the record fair. Take a hot iron and roll it across the wax, and it is all gone. That seems to me to be just what Jesus did with Paul's heart. It was all written over with blasphemy and rebellion, and He rolled the hot iron of burning love over his soul, and the evil inscription was all gone. He ceased to blaspheme, and he began to praise. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *An inspired vision*:—A poor woman caught by a slave-raiding band in the far interior, and in a moment snatched with a few of her friends from home, from children, from hope, found herself on the march to the coast in the dreadful slave-gang. Day after day, foot-sore and heart-sore, she wended her weary way, until one night in her sleep visions of God came to her. She dreamed she was in a larger room than she had ever seen; and at one end of it there was a man with a white face, whose words gave her great comfort. She rose the next morning with heart relieved, a pilgrim to a blessed destiny. She did not know what it was to be; she knew that she was a pilgrim to the sunrise. She reached the coast, was there sold, and embarked on board a slaver. The slaver was taken, and a large part, herself included, of the

slave cargo was landed at Fernando Po. A little while after she was taken to our little chapel at Clarence in West Africa. It was the room of her dream. There was the man of her dream, and his message brought the light of immortality to her heart, which never left it. And my story is not ended. That was fifty years ago. She was living a few years since, for Wright Hay told me that whenever he was in any discouragement or difficulty he went to this noble old saint of God, and never left without finding wisdom and help from her saintly counsel. (*S. Chapman.*)

The conversion of Saul:—Look at the mighty mountain lifting its head above the clouds that do but girdle it. How proud and defiant it stands! Far up above the dusty ways of man, clothed in robes of unsullied snow, it seems the very emblem of the unchangeable. Yet every day it is being levelled. The glacier grinds the rock; the frost frets and frays it; the torrents wear away the stones and hollow out the sides. Now rocks are rent from it and go sweeping far into valleys, in turn to be ground into soil, until in time the great mountain that stood bleak and bare is spread into the golden cornfields or into the pastures that are covered with flocks, and where the homesteads look forth from the midst of the trees that screen them, and the happy people laugh and sing. Now that is what the heavenly Father is seeking to do for us by the daily discipline of life, and by the ministry of His grace. He puts Himself within reach of us that He may bring down the pride and selfishness, that He may take away the coldness and hardness, and turn us into love and service and a thousand forms of blessedness. Have faith in God. Take hold of the power of God that is in Christ Jesus that in you the mountain may be made into cornfields. Look at Saul of Tarsus. How like a mountain did he stand! How proud, how defiant, how high he carried his head! And like the mountain, too, how the black storms gathered around him, and the lightnings blazed, how the thunders lowered and crashed, and the cruel torrents roared and raged in their fury! It is a volcano that rises before us whence flow the streams of fire. But lo! there comes the grace of God. He is broken, transformed. Listen how long after he writes to the little flock to whom he had ministered: "We were gentle among you even as a nurse cherisheth her own children, so being affectionately desirous of you we were willing to have imparted unto you not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were become very dear unto us." The persecuting Saul is turned into an apostle of love. Faith has cast out the mountain and transformed it into the cornfields and pastures. Now we are to take hold of the grace of God to do like wonders within us. We have no business to talk about our nature, we have to think about the almighty power of God. (*M. G. Pearse.*)

God's method of converting men:—Etienne de Grellet says he required a reason for everything from a child. God, however, chose His own way in his conversion. He was walking in the fields, under no kind of religious concern, when he was suddenly arrested by what seemed to be an awful voice, crying, "Eternity! eternity! eternity!" It reached his very soul. His whole frame shook, and, like Saul, he fell to the ground. He cried out, "If there is a God, doubtless there is a hell." For long he seemed to hear the thundering proclamation, and was eventually led to decision. *A sudden conversion:*—I knew a young woman who was brought to God very suddenly. She was busily engaged singing a profane song, when a flash of lightning seemed to pass through the room she occupied, illuminating the place with a sudden, supernatural light; then followed a deep, loud roll of thunder, and the young woman, feeling as if in the presence of God, fell upon her knees confessing her sins and crying for mercy. Sins, which hitherto she had not felt to be sins, seemed to stand up and condemn her; she felt that there was no safety for her except through the blood of Jesus; and Christ, the merciful Saviour, accepted her. *Conversions may be quite sudden in their beginnings:*—In December the days grow shorter till the twenty-first, the shortest day, when, at a precise moment, the sun pauses and begins to return towards the north. And then, though the days are constantly growing longer, and the sun coming nearer, yet for weeks there is no apparent change. The snow lies heavy upon the earth. There are neither leaves, nor blossoms, nor singing birds; nothing to mark the summer time which is surely advancing. But at length the ground begins to relax in the sunny places, and the snows melt, and warm winds blow from the south, and buds swell, and flowers spring, and ere long there is the bloom and glory of June. So there is a precise moment when the soul pauses in its departure from God, and begins to return towards Him. The fruits of that return may not be at once visible; there may be long interior conflicts before the coldness and deadness of the heart is overcome; but at length the good will triumph, and

instead of winter and desolation, all the Christian graces will spring up in the summer of Divine love. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The battle of Damascus*:—I. THE ENEMIES. 1. Saul breathing vengeance with his armed followers, and his weapons of human learning and carnal zeal. 2. Christ the Crucified and Exalted One, with the marks of His wounds and in His heavenly glory; behind Him crowds of angels, among whom is joy over one sinner that repenteth. II. THE FIGHT. 1. Christ attacks. 2. Saul defends himself. III. THE VICTORY. 1. Saul surrenders. 2. Christ triumphs. IV. THE SPOIL. "He shall have the strong for a prey." Saul is led away a prisoner, not to death, but to life. V. THE JOYFUL TE DEUM OF THE CHURCH. (*K. Gerok.*) *The great day of Damascus*:—I. ITS TROUBLED AND STORMY MORNING. II. ITS HOT AND THUNDERY NOON. III. ITS QUIET AND BLESSED EVENING. (*Ibid.*) *The proud rider unhorsed*:—Damascus still stands with a population of 135,000. It was a gay city of white and glistering architecture; its domes playing with the light of the morning sun; embowered in groves of olive, and palm, and citron, and orange, and pomegranate; a famous river plunging its brightness into the scene—a city by the ancients styled "a pearl surrounded by emeralds." A group of horsemen are advancing. Let the Christians of the place hide, for they are persecutors; their leader, as leaders sometimes are, insignificant in person—witness Napoleon and Dr. Archibald Alexander. But there is something very intent in the eye of the man, and the horse he rides is lathered with the foam of a long and quick travel of one hundred and thirty-five miles. He cries, "Go 'long" to his steed, for those Christians must be captured and that religion annihilated. Suddenly the horses shy off and plunge, until the riders are precipitated. A new sun had been kindled, putting out the glare of the ordinary sun. Christ, with the glories of heaven wrapped about Him, looked out from a cloud, and the splendour was insufferable, and no wonder the horses sprang and the equestrians dropped. Struck stone blind, Saul cries out, "Who art Thou, Lord?" And Jesus answered him, "I am the One you have been chasing. He that scourges Christians scourges Me. I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." From that wild, exciting, and overwhelming scene there rises up the greatest preacher of all the ages—Paul, in whose behalf prisons were rocked down; before whom rulers turned pale; into whose hand Mediterranean sea-captains put control of their ship-wrecking craft, and whose epistles are the *avant courier* of a resurrection day. I learn from this scene—I. THAT A WORLDLY FALL SOMETIMES PRECEDES A SPIRITUAL UPLIFTING. A man does not get much sympathy by falling off a horse. People say he ought not to have got into the saddle if he could not ride. Here is Paul on horseback; a proud man riding on with government documents in his pocket; a graduate of a most famous school in which Doctor Gamaliel had been a professor; perhaps having already attained two of the three titles of the school—Rab and Rabbi, and on his way to Rabbak. I know, from his temperament, that his horse was ahead of the other horses. But without time to think of his dignity he is tumbled into the dust. And yet that was the best ride Paul ever took. Out of that violent fall he arose into the illustrious apostleship. So it has been in all the ages. You will never be worth anything for God and the Church until you are somehow thrown and humiliated. You must go down before you go up. Joseph finds his path to the Egyptian court through the pit into which his brothers threw him. Daniel would never have walked amid the bronzed lions that adorned the Babylonish throne if he had not first walked amid the real lions of the cave. Men who have been always prospered may be efficient servants of the world, but will be of no advantage to Christ. II. THAT THE RELIGION OF CHRIST IS NOT A PUSILLANIMOUS THING. People try to make us believe that Christianity is something for men of weak calibre, for women, for children. Look at this man. He was a logician, a metaphysician, an all-conquering orator, a poet of the highest type. I have never found anything in Carlyle, or Goethe, or Herbert Spencer that could compare in strength or beauty with Paul's Epistles. I do not think there is anything in Sir William Hamilton that shows such mental discipline as you find in Paul's argument about justification and resurrection. I have not found anything in Milton finer than Paul's illustrations drawn from the amphitheatre. There was nothing in Emmet pleading for his life, or in Burke arraigning Warren Hastings, that compared with the scene before Agrippa. A religion that can capture a man like that must have some power in it. Where Paul leads, we can afford to follow. I am glad to know that Christ has had in His discipleship a Mozart and a Handel in music; a Raphael and a Reynolds in painting; an Angelo and a Canova in sculpture; a Rush and a Harvey in medicine; a Grotius and a Washington in

statesmanship; a Blackstone, a Marshall, and a Kent in the law; and the time will come when the religion of Christ will conquer all the observatories and universities, and philosophy will, through her telescope, behold the morning star of Jesus, and in her laboratory see that "all things work together for good," and with her geological hammer discern the "Rock of Ages." Oh, instead of cowering when the sceptic talks of religion as though it were a pusillanimous thing, show him the picture of the intellectual giant of all the ages prostrate on the road to Damascus; then ask your sceptic who it was that threw him. Oh, no! it is no weak gospel. It is a glorious, an all-conquering gospel; the power of God unto salvation. III. THAT A MAN CANNOT BECOME A CHRISTIAN UNTIL HE IS UNHORSED. We want to ride into the kingdom of God just as the knight rode into castle gate, on palfrey beautifully caparisoned. We want to come into the kingdom of God in fine style. No crying over sin. No begging at the door of God's mercy. No, we must dismount, go down in the dust, until Christ shall, by His grace, lift us up, as He lifted Paul. IV. THAT THE GRACE OF GOD CAN OVERCOME THE PERSECUTOR. Paul was not going, as a sheriff goes, to arrest a man against whom he has no spite. He breathed out slaughter. Do you think that that proud man on horseback can ever become a Christian? Yes! There is a voice from heaven uttering two words, "Saul! Saul!" That man was saved; and so God can, by His grace, overcome any persecutor. The days of sword and fire for Christians seem to have gone by; but has the day of persecution ceased? No. That woman finds it hard to be a Christian while her husband talks and jeers while she is trying to say her prayers or read the Bible. That daughter finds it hard to be a Christian with the whole family arrayed against her. That young man finds it hard to be a Christian in the shop when his companions jeer at him because he will not go to the gambling hell or the house of shame. But, oh, you persecuted ones, is it not time that you began to pray for your persecutors? They are no prouder, no fiercer than was this persecutor. God can, by His grace, make a Renan believe in the Divinity of Jesus, and a Tyndall in the worth of prayer. John Newton stamped the ship's deck in derisive indignation at Christianity only a little while before he became a Christian. "Out of my house," said a father to his daughter, "if you will keep praying"; and, before many months passed, the father knelt at the same altar with the child. V. THAT THERE IS HOPE FOR THE WORST OFFENDERS. It was particularly outrageous that Saul should have gone to Damascus on that errand. The life and death of Jesus was not an old story as it is now. He heard parts of it recited every day by people who were acquainted with all the circumstances; and yet, in the fresh memory of that scene, he goes to persecute Christ's disciples. Oh, he was the chief of sinners. No outburst of modesty when he said that. He was a murderer. And yet the grace of God saved him, and so it will you. There is mercy for you who say you are too bad to be saved. You say you have put off the matter so long. Paul had neglected it a great while. You say that the sin you have committed has been amid the most aggravating circumstances. That was so with Paul. You say you have exasperated Christ, and coaxed your own ruin. So did Paul; and yet he sits to-day on one of the highest of the heavenly thrones. VI. THAT THERE IS A TREMENDOUS REALITY IN RELIGION. If it had been a mere optical delusion over the road to Damascus, Paul was just the man to find it out. If it had been a sham and pretence, he would have pricked the bubble. And when I see him overwhelmed, I say there must have been something in it. And, my dear brother, you will find that there is something in religion in one of three places, either in earth, or in heaven, or in hell. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *The difficulties in the narrative*:—There are three accounts of the conversion of St. Paul, and they are all in this book. The first is the account of Luke here; the two others are by Paul himself—one to an infuriated mob in chap. xxii., the other before Agrippa in chap. xxvi. Let us—I. EXAMINE THE APPARENT DISCREPANCIES IN DETAIL. 1. In one account the companions of Saul fell to the ground; in the other they stood wondering and astonished. But—(1) It is not at all unlikely that in the journey from Jerusalem some were on horseback and some on foot. This is the common way of making up companies in the East. I once saw a caravan, coming out of the desert into Cairo; some were upon camels, some on asses, many were walking. They had all been to Mecca and back. Those who fell, therefore, in one narrative would be those mounted; those who stood in the other would be the travellers on foot. (2) But, again, at the first shock all might have fallen, and those who were the farthest from the centre might have sooner recovered themselves, and have been standing astonished even when Saul was still lying upon the

earth. 2. In one account it is said the companions of Saul did not hear the voice that spake, and in another that they did hear. Now, do you think that twelve men of common honesty and common sense would find much difficulty if there was such a discrepancy as this between two witnesses who were giving their evidence before them? The slightest cross-examination would bring out the fact that in the one case what was heard was a sound, something inarticulate, mysterious, and that in the other they did not hear the words, the distinct utterance that was given. And further, the difference in the word "voice" in the two passages involves this explanation. In the one case the import is that they heard (the sound) "of the voice"; in the other, that they did not hear "the voice" itself—what was said. 3. In one account Ananias is described as "a disciple," and all that he says, and all that is said of him, is in harmony with that; in another account he is described as "a devout man according to the law," and everything that is said of him, and that he says, is in harmony with that. Well, the one account is not contradictory to, but only supplementary of, the other. But besides that, there is beauty and propriety in the different way in which Ananias is spoken of in the two cases. In the first case, where he is spoken of as being "a disciple," is in St. Luke's history of him. St. Luke was a Christian writer, writing a Christian history for Christian people, and therefore he naturally put forward the Christian side of Ananias. In the other case St. Paul is addressing an infuriated Jewish mob, all zealous for the law. With admirable tact, therefore, he endeavours to conciliate them, and he naturally puts before them Ananias' Jewish side. 4. In one case it is said that Jesus directed Paul to go into the city, and "it should be told him what he must do"; but when he is addressing Agrippa, Paul himself seems to speak as if Jesus had said to him a great deal more. Paul, I think, did not receive at the moment of his conversion, from the lips of Jesus, all that he says to Agrippa; but he did receive it all, either direct from Christ or through Ananias as commissioned by Him. In addressing Agrippa his one object was fully to set before him his apostolic commission. The substance and the source of the truth were what was important; and Paul, without attenuating his address by enumerating times and places and circumstances, exercises his common sense in so putting the matter before the king as to fix his attention on the authority and the scope of the ministry he exercised. II. SOME OBSERVATIONS ARISING OUT OF THEM. Note —1. The nature and characteristics of human testimony. If two witnesses express themselves precisely in the same language, word for word, it is suspicious. What we look for is substantial agreement with circumstantial variations; such variations constitute, not the weakness, but the strength of the testimony. We have human testimony in this book. Inspiration in respect to some things was necessarily verbal, but, had it always been that, you could never have two accounts of anything. And, moreover, if the guiding inspiration had to be such that every word was to be exactly just that which was uttered, then you have no human agent, with his freedom and intelligence, giving his evidence, but exclusively the dictations of the presiding mind, and these mechanically conveyed. A mere automaton might have been set in motion to do that. On this hypothesis the Bible might have been photographed, and that, too, in human language, by a Divinely-directed, material force. You have something better than that. You have Divine thought; but you have that communicated by conscious and active minds. Of course, if we had the witnesses before us, we should soon be able, by a little cross-examination, to harmonise their statements. 2. These three different accounts were all written by the same hand. Though the first account only is in the words of Luke, the others being in the words of St. Paul, yet Luke wrote them all down; they lay before his eye; he could compare them as we do. Luke was a man of education and intelligence; of disciplined faculty and sound judgment. Now, if he had included what was inherently contradictory in a book written for the express purpose that those who read it should know the certainty of the things in which they had been instructed, do you suppose that he would not be conscious of the discrepancy? And do you not see that it was in his power to remove it? He could easily have made the accounts harmonise. But he did not think it worth while to do it. (*T. Binney.*)

Ver. 4. **He fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?**—*The Lord's word*:—I. CONSOLATION. This word is a two-edged sword; it carries comfort to those who are within, and reproof to those who are without. It is spoken to an adversary; but it is spoken for a friend. The first comfort given to fallen man was in a word spoken to his destroyer (Gen. iii. 15),

In the same way Israel was comforted, "Touch not Mine anointed," &c. Here, too, the Head will sustain the members by a reproof addressed to the Master. I scarcely know a more comforting word than this. Nowhere is the oneness of Christ and His disciples more clearly expressed. The Speaker is not now the Man of Sorrows: all power has been given into His hands. As you experience pain when any member of your body is hurt, so Christ cries out when an enemy's hand strikes some poor saint in Damascus. For this is the privilege of all Christians. Safety is secured, and therefore measured, by the power, not of the saved, but of the Saviour. The Queen's flag is the ægis of the tender woman as well as the stalwart warrior, and woe to the man who strikes either. Let Saul venture to say, Lord, when did we persecute Thee? The King shall answer, "Inasmuch as ye did it," &c. Here is my safety—I am His, part of Himself. We shall be able by and by to number up God's mercies, and nothing will be sweeter than the discovery of those signal rescues which Christ has achieved for us while we, like an infant sleeping in a burning house, were aware neither of the flame that was already singeing our garments nor of the strong arm of that brother who bore us beyond its reach. II. REPROOF. While the word carries consolation to the disciples, it bears terrible reproof to adversaries. Mark here—1. That although Saul is an enemy to Jesus, Jesus is no enemy to Saul, and the word is spoken not to cast him out, but to melt him down, and so win him near. In His glory, as in His humiliation, Jesus being reviled reviles not again. He draws a clear distinction between the converted and the unconverted, but it does not lie in that the first are received and the second rejected, but in this, that those who are already near are cherished as dear children, and the distant prodigals are invited to turn and live. Nor can we be surprised at this generosity. If, when we were His enemies, He won us, we cannot wonder that the door is still open for those who are without. 2. The form of the address betrays the tenderness of Jesus. The repetition of the name expresses sharp condemnation and tender pity. When you intend simple approval or disapproval you call the name only once; when you intend to condemn and win back you duplicate the call. "John" may be the prelude to either praise or blame, but "John, John," always means that he is doing evil, and that you mean him good (see John xx. 16; *cf.* Luke x. 41, 42). It is the double call that Christ is addressing to the world to-day; at the great day it will be single—Depart ye cursed, or Come ye blessed. 3. In Saul's case the redoubled stroke was effectual. He grieved for the sin that was rebuked, and accepted the mercy that was offered. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *The persecutor*:—I. IT IS THE GENERAL CHARACTER OF UNCONVERTED MEN TO BE OF A PERSECUTING SPIRIT. "Cain," says Luther, "will kill Abel to the end of the world." Speaking of Ishmael and Isaac, the apostle observes, "As then he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the spirit, even so it is now." The more zealous and holy believers are, so much the more will the malice of wicked men be levelled against them (Gal. iv. 29; James v. 6: 1 John iii. 12, 13). There are, however, different kinds and degrees of persecution. Though we are not in danger of bonds and imprisonments, yet the enmity of the wicked will show itself, either by injuries, unneighbourly treatment, vulgar abuse, or by one means or another. The Church of Christ has always been as a lily among thorns, or like a bush on fire, but not consumed (Psa. lv. 21; Acts xxii. 4; Heb. xi. 35–39). II. CHRIST HAS HIS EYE UPON PERSECUTORS, AND IS ACQUAINTED WITH ALL THEIR WAYS. He also views things in their proper light, and calls them by their proper names. What Saul called doing God's service, He calls persecution. There is not a step which His enemies take but He marks it well, nor a pain His servants feel but He beholds it with an eye of pity. Saul is on his way to Damascus, unobserved by the disciples, who were now accounted as sheep for the slaughter: but the Shepherd of the flock sees the enemy coming to devour, and stops him in his wild career. III. THE KINDNESS OR INJURIES DONE TO HIS PEOPLE, CHRIST CONSIDERS AS DONE TO HIMSELF. Let persecutors think of this and tremble. The union between Christ and His people is intimate and endearing; it is like that between the vine and its branches, between the head and the members. If the branch be cut off, the vine will bleed; and when one member suffers, the members suffer with it, and also the head! The same love that induced the Redeemer to suffer for His people, constrains Him to suffer with them. Christ is more tender of His body mystical than He was of His body natural, and is more sensible of His members' sufferings than He was of His own. Amidst all the cruel treatment He Himself met with, he never said, "Why scourge ye Me? why crucify ye Me? But when Saul threatened destruction to His disciples, He calls to him from

heaven, "Why persecutest thou Me?" IV. CHRIST'S CALL TO THE PERSECUTOR WAS TO CONVINCE HIM OF SIN, AND THIS IS THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS CONVERSION. This lays the foundation of repentance and faith; for we cannot repent of sin while insensible of its evil nature, nor do the whole need a physician, but they that are sick. Saul trembled at the voice which spake to him, and being astonished at the number and magnitude of his sins, as well as at the forbearance and compassion of the Saviour, cried out, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" He is now willing to be directed, and to obey Christ as his Lord. V. THE CALLS OF CHRIST ARE EARNEST AND PARTICULAR. From among the rest of mankind He singles out the man towards whom He has designs of mercy. Thus He chose Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom, and Zaccheus, whom curiosity had led up into a sycamore tree. And of the company that were going to Damascus, one is distinguished from the rest, and addressed by name. Hence his companions heard a voice, but knew not what was said. Ministers speak to all their hearers, and not to one more than another: but Christ speaks to the individual, and does not speak in vain. They draw the bow at a venture; but He aims at a certain mark, and never misses. Farther: Christ's call was earnest and pressing. There is something vehement and affectionate in the address: Saul, Saul! The Lord saw the danger he was in: He therefore warns him with a loud voice from heaven, and both pities and pardons his delusion. We see that all intercourse begins on Christ's part. His is preventing mercy, and previous to any inclination or endeavours on our part to seek after Him. VI. PERSECUTION IS A GREAT SIN, AND WHEN BROUGHT HOME TO THE CONSCIENCE OF AN AWAKENED SINNER, IT IS FOUND TO BE SO. It is so unreasonable as to admit of no defence, and none is made. 1. Is there any reason on My part? What injury have I done thee? For which of My good works dost thou persecute Me? 2. Is there any reason on the part of My people? Because they are My disciples, are they therefore worse parents or children, subjects or servants, friends or neighbours? Nay, are they not the salt of the earth, and the light of the world? 3. Is there any reason on thy part? Dost thou claim a right to judge for thyself: and have not they the same right? Who made thee thy brother's judge? Thou thinkest that truth is on thy side, and it is natural for thy neighbour to think the same. Dost thou allege the commission from the chief priests? Who authorised them to grant such a commission? Dost thou plead the Divine glory? Can God be glorified by a conduct contrary to all the feelings of humanity? 4. Will such conduct answer the end proposed? Force and violence may make men hypocrites, but cannot produce conviction. Will reproaches and injuries be more effectual than kind treatment and persuasion? Conclusion: 1. Christ's question to Saul should not only convince us of the evil of a persecuting spirit, but lead us to avoid and abhor it, as utterly contrary to the very genius of Christianity (Acts xxvi. 10; 1 Cor. xv. 9). 2. From this example let not the most atrocious sinner, nor the bitterest persecutor despair, if brought to a sense of their evil conduct (1 Tim. i. 16). (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) *The case of St. Paul in persecuting the Church*:—It was about two years after our Lord was gone to heaven. Saul, for a year or two before, had behaved as blind zealots are used to do, with great warmth and fury. He was then in the heat of his youth, about thirty years old, very honest and sincere in his way, and exceedingly zealous for the law of his God. The prejudices of education were so strong, and his natural temper withal so impetuous, that he stayed not to examine into the merits of the Christian cause. But as he very well knew that his own religion was from God, he too hastily concluded that this other, now pretending to rival it, could not be Divine also. I. SAUL AS A PERSECUTOR, AND THE GUILT HE CONTRACTED IN BEING SUCH. However sincere he had been in doing it, however fully persuaded in his own mind that he was serving God in it; yet he never reflected upon it afterwards but with shame and regret, with a penitential sorrow and remorse for it (chap. xxvi. 9, xxii. 20; 1 Tim. i. 15; 1 Cor. xv. 9). Saul, considered as a persecutor of the Church of God, cannot be acquitted of prejudice, partiality, and precipitate judgment, in a cause which demanded cool deliberation and the most scrupulous care. II. WHAT MAY BE PLEADED TO ALLEVIATE HIS GUILT IN IT, ON ACCOUNT OF WHICH HE FOUND MERCY. He himself has intimated that, though he had been some time a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious, yet he obtained mercy because he did it ignorantly, in unbelief. He did not know that the Christian religion was from God, and that the Jewish was to cease and give way to it. He meant and intended well while he was doing amiss: this is his excuse. It may be said in answer, that he might have known better, if he had been pleased to examine. Very true, he might, and therefore he is blameable; but still his

heart was honest and good, and therefore his mistake was pitiable and pardonable. His ignorance was not altogether affected and wilful, but had a great mixture of natural temper and human frailty to alleviate and qualify it. Our Lord, knowing the integrity of his heart, was pleased to overlook his failings, and to receive him into His own more immediate service. He approved his upright zeal, which wanted nothing but clearer light and a better direction. He indulges him the favour of a heavenly vision, condescends to speak to him from above, and finds him as willing and ready upon correction to embrace and propagate the Christian religion as he had before been to persecute and destroy it. III. THE EXCEEDING GREAT GOODNESS OF OUR LORD, BOTH TO ST. PAUL AND TO THE CHURCH, IN THIS AFFAIR. How gracious were the words which our Lord spake: Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? Next, He gave the good man a seasonable and a very affecting caution. I am Jesus, the Saviour of the world; it is hard for thee to contend with One so much mightier than thou art: stop thy career, and retreat in time. These were moving arguments, and pierced to the very soul. But, what is still more considerable, was the exceeding goodness therein shown to the Church in general. It was not only taking off a very furious and dangerous enemy; but it was making of him one of the kindest and best of friends. There was no man better qualified to serve the Church, both by preaching and writing, than St. Paul. He had great natural abilities, improved by a liberal and polite education; to which also were superadded many extraordinary supernatural gifts. IV. THE PROPER USE AND APPLICATION. 1. Let us learn from the instance of St. Paul how much it concerns every man to take care that he judges right in all matters of high consequence especially, and that his conscience be duly informed. Infinite mischiefs may arise from an erroneous conscience and a misguided zeal. 2. From the same instance of St. Paul learn we a ready submission and obedience to truth and godliness when sufficiently propounded to us. Lay we aside all inveterate prejudices and stubborn reluctances, as soon as ever we have light enough to see that we have been in an error, and that we ought to retract. 3. Learn we from the whole transaction, the truth and certainty of our Lord's resurrection and ascension into heaven, His power and majesty there as Lord of all, and His exceeding goodness in looking down from thence to take care of His Church here below; and how dangerous a thing it will be, and how fatal to the undertakers, to persist in any attempts against Him. (*D. Waterland, D.D.*)

Ver. 5. **And he said, Who art Thou, Lord?**—*Pressing questions of an awakened mind*:—The manifestation of Jesus subdued the great man into a little child. He inquires, with sacred curiosity, "Who art Thou, Lord?" and then surrenders at discretion, crying, "What wilt Thou have me to do?" I. THE EARNEST INQUIRER SEEKING TO KNOW HIS LORD. 1. He is not only willing to learn, but he is eager to be taught. If men were but anxious to understand the truth, they would soon learn it and receive it. 2. The subject he wished to be taught. You have heard that Christ is the Saviour, let your ambition be to know all about Him. Saints on earth, and even saints in heaven, are always wanting to have this question more fully answered, "Who art Thou, Lord?" (1) What is Thy person? Learn well that He is man, thy brother, touched with the feelings of thy infirmities, yet is He God eternal, infinite, full of all power and majesty. (2) What are Thy offices? He is a Prophet; thou must be instructed by Him. He is a Priest; He has offered sacrifice, and thou must accept it as being for thee. He is a King, and thou must let Him govern thee. (3) What are Thy relationships? The Son of the Highest, and yet the brother of the lowest. King of angels and of kings, and yet the friend of sinners. 3. What were the results of having this question answered? (1) When Paul knew that He whose face had shone upon him brighter than the sun was Jesus of Nazareth, he was seized with contrition. When Christ is unknown we can go on refusing and even persecuting Him; but when we clearly perceive that it is the Son of God and the bleeding Lamb whom we have refused and persecuted, then our hearts melt; we beg His forgiveness, and cast ourselves at His feet. (2) Hope was encouraged, for though Paul at the sight of the Lord Jesus must have been full of bitter anguish, it was by that same sight that he was afterwards comforted. Art Thou He who came to seek and to save that which was lost? Then is there hope for me. Oh, then, I will trust Him. (3) It led him to complete submission. He said, "Is this Christ whom I have rejected Lord of all? Then it is indeed hard for me to kick against the pricks. If all power be in His hands, then to oppose Him is as hopeless as it is wicked. O Lord Jesus, be my king." Some human

leaders have had such extraordinary influence over their soldiery that they have been cheerfully obeyed, even at the cost of life. The Christ of God has a superlative power over all hearts that know Him. See how Paul felt His influence, and scoured the world to win Christ's lost ones. 4. He sought instruction from the best possible Master; for who can tell us who Christ is but Christ Himself? Here is His book. It is the looking-glass. Jesus is yonder, and He looks into it, and you may see His reflected image; darkly, however, at the best. So, too, when you hear His faithful servants preach you may see somewhat of Christ; but there is no sight of Christ like that which comes personally to your own soul by the Holy Spirit. II. THE OBEDIENT DISCIPLE REQUESTING DIRECTION. "Whosoever believeth in Jesus has everlasting life" is the basis-doctrine of the gospel; but you may not believe in Him and then live as you like. Hence the question, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" The apostle here puts himself into the position of a soldier waiting for orders. He will not stir till he has received his officer's command. Before it used to be, "What will Moses have me to do?" And with some now present it has been, "What should I like to do?" Now take heed that Christ be your Master, and nobody else. It would never do to say, "What would the Church have me to do?" nor even "What would an apostle have me to do?" Paul said, "Be ye followers of me, even as I am also of Christ." But if Paul does not follow Christ, we must not follow Paul. "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel, let him be accursed." "One is your Master, even Christ." This obedience is—1. Personal. I have little enough to do with my neighbours. They have their duty; but, Lord, what wouldst Thou have *me* to do? Other persons must follow the light they have; but, Lord, what wilt Thou have *me* to do? Let it separate the nearest ties, let it cause your past friends to give you the cold shoulder, let it subject you to persecution even unto death; you have nothing to do with these consequences, your business is to say, "Show me what Thou wouldst have me to do, and I will do it." Note again—2. Prompt. He does not ask to be allowed a little delay. If you would have salvation, you must be ready to follow Christ to-night. To-night, it may be, is the time when the Spirit of God is struggling with you, and if resisted He never may return. 3. Unconditional. Saul little knew what the doing of his Master's will would involve, but he was prepared for it. Oh, you that would be Christians, do not suppose that it is just believing something—an article of a creed, or undergoing a ceremony—that will save you; you must, if you are Christ's, yield yourselves up to Him. Conclusion: It is by knowing Christ that you will learn to obey Him, and the more you obey Him the more easy it will be: and in obeying Him you will find your honour. Paul at this day stands in a most honourable place in the Church of God, simply because being called of God to do His will he did it faithfully even to the end. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.**—*The ways of sin hard and difficult:*—You often hear of the narrow and rugged road which leadeth unto life; and some of you, I am afraid, have not courage enough to venture upon it. You rather choose the smooth, broad, down-hill road, though it leads to death. It must be owned, that a religious life is a course of difficulties, and it is fit you should be honestly informed of it; but then it is fit you should also know that it is disagreeable and difficult only as a course of action is difficult to the sick, though it affords pleasure to those that are well. There are difficulties in the way of sin, as well as in that of holiness, though the depravity of mankind renders them insensible of it. It may be easy and pleasing to you to sin, just as it is easy to a dead body to rot, or pleasing to a leper to rub his sores. If it be hard, in one sense, to live a life of holiness, it is certainly hard, in another sense, to live a life of sin; namely, to run against conscience, reason, honour, interest, and all the strong and endearing obligations you are under to God, to mankind, and to yourselves. I. IS IT NOT A HARD THING TO BE AN UNBELIEVER, WHILE THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL SHINES AROUND US WITH FULL BLAZE OF EVIDENCE? Before a man can work up himself to the disbelief of a religion attended with such evidence, and inspiring such Divine dispositions and exalted hopes, what absurdities must he embrace! what strong convictions must he resist! what tremendous doubts must he struggle with! what glorious hopes must he resign! what violence must be offered to conscience! what care must be used to shut up all the avenues of serious thought, and harden the heart against the terrors of death and the supreme tribunal! How painful to reject the balm the gospel provides to heal a broken heart and a bleeding conscience, and the various helps and advantages it furnishes us with to obtain Divine favour and everlasting happiness! How hard to work up the mind to believe that Jesus was an impostor, or at best a moral

philosopher! or that the religion of the Bible is the contrivance of artful and wicked men! These are no easy things. There are many sceptics and smatterers in infidelity, but few, very few, are able to make thorough work of it. Such men find the arms of their own reason often against them, and their own conscience forms violent insurrections in favour of religion; so that whatever they pretend, they believe and tremble too. They find it hard, even now, to kick against the goads: how much harder they will find it in the issue! Christianity will live when they are dead and damned, according to its sentence. Infidels may hurt themselves by opposing it; as an unruly stupid ox, their proper emblem, may hurt himself, but not the goads, by kicking against them. II. IS IT NOT HARD FOR MEN TO PROFESS THEMSELVES BELIEVERS, AND ASSENT TO THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY, AND YET LIVE AS IF THEY WERE INFIDELS? If you believe Christianity—1. You believe that there is a God of infinite excellency; the Maker, Preserver, Benefactor, and ruler of the world, and of you in particular. How, then, can you withhold your love from Him, and ungratefully refuse obedience? Is not this a hard thing? Does it not cost you some labour to reconcile your consciences to it? This would not be easy to the mightiest archangel. And if it be easy to you, it is in the same sense that it is easy to a dead body to rot. Your strength to do evil is your real weakness, or the strength of your disease. 2. You believe the doctrine of redemption through Jesus Christ. And is it no difficulty to neglect Him, to dishonour Him, to slight His love and disobey His commands? Does not at least a spark of gratitude sometimes kindle which you find it hard to quench entirely? Does not conscience often take up arms in the cause of its Lord, and do you not find it hard to quell the insurrection? Alas! if you find little or no difficulty in treating the blessed Jesus with neglect, it shows that you are giants in iniquity, and sin with the strength of a devil. 3. You must believe that holiness is essentially to constitute you a real Christian, and prepare you for everlasting happiness. And while you have this conviction, is it not a hard thing for you to be only Christians in name, or self-condemned hypocrites? Is it an easy thing to you to keep your eyes always shut against the light, which would show you to yourselves in your true colours? 4. You believe in a future state of rewards and punishments. And since you love yourselves, and have a strong desire of pleasure and horror of pain, how can you reconcile yourselves to the thoughts of giving up your portion in heaven, and being ingulfed for ever in the infernal pit? III. IS IT NOT HARD FOR A MAN TO LIVE IN A CONSTANT CONFLICT WITH HIMSELF? I mean with his conscience. When the sinner would continue his career to hell, conscience, like the cherubim at the gates of paradise, or the angel in Balaam's road, meets him with his flaming sword, and turns every way, to guard the dreadful entrance into the chambers of death. The life of the sinner is a warfare, as well as that of the Christian. Conscience is his enemy, always disturbing him; that is, he himself is an enemy to himself, while he continues an enemy to God. Some, indeed, by repeated violences, stun their conscience, and it seems to lie still. But this is a conquest fatal to the conquerors. IV. IS IT NOT HARD FOR YOU TO DEPRIVE YOURSELVES OF THE EXALTED PLEASURES OF RELIGION? Is not this doing violence to the innate principle of self-love and desire of happiness? Can you be so stupid as to imagine that the world, or sin, or anything that can come in competition with religion, can be of equal or comparable advantage to you? Sure your own reason must give in its verdict in favour of religion. And is it not a hard thing for you to act against your own reason, against your highest and immortal interest, and against your own innate desire of happiness? (*S. Davies, A.M.*) *Kicking against the pricks*:—This expression is highly characteristic of the Saviour—1. From its figurative form. While He was on earth, without a parable spake He not unto the people; and speaking out of heaven He still adopts the parabolic style, as He did in Patmos. He does not say to Saul, "It is injurious to thee to resist My appeals," that would be mere abstract fact, but He puts it more pictorially, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." 2. From the tenderness of the rebuke. It is not, "It is wicked of thee to resist Me." The Saviour leaves Saul's conscience to say that; nor "It is hard for My people to bear thy cruelties"; nor "It is very provoking to Me, and I shall ere long smite thee in My wrath." No, it is not, "It is hard for Me," but "It is hard for thee." We have in the parable of the text—I. AN OX. No other beast is driven by a goad. 1. "How low is man fallen that he can be compared to a brute beast! "Oh," saith the proud heart, "doth God compare me to a beast?" Ah! and it is the beast which hath cause to complain rather than you; for what beast is that who has rebelled against God? Do not be angry, for if you knew yourself you would cry

with Asaph, "So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before Thee." Penitent sinners have wished that they had been beasts rather than men, feeling as if sin had degraded their nature below the meanest reptile. 2. But courage! The ox is a valuable animal. The text does not liken a man to a wild beast without an owner, but to an ox for which its master careth, and for which he hath paid a price. "I," says Jesus, "whom Thou persecutest, redeemed thee, with My own precious blood; thou art Mine, and I will break thee in. Why dost thou kick against Me? I have paid for thee too dearly to let thee be lost." 3. The ox is dependent upon its master for the supply of its needs. "The ox knoweth its owner." Thou, who art an enemy to God, dost thou not know that thou art the object of His daily providence? We have been worse than oxen. We have not known the hand that feeds us, but have kicked against the God from whom all our mercies have been flowing. 4. An ox is a creature of which service is rightly demanded. So does God expect of those creatures whose wants He supplies that they should do His bidding. Wherefore should God keep them, and they do Him no service? For if He gets nothing out of thee, He will not for ever spare thee. The bullock which is not good for its master in the furrows shall soon be good for the butcher in the shambles. 5. The ox is a perverse creature, not easily made accustomed to the yoke. Hence the rough and cruel instrument used by the Eastern husbandman—a long stick with a sharp prong at the end. Ah, how perverse are our wills! We will not go in the right way; we choose the wrong naturally. We go to the fire of sin, and we put our finger in it, and we burn it; but we do not learn better; we then thrust our hands into it, and though we suffer for it we return and plunge our arm into the flame. 6. Yet the ox is a creature which can be of great service to its master. When it becomes docile, it is one of the most valuable possessions of the Oriental husbandman. And when once the brutish heart of man is conquered by Divine grace, of what use he is. II. THE OX-GOAD. A cruel instrument, but one thought by the Oriental husbandman to be needful for the stubborn nature of the ox. God has many ways of goading us, but He does not use that where gentler means will avail. I should think that a kind man would speak to his ox, and might get it into such a condition that it would be obedient to his word. Now God does bring His people into such a state as that. God does not come to blows with men till He has first tried words with them. Before the tree is cut down there is a time of sparing, in which it is digged about if haply it may bring forth fruit. But when words are of no avail, then the Lord in tender mercy adopts sharper means, and comes from words to blows and wounds—that He may come in all His power to heal. 1. Some of us felt the ox-goad when we were children. Under the government of our parents we were often very restive, and felt it hard to sin. 2. Since that time some of you have felt the irksome goad in the good advice of friends with whom you have been situated. You do not like to be talked to about religion. 3. The teachings of God's Word acts like a goad to unconverted men. I have known people come in here, and the sermon has made them feel so angry that they could almost have knocked the preacher down, but yet they could not help coming again. They could not tell why, but they could not stop away; and yet they hated the truth they heard. When a man thinks enough about the truth to begin to fight against it, I am in hope that the truth will never let him go till it has fairly beaten him into better things. 4. At times the Lord will goad us by personal afflictions; a sickness, a failure in business, a loss of property, a disappointment in marriage, or the death of friends, or a gradual decay of the constitution, or the loss of a limb or an eye. Loud voices these, if men had ears to hear. Some of you have had so many afflictions that the Lord might well inquire, "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more." 5. Sometimes God stirs men with the common operations of the Holy Ghost in their consciences. Saul was being goaded at that very moment when Christ said, "Why persecutest thou Me?" And take care you do not resist these goadings. "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not," &c. III. THE KICKS. The ox when wounded is so foolish as to dash its foot against the goad, and consequently drives it deeper into himself and hurts himself the more. This is the natural manner of men till God makes something more than beasts of them. 1. Even when we were children we rebelled against our teachers; prayer was distasteful, the Sabbath was dull, and the house of God wearisome, and therefore we kicked against them. 2. As some of you grow up, you took to sneering at those who kindly advised you. Many, the moment they get a word of counsel from any person, treat him at once as an enemy, and vow that they will take no further notice of such a "cant." Many sinners, when the Word of God is too

hot for them, take to cavilling at it, or disputing over it. A man who is reproved by a sermon will perhaps feel that he must give up his drunkenness. "But," says he, "I will not give up my drunkenness; I do not want to do that, and therefore I do not believe that the sermon is true." Or another says, "If this is correct, I must shut up my shop on the Sunday, and so lose my Sunday's profits. I cannot afford to lose money, and therefore I will abuse the preacher." The guilty conscience cries, "I will pick a hole in the minister's coat, because he has found one in mine." 3. There are many who persecute God's people. They cannot burn them, nor shut them up in prison; but they vex them with cruel mockings, they twist their innocent actions into something wrong, and then they throw it in their teeth. 4. Certain profane men have gone so far as to kick at God Himself. Mind that He does not answer you, blasphemer. IV. THE RESULT. Christ says, "It is hard." It has been very hard for your mother, for your families, for your neighbours and employers; Christ says it is hard for you. You know that sin does not make you happy. You have had your swing of it, and you are miserable. You are afraid to die. Do you know what will very likely be your history if you run into sin and persist in it? You will make your present afflictions grow worse, and cause your present losses to accumulate. You are kicking against the pricks, and are making the wounds already received ten times worse, and so it always will be so long as you keep on kicking. He that is converted to God finds it hard to have been a sinner so long. His repentance is bitter in proportion to the greatness of his sin. Those who are saved late in life feel that their sins will be their plague till they die. A man does not go and plunge into the ditch of sin without bearing the stench of its vileness in his memory all his life. An old song that you used to sing will come up and defile your closet prayers, and perhaps the recollection of some unholy scene will trouble you even when you are at the sacramental table. The apostle Paul always bore the memory of his sin. "God forgives me," said one, "but I never can forgive myself." V. THE GOOD COUNSEL. 1. Since it is hard for you to kick against the pricks, and there is nothing to be got by it, cease. 2. Yield thy heart to the goadings of Divine love. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Saul's goads*:—The figure of speech is borrowed from a custom of Eastern countries: the ox-driver wields a long pole, at the end of which is fixed a piece of sharpened iron, with which he urges the animal to go on or stand still or change its course; and, if it is refractory, it kicks against the goad, injuring and infuriating itself with the wounds it receives. This is a vivid picture of a man wounded and tortured by compunctions of conscience. There was something in him rebelling against the course of inhumanity on which he was embarked, and suggesting that he was fighting against God. It is not difficult to conceive when these doubts arose. He was the scholar of Gamaliel, the advocate of humanity and tolerance, who had counselled the Sanhedrin to leave the Christians alone. He was himself too young yet to have hardened his heart to all the disagreeables of such ghastly work. Highly strung as was his religious zeal, nature could not but speak out at last. But probably his compunctions were chiefly awakened by the character and behaviour of the Christians. He had heard the noble defence of Stephen, and seen his face in the council-chamber shining like that of an angel. He had seen him kneeling on the field of execution and praying for his murderers. Doubtless, in the course of the persecution he had witnessed many similar scenes. Did these people look like enemies of God? As he entered their homes to drag them forth to prison, he got glimpses of their social life. Could such spectacles of purity and love be products of the powers of darkness? Did not the serenity with which his victims went to meet their fate look like the very peace which he had long been sighing for in vain? Their arguments, too, must have told on a mind like his. He had heard Stephen proving from the Scriptures that it behoved the Messiah to suffer; and the general tenor of the earliest Christian apologetic assures us that many of the accused must on their trial have appealed to passages like the fifty-third of Isaiah, where a career is predicted for the Messiah startlingly like that of Jesus of Nazareth. He heard incidents of Christ's life from their lips which betokened a personage very different from the picture sketched for him by his Pharisaic informants; and the sayings of their Master which the Christians quoted did not sound like the utterances of the fanatic he conceived Jesus to have been! (*J. Stalker, D.D.*)

Ver. 6. **And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what will Thou have me to do?**—*Saul of Tarsus converted*:—These words—I. ARE ILLUSTRATIVE OF A SINGULAR TRANSFORMATION OF MIND. We would not forget the attendant miracles.

There is the light, the voice; but we now would speak of the secret place of the spirit. There shines a more marvellous light; there resounds a voice, which "shakes not the earth only, but also heaven." This is not the effect of surprise. Astonishment is mingled with it; but it was not the ordinary emotion; it was amazement, admiration—lofty, tender, profound, awestricken. It is not the working of self-righteousness. Belief but seeks its proof; submission but asks its test. It is the loosing of the rebel's weapon from the rebel's hand. It is not "going about to establish a righteousness of its own," it is the incense of that sacrifice which God approves. This language is distinguished by—1. Deep compunction. He feels that his sin is of no common aggravation. It is as though all the strokes he had ever dealt now rebounded on his spirit. It is not mortified pride, abortive ambition, lacerating remorse. It is a gentler and a more amiable humiliation of spirit. Still it is bitter. Here is self-reproach. Conscience has started from its sleep. It is a "godly sorrow working repentance, which needeth not to be repented of." And until we are thus lowered we are strangers to that repentance which the apostle embodies as he describes. 2. Strange illumination. The "beam" is plucked out from his eye; the "veil" is torn away from his heart. What a world of new interests, realities, relationships, burst upon him! His right is wrong; his faith is unbelief; his earnestness is treason; his truth is error. All those "old things" must pass away. For the first time patriarchs and prophets are seen as frowning upon him; for the first time, "the hope of Israel" and its "consolation" condemns him; for the first time, the "lively oracles" ring alarms of danger in his ear. And then Jesus stands up to him, no longer a butt for ridicule, a stumbling-stone for reproach, but "altogether lovely." How could he have wronged that beauty that fills heaven with praise? 3. Earnest devotedness. It is not impulse—the relief of a mind bewildered and perplexed. There is an intentness upon all that is benevolent. The malignity is turned to love to Him whom he has till then hated, and to that people whom he has hitherto oppressed. And mark how this tendency of his soul, sudden as it was, was sustained. Enters he the polished city? Is he wrecked upon the savage isle? Is he dragged into the amphitheatre, where execution awaits him? Still as serenely he cries with unshrinking spirit, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" 4. Entire revolution. Here is a new creature. He falls a sinner; he rises a saint. He falls an unbeliever; he rises a champion. He falls a hater of the gospel; he rises an apostle of it. He falls a blasphemer; he rises a martyr. He falls a hater of the Saviour; he rises, so that "for him to live" henceforth "is Christ." II. SUPPOSE ADEQUATE CAUSES FOR THE PRODUCTION OF SUCH A CHANGE. The conversion of the apostle, though attended by prodigies, was no miracle itself, *i.e.*, that which is opposed to the particular laws of the subject on which it is wrought. The change wrought upon the apostle's mind is not contrary to the nature of that mind; it is contrary to its misdirection, enmity, darkness, but it is agreeable to its understanding, affections, and modes of volition. Yet at the same time it is all that is wonderful and there must be causes adequate for its production. It took place—1. By the impress of power. This power is creative; it therefore acts immediately upon the mind. We have not access to each other's mind, nor have angels; but at the same time there is a full access which God may claim. He knows the heart, and touches all its springs, and unlocks all its wards, and pursues all its avenues, and intricacies, "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts." Think, therefore, of this energy as direct; coming from the Father of light and from the fountain of power, reaching at once the heart which, however rebel it may be, is under His control and sway. Nor is it different as to ourselves. We may not know the hour, but if we have ever the heart opened, the Lord hath opened it; if we have ever a will at one with God, He worked within us first "to will and to do." 2. By the revelation of truth. It is not improbable that there was some natural process at work. Saul would know the types and predictions, so that when the beam fell upon them he had but to read them at once, and to construe them concerning Him whom he had hitherto opposed and withstood. But it was far more than a natural process. There came a light from God, not only in the sense of power, but in the sense of "quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." And what truth was disclosed? "The truth as it is in Jesus." He seized it. It was not by an intuition—because that implies some power of his own; but it had all the rapidity of such an intuition. He saw it in its dimensions, in its proportions, in its harmony; the system arose before him in its symmetry, in its breadth, in its perfection. Everything connected with the Saviour. The same as to ourselves. Others may teach

us; but unless we have the teaching of the Spirit, taking of the things of Christ, there may be light in us, but the light is darkness—and "how great is that darkness!" 3. By the sensibility of love. We may think of that soul as replete with all the most dire passions of enmity and of revenge. But now comes the strongest of all attractions, the most potent of all influences—love to God and love to man. Jesus to him is precious. What would he not do, what not endure to show how he loves that Saviour, and all who exhibit His image and promote His cause? It is this that causes us to relent and makes us yield. When this love is "shed abroad in our heart," every thought is "brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." III. FURNISH US WITH IMPORTANT LESSONS AND RULES FOR ITS INVESTIGATION. Conversion may be considered a part of the gospel, as it is a doctrine always inculcated by it—and as it is a blessing accomplished wherever it is preached, and the effect of its being applied. And therefore we may take a view of Christianity beyond a mere theory of speculative truth; we may consider it as God's constant doing in the earth. Now, as conversion amongst ourselves may be counterfeited, let us take this conversion and see how it will be to us a key to all. 1. Conversion is sovereign. For we cannot assign any reason why one man is converted and another is not. It is not of "him willing," or "him running," but of "God showing mercy." You say, "that there is a pre-disposition." But how came that pre-disposition? We do not mean to say that there are not reasons moving the Divine mind; but the reasons do not exist in the sinner himself. Think now of this man. You would have been surprised if Pilate had been the convert, or Caiaphas; why more surprised, then, that the convert is Saul of Tarsus? Have you any explanations to assign for it? There is one—one alone; "He quickeneth whom He will." 2. Conversion is wrought by a power fully sufficient. It would have been easy to have dashed that "vessel of wrath" into pieces; but was it not difficult to make "a chosen vessel" of it, and "to prepare it to glory"? And yet there was no difficulty to that power which did it. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" When we think of His power in conversion as equal to any power in the creation of a world or in the resurrection of the dead, then have we the right notion of that power; but not until then. It is power—but not mechanical, not physical—power expanding the powers, wielding the movements, brooding over the rudiments of the mind—the mind becoming supple, passive to that power; eager with all its energies still, with all its accountability and determinateness still—as the clay in the potter's hand. 3. Conversion in itself must always be sudden; there can be no interval between an unconverted and a converted state; we pass "from death unto life." But then the consciousness of a change may not rest upon instantaneous evidence. But let us not argue against the suddenness of conversion. 4. Conversion may be accompanied with circumstances very uncommon and extreme. One heart shall open like the Philippian prison, battered by the earthquake and all its avenues and doors thrown open by the shock; another heart may open like the full-blown rose tremulous in the breeze, bathed with the dew, blushing to the sunbeam. If God takes the one method, or if He adopts the other, what is that to thee? Leave Him to work in His own way—according to His own pleasure. 5. We need not despair of the conversion of any. Have we any friends of whom we have said, There is no hope for them in God? Why? Because we have shaped our thoughts according to ourselves. But "His thoughts are not our thoughts," &c. What if He have "thoughts of peace" after all? What if His ways are "mercy and truth" after all? "The prey" may still be "taken from the mighty." Malefactor as he is, that day he may "be with Jesus in paradise." 6. There must be a practical exhibition of our conversion. No matter what our reverie by day, or our vision by night, our conversion must be reduced to one standard; it speaks only one language—"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (*R. W. Hamilton, D.D.*) *The law of Christian life*:—He who had come from heaven, and had stooped to conquer the heart of the proud Pharisee, must have a purpose in all this. To know that purpose is Paul's chief desire. It is only when the will is surrendered to the will of Christ, and Christ is taken as Saviour and Lord, that the life of God begins to grow in us. Viewing this subject broadly in relation to ourselves, let us learn first—I. HOW DESIRABLE IT IS THAT WE SHOULD ALL HAVE FROM THE BEGINNING THE PLAN OF OUR LIFE CLEARLY BEFORE US. No work of any kind can be effectively done without a plan. The mind necessarily proceeds to action after processes of thought, prevision, anticipation of results and foreseen obstacles. Instinct acts from immediate impulse. The man who dispenses with purpose in action, and

lives for the occasion, has no certainty, or consistency, is the slave of every passing impulse, and accomplishes little in the battle of life. If all nature were not bound together by a plan, it would be a chaos, in which kingdom would war against kingdom, and all would end in disaster. If the history of a country do not proceed upon a plan in which successive generations co-operate, there is no cumulative progress in its life. The Hebrew race followed a plan. Why was Carlyle able to accomplish so much and so well as a historian? Because in early days he selected his precise vocation as a historian, and settling down in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, he, year after year, with growing power and speciality, dealt with the events of those times in his lives of Cromwell and of Frederick, and his history of the French Revolution. Why was Darwin able to effect so much for science? Because he recognised early in life as his special destiny the study of living forms, and the conditions of their existence, and gave all his life to that branch of science. Such a habit saves us from the weakening effect of distracting aims. It raises us above the power of opposing circumstances. It stimulates activity. It produces dependence upon God. It develops energy. II. THE PLAN OF OUR LIFE IS IN THE MIND OF CHRIST. He alone has the knowledge, power, all-embracing sympathy, patience, and perfection to make the plan blessed for us and for all. III. JESUS CHRIST PROGRESSIVELY UNFOLDS TO HIS DISCIPLES HIS LIFE-PLAN FOR THEM. He did so to Paul. But it was revealed through Ananias, a general outline—the details after. Christ's plan is adapted to our capacity—as strength grows we grasp it more clearly. IV. THE WILL OF CHRIST MAY BE CERTAINLY KNOWN BY US. Paul in this case did. In most of his subsequent experiences he knew the mind of Christ in truth and conduct. May we know the will of Christ certainly in these days? Yes! We have the words of Christ. We have the Spirit of truth. We know certain facts in nature and laws in science. We may also have spiritual certainty. V. TIMES WHEN WE SHOULD SPECIALLY BREATHE THIS PRAYER. 1. When burdened by sin. 2. When seeking the blessedness of a higher life. 3. When our way is uncertain. Such prayer will be answered. God's will be made plain by obedience. (*J. Matthews.*) *The question of an awakened sinner*:—I. THIS LANGUAGE IS EXPRESSIVE OF DEEP CONCERN. We sometimes wonder that men are not more concerned about what they must do to be saved. By nature they are blind and dark (Isa. lix. 10). Saul felt his danger, &c. Concern as to the manner of salvation. "What wilt Thou have me to do?" How shall I escape the damnation of hell? What means must I employ? A man lost in the Australian bush is not only concerned about the fact of being lost, but as to the way out of the trackless wilderness. II. IT IS THE LANGUAGE OF ASTONISHMENT AND TERROR. "He trembling and astonished said," &c. We have seen men tremble under conviction. III. THIS IS THE LANGUAGE OF DECISION. Saul meant to do whatever God should tell him. Many persons profess to be seeking the Lord for years. Why is He not found of them? because it is painfully manifest that they are not decided. IV. THE GOSPEL ALONE SUPPLIES A SATISFACTORY ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION. Conclusion: 1. Have we asked this question? 2. This is a matter of paramount importance. (*G. T. Hall.*) *Man's part in conversion*:—I. In men like Paul no sooner is there a vision of truth than there is a new resolution for duty. Saul had seen a new sight. One look at that majestic and tender countenance changed his anger to repentance. But he did not spend much time in gazing at the radiant spectacle. It purposely vanished from him. He did not call his fellow-travellers to admire it as a wonder; he looked instantly for some new work. Such tremendous exercises and convictions are not meant to end in mere emotion. So the convicted jailer, "Sirs, what shall I do to be saved?" So the young man, "What good thing shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And so the people, the publicans, the soldiers to John the Baptist, "What shall we do then?" It is the sincere cry of every earnest nature with a new and Christian view of life. 2. There is a supernatural element and there is a natural one in St. Paul's conversion; the one for our faith, the other for our imitation. After the first glow of religious interest there comes a period of suspended energy; sometimes of reaction; sometimes of miserable complacency—a looking back to see how far we have come; or sideways, to see who is coming with us. "Suffer me to go first and bury my father": "What shall this man do?" The strained sinews are relaxed. Here is the test of a true renewing. Can you survive that point of peril? If not, it is not a genuine work of the Holy Spirit. Your will was not converted, only your feelings; and as they are the transient, variable part of us, they are easily converted back again to falsehood and selfishness.

Henoo, the very question that belongs just there is this, "What wilt Thou have me to do?" How shall the better feeling pass into a better character? In the history, notice—I. A PERSONAL CONCERN. "What wilt Thou have me to do?"—not "this man"; not people in general; not older or better people, but myself. To Saul it was no time for anything but personal feeling and acting. Conscience told him what the vision meant, and the voice confirmed the findings of conscience. No wonder that he cried out "trembling and astonished," as if there were no moment to be lost, and as if there were no other soul in the universe but himself before the Judge. To those, then, who have begun to inquire what they shall do, the first counsel is, Keep it before you as a personal concern. Do not try to throw your uneasiness off by saying you are no worse than your neighbours. Make no cowardly attempt to shift your responsibility upon others—whether society, your education, employers, tempters, or unfaithful religionists. Remember how many souls have missed their salvation by halting between a general interest and a particular consecration. II. DOING THE FIRST SIMPLE DUTY; and for Christ's sake, because He has required it. Human judgments would, very likely, have expected something "comporting better with the dignity of the occasion." After such a supernal manifestation, surely life will not have to settle down into its tame uniformity again? Curiosity would expect some remarkable mission at once. Pride would suggest a sudden elevation into grand undertakings. But no; the first step must be plain and practical. The vision over, St. Paul must march on as before—outwardly as before—only with a changed errand and another heart. Above all, there must be no pause of indolence. "Arise, and go into the city," &c. After any spiritual excitement, or start forward, there is apt to come a contempt for familiar tasks. But see how the Scriptures rebuke this dangerous vanity; and how profoundly they interpret human nature. After that rapturous night when Jacob saw the splendour of heaven, and the angels of God, the next morning he arose, put together stones for a memorial, and went straight on his journey. Naaman expected some magnificent demonstration of miracle. But no; it was simply, "Go, bathe seven times in Jordan." "Too simple, too common," he said. Yet that was the way to health. At their first call, the fishermen that were to convert the world were not sent out with banners and trumpets. Drop your fishing-nets and come after Me, in a quiet, obscure, daily doing of My hard work, and in due time you shall be kings and priests unto God! The healed leper was only to go home and tell what great things God had done for him. The "young man" was looking for some unprecedented sacrifice; but to go and increase his charity to those poor people he had seen so often was more than he could bear. No, the true self-sacrifice is not on high or in strange places. Back to the old scenes, the dull shop, the unsocial, unexciting day's work, the tedious routine of the office; but if you take with you the new Spirit, which has beamed upon you in your blessed hour, then all the dull taskwork will be transfigured in that light. Go straight to the nearest, plainest duty, and "it shall be told thee" there, in the opening path of Providence, what thou shalt do next. III. SILENT SECLUSION AND MEDITATION. Observe how effectually the apostle was shut up to himself. First, a blindness, then three days of absolute privacy, fasting, thinking, afterwards three years in Arabia. He needed this cooling air of stillness and loneliness. His passions had been fiery, terribly tempestuous. Not long before he had taken a ferocious delight in Stephen's martyrdom; and now, sitting at the feet of that Jesus, he had that scene to remember. Food enough for meditation! Like the outward form of the Master, that old life must die, and lie "three days" hid in a sepulchre, before the new created man could be "risen with Christ." There is a lesson for us of this bustling age in that strong, penitent man, fasting, repenting, shut in his dark room, thinking, praying. When the deepest springs of life are moved by any grand experience we cannot speak: we ought to be still. Even nature, whenever she discloses to us her grander scenery, shuts our lips. After that call from heaven the apostle longed for silence, and it came. Such seclusion is sometimes our salvation. Every real renewal is a winepress that must be trodden alone. IV. SUBMISSION TO A VISIBLE RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY. Ananias, a representative of the Church, was sent to encourage him, and to introduce him to the Church. If Paul's strong nature needed guidance and help, our weak ones need it no less. What Ananias and the miracle and the heavenly voice were to him, one Book and the ministry and the ordinances are to us. This sounds very commonplace, I know. Visions are more exciting, ecstasies more transporting, sentimentalists will say it is uninteresting; pseudo-spiritualists will say it is formal; novelty-

seekers will say it is old-fashioned. But remember, the supposition now is that you are in earnest about making yourself a Christian man, and are willing to take the practical, sensible means. One of these, a chief one, is a study of the Bible—the text-book of the Christian knowledge. Whenever it is displaced, Christian character loses richness and depth. One reason why our modern religion is superficial, weak, irreverent, is that the intimacy with that nourishing inspiration declines. Nor can you separate the Bible from the Church. Our busy society has so little in its influence that is really spiritual—it offers so few helps to a weak soul struggling to maintain a Christian conversation—that we do all need to replenish our inner light and love and strength from supernatural and sacramental fountains. V. THE APPEAL TO CHRIST BY PRAYER. St. Paul spoke first, not to himself, not to Ananias, not to any friend on earth; it was, "*Lord*, what wilt *Thou* have me to do?" There is no such thing as growth in a holy life without communion between the heart and Him. For every perplexity and despondency, a fresh supplication: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" and He will show us. He has promised that He will. "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find." (*Bp. Huntington.*) *An eager inquiry*:—The words are—I. AN EARNEST APPEAL FOR DIVINE MERCY. Saul was conscious of his great wickedness in persecuting Christ, and doubtless thought that he would have to "do" much to secure forgiveness. The reply, "Arise," &c., must have given him hope. The period of three days was one of great anguish, but relief came through Ananias, and Saul received his sight and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Nothing is said about forgiveness, but this is surely included in the gift of the Spirit, for the one is of no use without the other. So Peter said to the penitents at Pentecost, "Repent and be baptized . . . and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Does any one here inquire, "What shall I do?" The answer "is nigh thee even in thy heart," &c. II. A HEARTY DESIRE FOR CONSECRATION TO GOD'S SERVICE. The question means not only, "What must I do to be saved?" but, "What must I do to serve Thee?" God wills—1. That we should hold communion with Him. This Saul did during the three days at Damascus. "Behold he prayeth." He had prayed before, but only as a Pharisee—outwardly; now he came into actual contact with God, and poured out his soul before Him. 2. That we should exemplify the power of the gospel in our daily life. "As ye have received Christ as Lord, so walk in Him" in your personal capacity, in your domestic relations, in your secular employments, in your religious and Church duties. 3. That we should help to diminish human misery. Our Master went about doing good, not only to the souls, but to the bodies of men. His religion is not only one of faith and hope, but of charity. "Pure religion and undefiled," &c. "Whoso hath this world's good," &c. 4. That we should seek to bring men to Christ. It was revealed to Paul that he should be a preacher, and right well did he fulfil his task. Although all Christians are not called upon to be preachers, yet all are expected to do something to save souls. In the family, Sunday-school, workshop, by the sick bed, &c. We may all work for the Master. In conclusion: 1. This life is the only opportunity we have for working in reference to the world to come. 2. Our position in heaven will be determined by our activity on earth. 3. Our work and therefore our reward will be proportioned by the degree to which we yield to the constraint of Christ's love. (*J. Morris, D.D.*) *The Christian's life*:—Standing on a platform when the train, shooting out of some dark tunnel, dashes by with the rush of an eagle, and the roar of thunder; or, seated upon some lofty rock, when the mountain wave, driven on by the hurricane, and swelling, foaming, curling, bursts, and, passing on either side, rushes to roll along the beach—than these I know no situation, under heaven, where a man more feels his weakness. What hand could stop these flying wheels; or, seizing the billow by its snowy main, hold it back? Only one—God's own right hand. Great miracle that! A greater is here, in the sudden omnipotent arrest of Saul. With what impetus he moves on his career, and, breathing flames and slaughter, he rushes on his prey; but in a moment he is arrested in mid-career, changed into a little child. The hand that bent the arch of heaven has bent his iron will; and, now yielding himself up to Christ, he lies at His feet. Let us now consider what is implied in this question of his. I. THAT EVERY TRUE CONVERT SUBMITS HIMSELF TO THE WILL OF CHRIST. It is not, What will my minister, parents, friends, &c.; but what wilt Thou have me to do? 1. This submission to another's will is the most difficult of things. It is easier to bend iron than a stubborn will. Does not every parent find it so? Happy are the children that have learned to say to a wise, good, Christian father, what Jesus said to His, "Not My will, but Thine be done," This

submission to the will of another, the first, best lesson, the battle of the nursery, trains us for the battle of the world, and also the Church. And thus are we to yield our wills to Christ, not saying what would I wish, or what will this or that one say? but Speak, Lord, Thy servant heareth. In the church, in the place of business, in the family, in the world, What wilt Thou have me to do? There is a passage in the history of St. Francis that may throw light on this subject. The rule of the order which he founded was implicit submission to the superior. One day a monk proved refractory. He must be subdued. By order of St. Francis, a grave was dug, and the monk was put into it. The brothers began to shovel in the earth. When the mould had reached the wretch's knees, St. Francis bent down, and, fixing his eye on him, said, Are you dead yet—do you yield? There was no answer; down in that grave there seemed to stand a man with a will as iron as his own. The burial went on. When at length he was buried up to the neck, to the lips, St. Francis bent down once more, Are you dead yet? The monk lifted his eye to his superior to see in his cold, grey eyes no spark of feeling. Dead to all the weaknesses of humanity, St. Francis stood ready to give the signal that should finish the burial. It was not needed; the iron bent; the funeral was stopped; his will yielding to a stronger, the poor brother said, "I am dead." Popery is not so much a contradiction as a caricature of the truth. I would not be dead as these monks to any man. The reason which I have got from God Almighty is to bend blindly before no human authority. But the submission I refuse to man, Jesus, I give to Thee—not wrung from me by terror, but won by love. I wish to be dead, not as that monk, but as he who said, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live." Saul, the persecutor, was dead; but Paul, the great apostle, lived. "Yet not I," he adds, "but Christ liveth in me," &c. 2. Were it so with us, what happy, good, brave, devoted Christians we should be! I have seen a servant come in the morning to his master for orders, and leave to spend the day in executing them; and would that every one of us would go morning by morning to Christ, saying, with Saul, Lord what wilt Thou have me to do this day? There would be no difficulty in getting money for Christ's cause, or people to do His work. I have read how a troop of cavalry, dashing at the roaring cannon, would rush on to death; and how the forlorn hope would throw themselves, with a bound and a cheer, into the fiery breach, knowing that they should leave their bodies there—it was the will of their commander. And shall Christians do less for Christ? Are you your own? We have one Master in heaven; and if it be true that He bought us with His blood, what right has a Christian to himself? II. THAT EVERY TRUE CONVERT FEELS HIS INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY. It is not only, Lord, what wilt *Thou* have me to do? but What wilt Thou have *me* to do? 1. In looking over some vast assembly one reflection naturally suggests itself—What power is here! You may smile at him who, standing by the cataract of Niagara, instead of being filled with admiration, began to calculate how much machinery that water-power would turn. But it is a serious, stirring thought to think how much moral machinery all this power now before me could turn for good, were every scheming brain and busy hand, and willing heart, engaged in the service of God. What honour would accrue to God! what a revenue of glory to Jesus Christ, and what invaluable service to religion! It is impossible to estimate the power that lies latent in our Churches. We talk of the power latent in steam till Watts evoked its spirit from the waters, and set the giant to turn the iron arms of machinery. We talk of the power latent in the skies till science, seizing the spirit of the thunder, chained it to our service—abolishing distance, and flashing our thoughts across rolling seas to distant continents. Yet what are these to the moral power that lies asleep in our congregations? 2. And why latent? Because men and women neither appreciate their individual influence, nor estimate their 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 are the woods clothed in green, but by every little leaf expanding its own form. Nor thus are fields covered with golden corn, but by every stalk of grain ripening its own head. You say, What can I do? oh, I have no power, nor influence, nor name, nor talents, nor money! Look at the coral reef yonder, which stretches its unbroken wall for a thousand leagues along the sea. How contemptible the architects; yet the aggregate of their labours, mocking our greatest breakwaters, how colossal! I know that all cannot be bright and burning lights; but see how that candle in a cottage window sends out its rays streaming far through the

depths of night. Why should not we shine, though it should be to illumine only the narrow walls of our country's humblest home? 3. Consider how the greatest things done on earth have ever been done by little and little—little agents, and little things. How was the wall restored around Jerusalem? By each man, whether his house was an old palace or the rudest cabin, building the breach before his own door. How was the soil of the New World redeemed from gloomy forests? By each sturdy emigrant cultivating the patch round his own log cabin? How have the greatest battles been won? By the rank and file—every man holding his own post, and ready to die on the battlefield. And if the world is ever to be conquered for our Lord, it is not by ministers, nor by office-bearers, nor by the great, and noble, and mighty; but by every member of Christ's body being a working member, and saying to Jesus, Lord what wilt Thou have *me* to do? III. THAT THE LIFE OF THE TRUE CONVERT WILL BE ONE OF DEEDS. What wilt Thou have me not to believe or to profess, but to do. 1. I do not set deeds against doctrines, nor have I any sympathy with the fashion of setting small value on creeds; saying, It matters little what a man believes, if he does right. A man cannot do right unless he believes right, since every effect must have a cause. I know that doctrines are not deeds; that the foundation is not the superstructure. Yet that night when the rains descend, and the floods rise, and the winds blow, happy is the man whose storm-beaten house stands founded on a rock, and happier still the man, when the hour comes which shall sweep away all confidence in human merits, whose hopes of salvation stand on the Rock of Ages. Call creeds, as some do, but the bones, and not the living, lovely, breathing form of true religion; still, what were the body without the bones? Not less important the place that doctrines hold; and therefore I say, hold fast the profession of your faith. 2. Still, faith without works is dead. Useless the creeds that do not influence our conduct; the preaching that leads to no practice. Prayer meetings, sermons, are good; but they are not, as some make them, banquets where you are to enjoy yourselves. Would you see their proper use? Look at yon hardy and sun-burned man, sitting down in his cottage to a simple meal; and rising from the table to spend the strength it gives him at the labours of the field. So Sabbaths and religious services are to strengthen us for work—otherwise our religion is no less selfish than the lives of epicures. Our object should be to get strength to do God's work in this world, and to follow Him who, as our pattern as well as propitiation, went about continually doing good. Christ is the propitiation of none of whom he is not also the pattern; and on the last day you will never be asked what was your denomination or creed. No! It is fruit, not leaves nor even flowers, that is the test of the tree. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down, and cast into the fire. Alive to this, what good we should do! how busy we should be! There would be no time for sin; little even for rest. Rest? What have we to do with that? From His cradle to the grave, did Christ ever rest? "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Earth for work, heaven for wages. "There remaineth a rest for the people of God." (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *The twofold subjection of humanity to God—Pharaoh and Paul* (text, and Rom. xiv. 11; Exod. x. 17):—The passage from Romans, taken from Isa. xlv. 23, predicts the universal subjugation of mankind to the Divine will. This does not mean universal salvation, for the subjugation is twofold, the one represented by Pharaoh, the other by Paul. I. THE ONE IS BY A CONVICTION OF GOD'S TERRIBLE POWER, THE OTHER BY A CONVICTION OF HIS LOVE. Pharaoh felt that further rebellion would be ruin, and for a moment "bowed the knee." Paul felt that further rebellion would be a crime against that tenderness that could plead, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." So it is ever. Wicked men and devils are made to bow by a sense of God's power. Good men and angels bow from a sense of His love. II. THE ONE INVOLVES ANGUISH, THE OTHER HAPPINESS. In what a state of agony was Pharaoh when he said, "Intreat the Lord for me." But what joy came to Paul as the voice of Mercy said, "Rise, stand upon thy feet," &c. The one therefore involves heaven, the other hell. 1. In the one there is a sense of absolute slavery, in the other of perfect freedom. 2. In the one there is a sense of despair, in the other of hopefulness. 3. In the one there is a sense of Divine antagonism, in the other of Divine favour. III. THE ONE BECOMES A MINISTRY OF DESTRUCTION, THE OTHER OF SALVATION. Pharaoh, the moment the panic abated, rushes on and brings destruction to himself and his hosts; Paul begins a ministry which issues in the salvation of myriads. Conclusion: It is not for us to determine whether we shall bow the knee or not—we must—but how: by a sense of God's power or of His love, by coercion or choice? (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Our mission*:—I. EVERY MAN HAS HIS

MISSION. 1. Life is awfully significant. 2. Duty renders it sublime. II. OUR MISSION MAY BE ASCERTAINED—1. By observing our position and circumstances. 2. By listening to the voice of God. III. OUR MISSION MAY BE ACCOMPLISHED. 1. Impossibilities are not required. 2. God is pledged to give the needful strength. (*W. W. Wythe.*) *The Christian for the times*:—The great apostle was a man for the times in which he lived. "The Christian for the times" must be—I. SPIRITUAL. He must be "converted" on the conditions of repentance and faith. II. He must be INTELLIGENT. Must know the Scriptures. III. He must be TOLERANT IN SPIRIT. The age of intolerance is past. IV. He must be PROGRESSIVE in his methods. V. He must be AGGRESSIVE in spirit. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." To go is to be aggressive. VI. He must be LIBERAL with his possessions. VII. He must possess STABILITY OF CHARACTER. (*J. Robinette.*)

Ver. 7. **And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man** (text, and chap. xxii. 9):—*The sights and sounds of life*:—Here is a record of the supernatural in the life of Paul and his companions. The fact that these phenomena were at mid-day, and that the apostle's fellow travellers were also sensible of them demonstrates that both the voice and the light were objective realities. The slight discrepancy between the two accounts confirms their authenticity. Identity of statement by two different persons after an interval of twenty-five years would excite suspicion. But it may fairly be supposed that all that Paul means is that they heard not articulate voice but mere sound. The same sound that communicated no idea in the one case, conveyed a message from Christ in the other. And the same light which revealed nothing to "the men" revealed the Son of God to Paul. This extraordinary circumstance indicates what is common in human life. A voice fraught with deep meaning to some, is a mere empty sound to others; a light revealing the grandest realities to some, discloses nothing to others. I. MEN'S LIVES IN RELATION TO MATERIAL NATURE SHOW THIS. 1. The lights of nature reveal—(1) To the thoughtless multitude nothing but mere sensuous forms—just what they reveal to the brute. (2) To the superstitious, unearthly existences—dreaded as demons or worshipped as gods. (3) To the sceptical philosopher, nothing but a grand system of well-organised forces working by its own inherent impulse resistless as fate. (4) To the enlightened Christian, a wise and loving Father. 2. The voices of nature, too, which are boundlessly varied, and set in every key, convey different impressions to different minds. (1) Nothing but mere sensation. (2) Superstitious awe. (3) Scientific intelligence. (4) Thoughts from God. II. MEN'S LIVES IN RELATION TO HUMAN HISTORY SHOW THIS. The lights and voices of history reveal varied and almost opposite things. 1. To some it is without any governing law. Its social, mercantile, political movements are ascribable only to blind impulse and capricious passions. 2. To others it has only the governing law of human might. Some explain all on the principle that the strong preys on the weak. The progress and decline of commerce, the rise and fall of empires, the fate of battles are all ascribable to superior might. 3. To others it is governed exclusively by evil. The devil is in the schemes of the trader, the thunders of the orator, the craft of the priest, and shapes the destiny of the race. 4. To others it is governed by the mediatorial plan of God. The restorative purpose of heaven is seen running through the ages. Even the bitterest sufferings are regarded as parturition throes giving birth to a higher order of things. III. MEN'S LIVES IN RELATION TO THE INSPIRED ORACLE SHOW THIS. The Bible has wonderful lights and sounds, but nothing is more true than that they differently affect different men. Ecclesiastical history, theological polemics, as well as the religious life of our own age, are fraught with illustrations of this. The sceptic and the believer, the Papist and the Protestant, the Socinian and the Trinitarian, the Churchman and the Nonconformist are striking examples. IV. MEN'S LIVES IN RELATION TO THE GOSPEL MINISTRY SHOW THIS. How differently the same sermon is regarded by various members of the congregation. The sermon which as a Divine voice speaks to the conscience of some, has no meaning to others; or which, as a Divine light, flashes moral conviction and reveals Christ to some, is either not seen at all, or regarded as a mere glare of human genius or enthusiasm. Conclusion: This subject—1. Reveals a distinguishing attribute of human nature. Men have the power of hearing and seeing with the soul. All that the brutes see and hear terminates in the region of sensation. Ezekiel, Isaiah, John, our own Milton show what men can see and hear with the organs of their soul. The pure in heart see God. Man, in one word, has the power of receiving, modifying, and interpreting the impression the outward makes upon

him. 2. Explains the great difference between spiritually and carnally minded men. Men are divided into two classes, those who live to and for the flesh, and those who live to and for the Spirit. Why is this? The one hears and sees in the sounds and sights of life what the other does not. The spiritual realises the spiritual even here. 3. Presents an object in life after which all should strive—viz., to get the eyes and ears of his soul so quickened as to see and hear the Divine everywhere, as the Lord did for Elisha's servant. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

Vers. 8, 9. **And Saul arose, and. . . . they led him by the hand.**—*Hand-led*:—A wonderful change in the soul of which this was the symbol. I. THE HAND YIELDED. 1. Confession of futile character of past opposition. Sense of helplessness. 2. Trust in a newly discovered guide. II. THE HAND GRASPED. Soldiers accompany Saul, or strangers to him; they yet represented Divine guidance given in weakness. The responsibility of those who offer to guide. III. THE HAND KEPT—a type of soul attitude. Continue with Christ. True progress was the outcome of being led. We shall be brought to the great ends of life by being led. We shall attain rest. We need to gain that submissiveness embodied in "Lead, kindly light." (*A. F. Muir, M.A.*) **And was three days without sight.**—*What Saul felt in his seclusion and saw in his blindness*:—Only one other space of three days' duration can be mentioned of equal importance. The conflict of Saul's feelings was so great and his remorse so piercing that he could neither eat nor drink. He could have no communication with the Christians, for they had been terrified by the news of his approach, and the Jews could have no sympathy with his present state of mind. He fasted and prayed in silence. The recollections of his early years—the passages of Scripture which he had never understood—the thoughts of his own cruelty—the memory of the last looks of Stephen—all these crowded into his mind, and made the three days equal to long years of repentance. And if there was one feeling which above all others kept possession of his heart it was that suggested by Christ's expostulation, and this feeling would be attended with thoughts of peace, with hope and faith. He waited on God; and in his blindness a vision was granted unto him. (*Dean Howson.*) *Saul at Damascus*:—Just as an eagle which has been drenched and battered by some fierce storm will alight to plume its ruffled wings, so when a great soul has passed "through fire and water," it needs some quiet place in which to rest. Like Moses, like Elijah, like our Lord Himself, like almost every great soul in ancient or modern times to whom has been entrusted the task of swaying the destinies by moulding the convictions of mankind—like Sakya Mouni, like Mohammed in the cave at Hira, like St. Francis of Assisi in his sickness, like Luther in the monastery of Erfurt, Paul would need a quiet period in which to elaborate his thoughts, to still the tumult of his emotions, to commune in secrecy and silence with his own soul. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *The three days' sepulture for the inward man*:—I. THE OLD MUST PASS AWAY. 1. The old light is gone. 2. The old enjoyments are no longer palatable. 3. The old activity is paralysed. 4. The old friends are away. II. THE NEW IS QUIETLY PREPARING. 1. A new light is kindling within. 2. A new salvation is rising up in the soul. 3. Strength is collecting for a new calling. 4. New friends are standing at the door. (*K. Gerok.*)

Vers. 10–18. **And there was a certain disciple at Damascus called Ananias.**—*Ananias of Damascus*:—1. Most people have watched a little steam-tug busily towing some great ship down stream or out into the sea. The tug is almost extinguished by the giant hull that floats behind, and returns unnoticed into port, while, observed of all observers, the big ship spreads her white sails to the breeze, and, like a noble bird upon the wing, speeds her silent but majestic flight across the waves. The conversion of Saul, and the glorious work which he achieved, are household words in our Christian communities, and evidences of our Christian faith. Every one is familiar with the start of that goodly vessel, with the voyages it made, and the precious cargoes which it carried. But that ship also had its steam-tug, who appears at the crisis, does the work appointed to Him and then vanishes. 2. How a Christian Church had grown together at Damascus we know not; but some of the scattered disciples, doubtless, fled thither after Stephen's death, and converts were added from among the native Jews. Thus far Jews and Christians seem to have lived on peaceable and even friendly terms, far removed from the controversies of Jerusalem. Ananias himself was universally respected. He was known as "a devout man according to the law," and "had a good report of all the Jews which dwelt in Damascus." Such are the men whom our Lord loves to employ, men of

unblemished character, "sanctified and meet for the Master's use," &c. 3. It does not follow that Ananias held any official position in the Church. We have a perfect right to consider him a private Christian, with no special gift of public speech or pastoral authority, but holding the warrant which belongs to all disciples, to preach the gospel. Ananias's commission is only what may come to any one of us, and for which we should be prepared. True, the Lord spoke to him "in a vision"; but He may speak with equal emphasis by the whisper of His Spirit, or the indication of His providence; and our attitude, like his, must be that of the girded loins and watchful eye—"Behold, I am here, Lord." 4. The work prepared for Ananias is now unfolded to him. In the "street called Straight" stood a house, belonging to a well-known citizen, Judas; and there lies a blind man, wanting help, which Ananias is to give. The man is expecting him: for he too has had a vision of such an one coming. And mark the motive for going. "Behold, he prayeth"; that is the sight which attracts the eye of the Lord, and ought to kindle the zeal of the disciples. Are you beginning to pray? The ear of Christ has caught the sound. It comes floating up to the high heavens, through all the thunder of the angels' adoration, and the ceaseless murmur of the universe, heard as surely as an infant's cry reaches the mother's ear amidst the bustle of the house. He sees you; and He will stir up some Ananias to come to you. 5. The street is called Straight, the house is the house of Judas, and so far all is plain; but the man in the house—what is his name? The sound of his name fell like a thunderbolt; "inquire for one called Saul of Tarsus." Shall Ananias put his head into the tiger's mouth? Shall he carry the pearl of the gospel and cast it down at the feet of its bitterest calumniator? "Lord, I have heard by many of this man," and I had rather have nothing to do with him! How often has the same answer started to our lips at some distasteful call of duty. But these difficult errands are really our noblest opportunities. "Go thy way," Ananias; thou art to have part in a work with the fame of which the world shall ring! That persecutor is "a chosen vessel unto Me." To that devout disciple it is granted to take Saul of Tarsus by the hand, to introduce him into the Church, and to send him forth upon his mission of self-sacrifice. May there be no such honours waiting for us? John Bunyan was first enlightened by the simple Christian talk of some poor women, spinning on the summer's evening at their cottage doors. Sir Hope Grant is said to have been brought out of utter indifference by overhearing a group of private soldiers at prayer. The mouse lets loose the lion. Only let us cultivate simplicity and faith, and yield a prompt obedience to the call of duty, and to us too may fall some glorious trophy of Divine favour. 6. Brave believer as he was, Ananias reached the house, and found the man. He seems like some skilful and friendly physician in his treatment of the difficult case, and shows us how to deal with the inquiring. (1) Before him lies the man whose hands have been imbrued in Christian blood. He would have had Ananias himself in prison before now, if he had not been hindered. But it is all forgotten and forgiven. Friendly hands are laid on those blind eyes, and a voice, full of pathos and pity, says, "Brother Saul!" The salutation with which one Christian was wont to salute another—breathing so different a spirit from rigid Pharisaism. It seemed to take in the poor forlorn sinner to a family fireside, with its warmth and light. If we want to do men good, they must be our "brothers." Never stand, like some old pillar-saint, on your high pedestal of virtue, and talk down to the people at your feet. Go and sit at their side; put your hands on them; make them feel at home with you; and even if you have to do with the most wicked, speak to him as man to man, on the common footing of the love of God. (2) There, is moreover, a cheerful assurance in the tone which Ananias takes. He might have come to that chief of sinners with stern words of condemnation. He comes with words of hope and with acts of blessing. The falling of the scales from Saul's eyes was but a symbol of the spiritual enlightenment which Ananias was permitted to bring to his benighted soul. 7. What a commission we Christians have and with what alacrity should it be done! Happy must be the surgeon who with delicate skill can give sight back to the blinded eye, and bid it look out once more on sky and earth, and springing flowers, and human faces. But higher and happier still the calling of the disciple, who may send forth a brother man rejoicing on his pilgrimage to the eternal sunshine of heaven. 8. Nor does Ananias reckon his task yet complete. We preach the gospel to men, and then too often let them go. It matters much to a young disciple that he should be clearly told what to do next. And now to Saul's eager inquiry, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to

do?" comes the appropriate answer, "Arise and be baptized," and then, "join thyself to the disciples." Was it not a joyful day when Ananias entered the Christian assembly, leading by the hand that changed and humbled man, and witnessed the good profession which he made? And have you been the means of guiding a soul to Christ? That is good; but now complete your work. Bring your friend into the Church, among fellow Christians, whose experience may instruct and edify him, and with whom he may find a spiritual home. (*W. Brock, jun.*) *The good Ananias: a lesson for believers:*—I. THE MAN. 1. He was simply a private person. He is not described as pastor, or evangelist, or deacon: yet he was the channel for communicating the Holy Ghost to the great apostle. The Lord did not send to Paul an apostle, lest any should have said that Paul received his commission at second-hand from those already in office. I see in many of you special qualifications for certain uses, which your being church officers or preachers might take from you. 2. He was a disciple. He sat at Jesus' feet and learned of Him, and therefore was ready to instruct Saul. How can you teach others that which Christ does not teach you? 3. He was "a devout man" (chap. xxii. 12). Nowadays we greatly need more devout men, men of prayer, devoted men: for the strength of the spirit of man lies in fellowship with the Spirit of God. And he that has power with God will not fail to have power with men. 4. He had "a good report of all the Jews which dwell in Damascus." They hated Christians, but they could not help respecting this devout man. The world had then, as it still has, a respect for those who walk with God. If we are to be useful to our fellow-men we must deserve their esteem. 5. He was thoughtful for the Church of God. He was grieved at the afflictions of the saints in Jerusalem, and he feared for his brethren in Damascus. He is the first to call Christians "saints," or holy ones. He had evidently noticed with delight this point of their character. All the servants of God should take an interest in the condition of the Church. It is one mark that a man is right towards God when he is right towards the family of God. II. HIS POSTURE. He was familiar with the Old Testament, and remembered how the Lord said, "Abraham," and the patriarch answered, "Here am I," and how Samuel and Isaiah said the same. Did not this indicate that—1. His heart was responsive to the Divine voice? God speaks to us many times and gets no answer. Happy is he who can say with David, "When Thou saidst, Seek ye My face," &c. If there be a call to duty, or a prompting to sacrifice, does your spirit say at once, "Here am I"? 2. He was ready. He did not ask, "What for?" but "Here am I," ready for anything. Are we free from reservations? Whatsoever the Lord saith to us, are we prepared to do it? What drawbacks there often are! But blessed is that man who says "Ready, aye ready!" 3. He was all there. "Ananias." "Here am I." In prayer, in singing, how often it happens that the mind is wandering—we are not there. There is such a thing as preaching, and doing service for God with a portion of yourself. I often see upon a sunny wall a chrysalis, and when I go to take it down, I find that the summer's sun has shone upon it and the insect has developed, and left nothing but an empty case behind. How often in the pew we find the chrysalis of a man, but where is the man? Wait till to-morrow morning, and see him in his shop; there is the man; or, to follow up the figure, there is the butterfly. But if ever a man ought to be all there, it is when he is called to the service of God. He should marshal all his faculties, and every faculty should reply, "Here am I." The whole of a living man is something worth having, but a fragment is only fit to be buried. III. HIS DIRECTION. When he had thus said, "Here am I!" the Lord gave him his orders in detail. I do not say that the Lord will give us orders verbally, and I would have you not mistake your own whims for God's voice; but I do say believe that God's voice is calling you to that service which providence places in your way. God still guides His servants when they are willing to be guided. Ananias had his orders as to—1. Where he should go. The Lord knows the street and house where the sinner lives who is to be blessed by you. Only wait upon Him, and if you go in His name He will take care that you are not sent to the wrong person. 2. To whom he was to go. The Lord knows the individual whom you are to bless, and all about him. Though you have no verbal directions, yet the person who falls in your way, if you will but seek to do God's work to him, will turn out to be the person whom God intends you to bless. 3. When to go. Perhaps he had not yet left his bed, for it was a vision of the night; but he was to "Arise and go." God's errands are so important that we must not delay their performance. Why he was to go. Because the Master was there already. God had inspired the prayer of the blinded persecutor, and now he was about to answer it by Ananias. Where God has ploughed

we are to sow. Of that preparation you know but little, but your own duty is clear enough. 5. What he was to do when he found Saul; he was to lay his hand on him. There is a great deal in the touch of an earnest man. If you stand half a mile off from a man, and throw the gospel at him, you will miss him; but if you go close to him, and lay hold upon him, and show that you have an affection for him, you will, by God's blessing, lead him in the right way. IV. His difficulties. These were—1. Very natural. There is a promise that the leopard shall lie down with the kid, but it is not surprising that the kid should at first shrink from the monster; and so this simple-minded man was startled at the idea that he was to visit the malicious man who had sought the lives of Christians. 2. Were such that he could tell the Lord about them; and whenever you feel any difficulty, if you can lay it before the Lord in prayer, there may be unbelief in it, but there will be no wilful sin in it. 3. Unfounded. If he had thought for a minute he would have concluded that if Saul prayed he must have ceased to persecute. Do we not lose opportunities of doing good by dwelling too much upon the past characters of those to whom we are sent? Utterly hopeless people are often the most hopeful when we have faith enough to approach them. Be hopeful that He who placed this sinner in your way and you in the sinner's way has designs of love which are about to be accomplished. V. His comfort. The Lord reassured His servant by reminding him—1. Of the doctrine of election. "He is a chosen vessel unto Me." Here was one whom God had chosen to bless, though Ananias knew it not. 2. That He had chosen this man to a great purpose. "To bear My name among the Gentiles." A great sinner is to be made a great saint. A great opposer is to become a great labourer. Who knows how largely God may use the sinner whom we seek to save? You teachers may be teaching Luthers or Melancthons, holy men and women who shall serve the Lord abundantly. 3. That He would go with him—"For I will show him," &c. You are bidden to teach an individual and you fear that you have no strength, and, therefore, you cry, "Lord, I cannot show this man the truth." The Lord replies, "I will show him." VI. His obedience. It was—1. Prompt. He went his way with all speed. 2. Exact: he entered into the house, and, putting his hands on him, said, "Brother Saul." He did as he had been bidden. And if I deliver my Lord's message just as He gave it to me, then my Lord is responsible for the success of it, and not myself. 3. Loving. "Brother Saul." You cannot win souls by putting on a morose countenance. Do not be afraid to call the individual "Brother"; but take care that you mean it. Ananias did not use the term as a cant expression, but his spirit and feeling were brotherly. 4. Wise. He did not pompously say, "I am an ordained official, and therefore speak with authority"; but "The Lord, even Jesus, that appeared," &c. When he alludes to Paul's former course, he only gives a hint of it—"the Lord that appeared to thee." He does not say, "as thou camest to persecute us," but he allowed conscience to do its own work. He gives the items of his errand—"that thou mightest receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost." 5. Faithful. "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins." The tendency with many is to say nothing upon that point. VII. The results. They were—1. Immediate; for Paul received his sight, was comforted and baptized at once. 2. Extensive; for this Paul became a preacher of the gospel to every land. Go ye, then, wherever God sends you. Everybody is not a Paul, but yet you may find a Paul among your converts. The pearl fisher plunges into the sea; he does not know whether or no he shall bring up a pearl that will decorate an emperor's diadem, but he searches the deeps in that hope. No matter though the fisherman himself may be coarse and rugged, yet he may light upon a priceless pearl. And you, whoever you may be, plunge into your work with whole-hearted devotion, and you shall yet discover some hidden jewel which shall adorn Immanuel's diadem. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 11. **And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight.**—*Straight street* is distinguished—I. As the temporary abode of a remarkable stranger. "One Saul of Tarsus." 1. Remarkable for intellectual ability. 2. For prodigious force of character. 3. For undivided concentration of purpose. 4. For conscientious religious conviction. 5. For tragic success in persecution. 6. For startling change of career. II. As a locality visited by a Divine messenger. "And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go," &c. That Heaven—1. Is intimately acquainted with the homes of the good. 2. Sometimes utilises the homes of the good for its own purpose. 3. Invariably immortalises such occasions by the Divine presence. III. As the scene of the greatest conversion. "Behold, he prayeth,"

The conversion was—1. Unexpected in its occurrence. 2. Miraculous in its agency. 3. Bitter in its experience. 4. Prolonged in its process. 5. Unique in its purpose. 6. World-wide in its results. This one conversion was a universal revival. (*B. D. Johns.*)

The dwellers in "the street called Straight":—I am afraid that if Ananias had been sent to that street to inquire for some of us he would not have found us living there. This street is a very interesting one, because—1. The people who live in it are honest, and would not do a dishonourable thing for all that you could give them. Thus there are many people who do not think it worth their while to live in that street, still less do they think that any one can succeed in business there, as they will have to compete with people who live in other streets, and who will do very unworthy things for the sake of gain. Thus they think they are bound to do some crooked things or they will be driven out of house and home by competition. And so there are many people who refuse to live in "the street called Straight," because it has no "Lying Corner" or "Cheating Alley." But we must remember that the only sense in which we can be rich is not having a lot of money to our credit in the bank. The richest man after all is the man who has got a good name, which cannot be bought for money; so that if a man loses occasionally in pounds, shillings, and pence by living in "the street called Straight," he gains in having a nobler spirit, a finer character, and a more beautiful life. 2. The people who live in "the street called Straight" are truthful. They will not tell a lie on any account, even if it gets them out of a difficulty. Now, I wonder how many of you children live in this street? 3. Those who live in "the street called Straight" are self-denying. They will gladly do a kindness, if by so doing they can help their neighbour. Ah, there is wonderful neighbourliness in this street. 4. Those who live in this street keep everything very clean. They sometimes may be mistaken, but they are very pure in their motives. (*D. Davies.*)

Enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth.—*Behold he prayeth:*—These words are the hall-mark of genuine conversion. "Behold, he prayeth" is a surer witness of a man's conversion than, "Behold, he singeth, or, readeth the Scripture, or, preacheth." These things may be admirably done by men who are not regenerate; but if a man really prays, we may know that he has passed from death unto life. Prayer is the autograph of the Holy Ghost upon the renewed heart. Hence the Lord gave to Ananias his sure indication that Saul of Tarsus was a converted man, by saying to him, "Behold, he prayeth." In Saul's case, this indication was very specially remarkable: "Behold, he prayeth" had a peculiar meaning in relation to this converted Pharisee. I shall have to show you this at length. It was thought a great wonder that King Saul, of the Old Testament, prophesied. So unexpected and singular was the event that it became a proverb: "Is Saul also among the prophets?" But it was an equal marvel when this more modern Saul was seen to pray. Is Saul of Tarsus among those who pray to Jesus for mercy? The Lord from heaven Himself mentions it as a prodigy, he points to it as a thing to be beheld and wondered at, for He says to His servant Ananias, "Behold, he prayeth." This expression concerning Saul of Tarsus is remarkable, for—I. IT IMPLIES THAT HE HAD NEVER PRAYED BEFORE. This is very striking, for Saul was a Pharisee, and therefore a man who habitually repeated prayers; but He who searcheth the hearts, and knew what prayer is, here declares that now at length he begins to pray. What his friends would have put down as a great mass of prayer, the Lord makes nothing of. I want to push this fact home upon those who in a formal manner have always prayed and yet have never spiritually prayed. 1. Real prayer must be spiritual; and Saul's prayers had not been such before. Words are but the body of devotion: the confession of sin, the longing for mercy, these are the spirit of prayer. A man may have repeated the choicest words, and yet not have prayed at all. A man may utter no word whatever, and he may be praying most effectually, as Moses and Hannah. Anyhow, that prayer which is not spiritual is not prayer; for "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." If the spirit does not commune with God, there may have been music and oratory, but there has been no prayer. 2. Saul had never offered prayer of the kind which the Lord can accept. He knew the letter of the truth according to the ceremonial law; but he did not know the spirit of it as it is embodied in Jesus. He had been going about to establish his own righteousness, but he had not submitted himself to the righteousness of Christ; and therefore in his prayer he had not been traversing the road which led to the heart of God. If you employ a servant to do a work, and he persists in doing another thing, however industriously he works, he will receive nothing

at your hands. So if you pray in a way which God has never ordained, you will not receive anything of the Lord. 3. Saul had never made mention of the name of Jesus. There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved; there is none other name by which we can hopefully approach the mercy-seat. Saul had rejected that name, and had come in his own. 4. Real prayer cannot come from men whose characters are contrary to the mind of God. Their lives have effectually pleaded against their lips. Saul of Tarsus was opposed to the Son of God; how could he be in favour with God Himself? If we set ourselves in opposition to His gospel, while we pretend to be knocking at heaven's gate we are turning the key against ourselves. Saul had been a persecutor, and how can a persecutor pray? If you have the spirit of hate in you, it nullifies your devotions; for prayer ought to be the flower and crown of love. Friend, if you are living an ungodly life, I do not care how regularly you bend your knee in seeming devotion, there is nothing in it. 5. Saul with all his prayers had never truly prayed, because humility was absent from his devotions. His prayer was the expression of thankfulness that Saul of Tarsus was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, as touching the law blameless. In the courts above, where outward appearances are nothing, and God looketh at the heart, his pious harangues were not reckoned to be prayers at all. II. IT IS IMPLIED THAT IT WAS A REMARKABLE THING FOR SUCH A PERSON NOW TO PRAY. "*Behold*, he prayeth!" It is a very difficult and marvellous thing for a man truly to pray who has been all his lifetime praying in a false way. It is a miracle of grace to bring a proud Pharisee to plead for mercy like a penitent publican. It is not half so wonderful that an irreligious man should begin to pray as that a vainglorious professor should begin to pray; because—1. He has been a formalist for so long, and so rooted in the habit of formal devotion, and so contented with it. It is easier to attend a thousand masses, or to go to church every day in the week, than to offer one true prayer. 2. Of self-righteousness. In Christ's day, the publicans and harlots entered the kingdom before the Pharisees. It is a great thing to conquer sinful self, but it is a greater thing to overcome righteous self. The man who is downright bad and feels it, asks for mercy; but these people are bad at heart, and do not feel it: therefore they will not seek the Lord. 3. Of prejudice. He has made up his mind that he will not see the light of God, because he believes in his own light. 4. Even religious fervour may become a hindrance when that ardour is for a false faith. The earnest formalist is cased in steel, and the arrows of the gospel glance from him. III. IT IS DIVINELY DECLARED THAT HE DID PRAY. One would have liked to have heard him. See him now! This fine, good man! How humble he is! 1. His prayers began with a full and grievous confession of sin. He offered neither excuse nor extenuation, except "I did it ignorantly, in unbelief." 2. Now you will find him acknowledging his great need—a new heart and a right spirit. 3. I think I can see mingled with that prayer the lowliest adoration. How he would worship Jesus of Nazareth as his God now that he was conquered by Him! 4. Consider what pleas he had. Pleading is the truest and strongest part of prayer. Assuredly he urged the promises, "Let the wicked forsake his way," &c., "Come, now, and let us reason together," &c. "Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God." How the fifty-third of Isaiah must have flashed in on his mind! 5. And all this must have been steeped in a wonderful fervour. Before, you might have said to yourself, "He is saying his prayers," but this time it was as when a man wrestleth for his life. IV. IT IS EVIDENT THAT THE LORD ACCEPTED HIS PRAYER. I know it from the text, because—1. God bore witness that he did pray. 2. He was about to answer the prayer. He had Ananias in readiness to go and comfort the poor blinded penitent. God is about to answer your prayer if you have cried to Him. Perhaps the man is present who will speak to you. 3. He called attention to it by a "Behold." We have heard of many marvels concerning which men cry, "Behold"; but that which strikes God most is a sinner praying. God does not say, "Behold Herod on his throne," or "Behold Cæsar in his palace." Conclusion: I am afraid there are many of whom it would have to be said, "Behold, he never prays!" What a sight—a man created by his Maker, and daily fed by His bounty, who never worships Him! And yet when he does pray, God makes a wonder of it. It is his first prayer this morning. He has reached home and is kneeling by the side of that bed on which he has slept so often without prayer, and he cries, "O God, I do not know what to say, but be merciful to me a sinner, and forgive my sins." I hear the rustling wings of angels as they gather around the sacred spot. Anon they fly upward, crying, "Behold he prayeth." Years pass on, young man, and you come to middle life and are exposed to sharp temptation,

Good spirits watch you. You remember that day when you first prayed; and you go upstairs, and say, "Lord, many days have passed since, and I have not ceased to cry; but now I am in special trouble. I beseech Thee, deliver me!" And angels sing and the devils mutter, "Behold, he prayeth." The young man has grown old, and has gone up to the same room for the last time. "Behold, he prayeth." Prayer, which has long been his vital breath and native air, is now "His watchword at the gates of death," &c. The shining ones gladly meet the soul that is on Jordan's bank when they hear the voice, "Behold, he prayeth." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Saul praying*:—Notice—I. THE PERSON WHO SPEAKS—"The Lord." 1. He whom Peter preached. 2. He whom Stephen saw. 3. He whom Saul heard. 4. He whom Ananias served. II. THE PERSON SPOKEN OF—"Saul." 1. A native of Tarsus. 2. A persecutor of the Church. 3. A sinner arrested. 4. A penitent converted. III. THE ACT DESCRIBED—"Prayeth." 1. It was becoming. 2. It was necessary. 3. It was beneficial. 4. It was exemplary. IV. THE ATTENTION DEMANDED—"Behold." 1. What grace has done. 2. What grace can do. 3. What grace must do. 4. What grace leads to. (*A. Macfarlane.*) *Prayer the evidence of Paul's conversion*:—I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH LED PAUL TO PRAY. His understanding was convinced, his will was subdued, his heart was converted, and his soul was saved. II. THE CHARACTER OF PAUL'S PRAYERS. What was there in them which rendered them acceptable? 1. The prayers of a sinner thus humbled, we may feel assured, were offered up in humility. From the proud and self-sufficient Pharisee he is transformed into the humble and self-denying penitent, "striking on his breast and saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." 2. And not only were his prayers offered up in humility, but we cannot doubt of their earnestness also. Convinced of sin, and deeply anxious for the salvation of his soul, he "utters strong cries" in the hope that they may enter into the ears of the Lord of Hosts, and meet with an answer of pardon and peace. 3. We may naturally conclude that Paul also prayed in faith, after the recent wonderful revelation made to him. Our Lord Himself, indeed, acknowledged and accepted his prayer, when He said, "Behold, he prayeth!" Then did that new light break in upon his soul, which "shone more and more unto the perfect day," and which so wonderfully displayed itself in his arduous work of the ministry. III. THE LIGHT IN WHICH GOD REGARDED THE PRAYERS OF PAUL, and in which He regards the prayers of all who offer them up in the same spirit that he did. God regarded them as a mark of his real conversion, and as such approved of and accepted them. (*J. L. F. Russell, M.A.*) *Saul of Tarsus praying*:—We live in a world of changes. Seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, &c. Human affairs are as variable as the seasons. But no changes are so important and interesting as those of a moral nature. It is painful to see a fellow-creature proceeding from evil to evil; but how pleasing is it to see a sinner plucked as a brand from the burning! To one of these remarkable changes we are referred in the text, from which we are led to remark—I. THAT THE LORD KNOWS WHERE WE ARE, AND HOW WE ARE ENGAGED. What was this house of Judas? An inn? If so, it was a sad situation for a man in spiritual distress; and never did an inn before or since accommodate such a passenger. Perhaps it was a private dwelling belonging to one of his acquaintances. If so, what would be the emotions of the family as he entered! But however this may be, the Lord knew—the street—the very house in which he was; and what he was doing there. It would be easy to multiply similar instances, *e.g.*, that of Cornelius and Peter, Nathanael, Zacchæus. He knew how to guide Cornelius in sending to Joppa for Peter. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." Let sinners think of it; and never dream of secresy in their guilt. Let hearers think of it; and remember that God is privy to all the workings of their minds while in His worship. Let the righteous believe this; and remember that though they are poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon them. And, oh! thou dejected penitent, think of this and be comforted. "To this man will I look," &c. II. HOWEVER THE LORD MAY TRY THEM, HE WILL NOT SUFFER PRAYING SOULS TO CALL UPON HIM IN VAIN. Saul was deprived of sight; and thus all his gloomy thoughts were turned inward upon himself, and the anguish of his mind was such, that he probably could eat nothing. All that he had heard was this, "It shall be told thee what thou must do": but this was general, and capable of various explanations. But says the Church, "Come, and let us return to the Lord . . . in the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight." And here this was literally accomplished. "I never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye Me, in vain." Joseph was a type of the Redeemer.

His behaviour to his brethren was for a time apparently very unkind. But the trial was necessary: and at length giving way to the compassion which his prudence had restrained before, he said, "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt—but be not grieved." Thus Christ leaves Saul three days without comfort; but it was in order to lay deep the foundation of a superstructure that was to rise so high. And all the time Saul was praying, He was hearing; and longing to succour and relieve Him. What is the use you ought to make of this? To persevere. God's delays are not denials. He has reasons for what we deem severity, founded in a regard to our welfare. You cannot be in a worse condition than David was: but hear him. "I waited patiently for the Lord," &c. Say not, therefore, "My hope is perished from the Lord—why should I wait for Him any longer?" If you draw back, you are sure of destruction; but if you go forward, you are certain of success. "Ask, and it shall be given you," &c. Perhaps some messenger of mercy is now on his way. III. THOUGH THE LORD CAN ACCOMPLISH HIS WORK WITHOUT HUMAN INSTRUMENTALITY, HE IS PLEASED TO MAKE USE OF IT. The voice from heaven could have told Saul at once what he must do—but a messenger shall be employed. He could have sent an angel—but he shall learn it from the lips of a man of like passions with himself. His terror would not make him afraid. With him he could hold free intercourse and familiar conversation. He could speak to him from his own experience; and therefore sympathise with him. It would be also useful to Ananias as well as to Saul. By doing good to others we benefit ourselves. It certainly was designed to prevent our undervaluing means, under a notion of depending on Divine agency. Here let us however beware of two extremes. Let us not, on the one hand, overlook instruments in relying on God; nor, on the other, overlook God in using instruments. It is not the sun that warms us, but He by the sun: it is not food that sustains us, but He by food. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos," &c. IV. THINGS DONE IN OUR OWN APPREHENSION, AND IN THE OPINION OF OTHERS, ARE FREQUENTLY NOTHING IN THE JUDGMENT OF GOD. "Behold, he prayeth!" And what was there strange or new in this? Was he not of the straitest sect of the Pharisees? And were they not more distinguished by their prayers than by anything else? Yes. Yet Saul had never prayed till now. See the difference drawn by an unerring Judge in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. V. PRAYER IS A GOOD EVIDENCE OF CONVERSION. "Go, Ananias; he is ready to receive you. Go, and be not afraid of him—the man is changed—he is become a new creature—'for, behold, he prayeth.'" "The spirit of grace" is always a spirit "of supplications." Be it remembered, however, that this mark is better applied exclusively than inclusively. A man may pray, and not be in a state of salvation; but he that does not pray, cannot be in a state of salvation. No man can be a partaker of Divine grace that lives without prayer. What then is the condition of many! (*W. Jay.*)

Paul's first prayer:—Here was—I. AN ANNOUNCEMENT. "Behold, he prayeth." It was the announcement of a fact which was—1. Noticed in heaven. Saul had been led to cry for mercy, and the moment he began to pray God began to hear. See what attention God paid to Saul. He knew the street where he lived, the house where he resided; his name; the place where he came from, and that he had prayed. God may not regard battles, nor care for the pomp and pageantry of kings; but wherever there is a heart big with sorrow, the ear of Jehovah is wide open. Poor sinner, thy prayers are heard. Where was it—in a barn? At thy bedside, or in this hall? There is one thing which outstrips the telegraph. "Before they call I will answer, and while they are speaking I will hear." 2. Joyous to heaven. (1) Our Saviour regarded it with joy. The Shepherd rejoices more over that lost sheep than over ninety and nine that went not astray. (2) Angels rejoiced too. Why, when one of God's elect runs into sin, angels gaze with sorrow. Presently the man is brought under the sound of the gospel. The angels say, "Behold, he begins to hear." At last he cries from his inmost soul, "God have mercy upon me!" The angels say, "Behold, he prayeth." Then they set heaven's bells ringing; "there is joy among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." (3) There are others that rejoice, besides the angels, our friends who have gone before us, and our ministers most of all. 3. Most astonishing to men. Ananias lifted up both his hands in amazement. Sometimes I look upon such-and-such individuals and say, "Well, they are very hopeful; I trust there is a work going on." Soon, perhaps, I miss them altogether; but instead thereof my good Master sends me one of whom I had no hope—an outcast. Then I am astonished, "I should have thought of anybody rather than you." There was an old sailor, one of the worst men in the village. He came into the chapel, however, when one was preaching

from Jesus weeping over Jerusalem. And the poor man thought, "What! did Christ ever weep over such a wretch as I am?" He came to the minister, and said, "Sir, sixty years have I been sailing under the colours of the devil; it is time I should have a new owner; I want to scuttle the old ship; then I shall have a new one, and I shall sail under the colours of Immanuel." Ever since that moment that man has been a praying character. Yet he was the very last man you would have thought of. Somehow God does choose the last men. God is more wise than the chemist; He not only refines gold, but He transmutes base metals into precious jewels. The conversion of Saul was a strange thing; but was it not stranger that you and I should have been Christians? 4. A novelty to Saul himself. All he had ever done before went for nothing. I have heard of an old gentleman who was taught, when a child, to pray, "Pray God bless my father and mother," and he kept on praying the same thing for seventy years, when his parents were both dead. After that it pleased God to touch his heart, and he was led to see that, notwithstanding that he had often said his prayers, he had never prayed. So it was with Saul. Now comes a true petition, and it is said, "Behold, he prayeth." There is a man trying to obtain a hearing from His Maker. He speaks Latin; but God pays no attention. Then the man tries a different style; procures a book, and prays the best old prayer that could ever be put together; but the Most High disregards his empty formalities. At last the poor creature throws the book away, and says, "O Lord, hear, for Christ's sake." One hearty prayer is better than ten thousand forms. II. AN ARGUMENT. "For, behold, he prayeth." 1. For Ananias' safety. Ananias was afraid to go to Saul; he thought it was very much like steping into a lion's den. God says, "Behold, he prayeth." "Well," says Ananias, "that is enough." You may always trust a praying man. A master likes to have a praying servant, if he does not regard religion himself. He who communes with God in secret, may be trusted in public. Two gentlemen were travelling together in Switzerland. Presently they came into the forests; and you know the gloomy tales the people tell about the inns there. One of them, an infidel, said to the other, a Christian, "I don't like stopping here, it is dangerous." But they went into the house, and presently the landlord said, "Gentlemen, I always read and pray with my family before going to bed; will you allow me to do so to-night?" "Yes," they said, "with the greatest pleasure." When they went upstairs, the infidel said, "I am not at all afraid now." "Why?" said the Christian. "Because our host has prayed." "Oh!" said the other, "then it seems, after all, that you think something of religion; because a man prays you can go to sleep in his house." 2. For Paul's sincerity. Secret prayer is one of the best tests of sincere religion. If Jesus had said, "Behold, he preacheth," Ananias would have said, "that he may do, and yet be a deceiver." If He had said, "he has gone to a meeting of the church," Ananias would have said, "He may enter there as a wolf in sheep's clothing." But when He said, "Behold, he prayeth," that was argument enough. A young person comes and tells me about what he has felt and what he has been doing. At last I say, "kneel down and pray." Then I am a little more satisfied, and I say, "I did not mind all your talk, I wanted your prayers." But if I could see him pray alone then I should feel sure. 3. Of Saul's election, for you read directly afterwards, "Behold, he is a chosen vessel." Some say, "How can I discover whether I am God's elect?" Do you pray? If so, never be afraid of non-election. III. AN APPLICATION. 1. To the children of God. The best mark of our being sons of God is to be found in our devotion, and as a natural consequence the more we are found in prayer the brighter will our evidences be. Perhaps you have lost your evidence, and I will tell you where, in your closet. Prayer is the ship which bringeth home the richest freight—the soil which yields the most abundant harvest. 2. To the ungodly. A prayerless soul is a Christless soul. I beseech you, as you love yourselves, contemplate what will become of you if you should at last die without prayer. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Prayer in not being able to pray*:—I went home from my church one Sabbath evening, and a few days after a man and his wife who had not been accustomed to pray met me, and said, "We had a wonderful time at our house last Sabbath night." I said, "What was it?" "We went home from church, and though we had never had prayer in our house, yet I called my family together, and after I had read a verse or two (I am a pretty good reader) I could read no further. My voice broke, and then I stopped, and we knelt down and I began my prayer, and I said, 'O God——,' but the thought that we had never had prayer in our house so overwhelmed me that I could get on no further with my prayer; and then my wife, who is a Christian woman, began to pray, but

the thought that Christ had at last come to our house had so overwhelmed her too, that she only advanced with one or two sentences, and we could not pray, and there we lay on the floor, and cried and cried, but we could not pray." "Oh," I said to him, "my brother you did pray. You don't know what prayer is. Prayer is the sigh of the heart, for before even your first tear touched the earth, God, I think, despatched an angel from the throne, and he thrust his wing under the falling tear and caught it, and sped with it backward towards the throne of grace; and as that tear glittered in the light of the celestial throne, all heaven broke forth into full chant, crying, 'Behold, he prayeth.'" (*T. de Witt Talmage.*) *Unlikely men praying*:—In a well-known seminary in New England, a notice was placed on the outside of the door of a room occupied by a student. "No admittance" was the legend inscribed in bold letters on the notice. The occupant of the room was not the kind of a man who would be likely to be so busy with his studies as to dread interruption, and he was, besides, a young man fond of society. His motive for affixing the notice was a mystery to most of the students. A few, however, understood it. A revival of religion was in progress in the seminary, and some young men interested in it had agreed together to visit every non-Christian member of the institution and plead for Christ personally with the individual soul. This young man had heard of the arrangement, and put up the notice to warn off his expected visitors. The little band of praying students resolved to test the virtue of prayer in opening the bolted door. Fervently they committed the case to God, entreating Him not only to unbar the door, but also and especially to unlock and take possession of the stubborn heart within the door. And never can they forget the thrill of wonder and joy which they felt when the message, "Behold, he prayeth!" was announced to them. While they were appealing to God one of their number knocked at the bolted door, and to his great surprise, as he listened for a response, heard the most earnest cries and sobs within. The Holy Spirit had evidently gained "admittance" not only into the room, but into the far more strongly bolted heart, and the bitter enemy of the revival was pleading for mercy. In a short time the door was opened, the "Notice" was removed, the praying student was welcomed; and the result was, that in a day or two the enemy joined the ranks of the friends of Christ.

Vers. 13–16. **Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man.**—*An encouraging lesson from Paul's conversion*:—The conversion of Saul was one of the most remarkable facts in Christian history. It was important as a testimony to the power and truth of the gospel; as securing for the Church its ablest advocate, as giving a mighty impetus to Christian missions, and as securing for Christianity the master mind who formulated its theology and shaped its mode of thought and action. The Pauline mark will never be erased from the page of Church history. That, however, is not my business at present. I would rather remind you of the conversion of Paul as teaching the fact of the Divine interposition in the Church. God has been pleased by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe; and it is by the communication of one earnest heart to another that men are usually converted. Such, however, was not the way by which Paul was converted. The Church has reason to believe that while she uses all the power committed to her, there will be interpositions of a power far higher than her own, which will work for her great successes. While Barak fights below, the stars in heaven shall also fight against Sisera. I. THERE ARE OTHER PRODUCTIVE FORCES AT WORK FOR THE CHURCH BESIDES HER TEACHING. 1. The work of the Spirit. All the success of the Church comes through Him, but have we not reason to expect that the Holy Ghost will occasionally display His power, by working apart from the ordinary agencies of the Church? We have heard of persons who have not been accustomed to attend the house of God, who have not been reading religious books, and yet in the middle of their work they have been filled with penitent and devout thoughts, and have known cases of persons intending to perpetrate vice, who have, nevertheless, been struck with certain reflections which they had never recognised before, and have been led to become men of holy lives. Why should not the Holy Spirit do so still? 2. The intercession of our Lord. Our Lord prays for those we never thought of praying for: and shall there not come to them grace in due season? 3. The incessant intercession of the faithful. Of course, this brings success to instrumentality, but there are prayers which are offered in connection with no particular agency. They are like the clouds which ascend from the sea, as the sun shines on the waves; they fall on the fields which have been sown by man,

but they also drop upon the pastures of the wilderness, and the little hills rejoice on every side. Who shall say that Saul's conversion was not traceable to the prayer of Stephen? Yet there was no distinct connection such as could be defined. Who shall say that the gatherings in Jerusalem for prayer, may not have had about them power with God for the conversion of the persecutors? Yet we do not see the same connecting link as between the prayer-meeting in the house of John Mark's mother, and the escape of Peter from prison. Pray on, for though there should seem to be no connection between your prayers and the salvation of the sons of men, yet this shall be one of the forces in operation which shall not spend itself in vain. 4. The aroma of the truth in the world. The truth is mainly spread by plain earnest statements of it, but there is also a savour in truth, whereby even in our silence it spreads itself. Where the gospel of Jesus Christ comes, it impregnates the social atmosphere, it permeates society, it has an effect far beyond its local habitation. Many men who have not yet bowed before the deity of Christ, have unconsciously learnt much from Him, and what they think to be their own is but a blessed plagiarism from Jesus. Even the philosophies of men have been all the soberer, and the laws of men all the gentler, because of the existence of the gospel. Men cannot live in the midst of Christians, and yet altogether shut out the influence of Christianity. 5. The influence of Christian life and of Christian death. Wherever the Christian acts up to his profession, those who observe him take knowledge of him that he has been with Jesus; and as example speaks more loudly than precept, we may look for very marked results. The eloquence of Christian holiness is more potent for conversion than all the speaking of Christian orators. So, too, when the ungodly sees a Christian die, that happy death will be a potent agency to arouse, to win the heart for Christ. 6. All the work of God in providence. I might truly say of the Church that the stones of the field are in league with her, and the beasts of the field are at peace with her, for all things work her good. Sickness, when it stalketh through the land, is a powerful preacher to the unthinking masses. When death has come into the house, it has frequently happened that hearts were impressed that were hard as iron before. As God sent the hornet before His conquering Israel to overthrow the Canaanites, so doth He send providences to work together, for our help, that the truth may prevail. 7. Conscience, which though sadly impaired leans to the right side. II. FROM THESE SOURCES WE MAY EXPECT REMARKABLE CONVERSIONS. 1. Those who were formerly violently opposed to the truth through prejudice. Paul was opposed to Christ not because he was opposed to truth, but because he thought that Jesus was not the Messiah. Once convinced that he was wrong, he followed the right at once; and we may hope that interpositions will occur in which the Holy Spirit will enlighten the darkness of men who are honest in their darkness, and that they, seeing the light, will embrace the gospel. 2. Those who have been doing much mischief to the good cause, and who are resolved to do still more (vers. 13, 14). Do not despair of a man because he is industriously opposed. Anything is better than indifference. 3. Those who are beyond the reach of ordinary ministries. We sometimes regret that the voice of a thoroughly faithful ministry is seldom heard in the courts of kings; but for all that the Lord can reach those whom we cannot reach; He can, in life or in the dying hour, come to the hearts of men whose ears were never reached by any testifier to the truth. Paul would not have heard a preacher of Christ; but the Lord hath a way where we have none. 4. Those who will be most earnest. A man who feels that God has had singular mercy upon him, feels that being much loved, and having had much forgiven, he must render much service. 5. Those who will become profoundly evangelical. I trace Paul's evangelism to the fact that he was so remarkably converted. He saw in himself the boundless power, the infinite mercy, the absolute sovereignty, of God; and therefore he bare witness more clearly than any other to these Divine attributes. Courage, then, the noblest minds will yet be engaged in the service of our Master. The leaders on the enemy's side shall yet be champions in our Master's army. III. THIS OCCASIONAL SINKING OF INSTRUMENTALITY ANSWERS ADMIRABLE ENDS. This might be thought to be a dangerous thing for the industry of the Church, for some are always ready enough to clutch at excuses for leaving God's work alone. But there are admirable reasons for the Lord's sole working; for these interpositions—1. Disclose the presence of the living Christ. We too often forget this, and yet the power of the Church lies in Christ. In the Romish church its power over devout minds lies in no small degree in the fact that the person of Christ is much loved and reverenced; but you seldom see Christ in any but two attitudes—as a babe in His

mother's arms, or else dead; scarcely ever is He set forth as the living Lord. That Church which, not forgetting His birth, nor His sacrifice, yet most clearly recognises that He still liveth, is the Church that shall win the day. 2. Remind us of the supernatural agency of the Holy Spirit. The tendency nowadays is to expunge the supernatural; but for all that there is a Holy Spirit. In proportion as that truth is made clear to the Church by her personal experience, the Church will be girt with power from on high. 3. Unveils many of the Divine attributes. Men so remarkably converted are sure to display the sovereignty, power, grace, and long-suffering of God. 4. Aids very much the faith of the Church. When she is beginning to droop and to sink, then it is that these remarkable conversions come in and inspirit the whole band. 5. Startles and impresses the world. What knows the world of the conversion of those who have sat in these pews ever since they were children? But let some gross blasphemer or persecutor preach the faith which once he sought to destroy, and the whole land is astonished. IV. ALL THIS BY NO MEANS LOWERS THE VALUE OF INSTRUMENTALITY. For—1. Such cases are rare. One Saul is struck to the earth; but Peter preaches at Pentecost, and three thousand are pricked in their hearts. One Colonel Gardner, on the night he was about to commit a great sin, saw, or fancied he saw, the appearance of our Lord, and heard the words, "I have done all this for thee, what hast thou done for Me?" but there were fifty thousand perhaps in Scotland and in England at that time who were brought to a knowledge of the truth by the ordinary methods of mercy. 2. These cases involve human agency somewhere. Saul struck down, but how does he get comfort? Does that come by another voice from heaven? It might have done; but the Lord takes care that the very instrumentality which is put aside in one place shall be honoured in another, and so Ananias must be sent forth to bless the penitent. Conviction may be wrought by the Holy Spirit without means, but in the full decision somewhere or other God will use you. 3. These conversions are a provision of a most remarkable instrumentality. "I have called him"—not to be a singular article for exhibition—but "to be a chosen vessel unto Me to bear My name among the Gentiles." Remarkable converts become themselves the most indefatigable servants of God. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Undue alarm at evils*:—I. WE LIVE IN A DAY OF BOLD, AGGRESSIVE WICKEDNESS, as personal, public, palpable as that of Saul, *e.g.*, Sabbath breaking, licentiousness, intemperance, infidelity, gambling, corrupt literature, &c. II. THE CIVIL AUTHORITIES SANCTION AND UPHOLD OR FAIL TO SUPPRESS THESE CURSES, as in the case of Saul. III. LIKE ANANIAS CHRISTIANS AND MORAL REFORMERS ARE UNDULY ALARMED AT THE POWER AND CIVIL AUTHORITY OF THESE EVILS. Right is mighty and will prevail (Eph. vi. 10–20). IV. LIKE ANANIAS WE SHOULD LAY ASIDE OUR FEARS AND TIMIDITY, and, seeing the right, go out and meet these foes face to face. V. HOW SHALL WE DO THIS GREAT WORK. 1. By earnest personal effort rebuking sin. 2. By combined and consecrated Christian effort. 3. By invoking civil as well as Divine power. Prohibition of wrong is God's law, and professedly man's also. Politicians cannot or will not save us. (*T. S. Love.*)

Ver. 15. **He is a chosen vessel unto Me.**—*A chosen vessel*:—I. ITS MATERIAL. All the vessels in your house—the strong bowls, the fine vases, and the china tea-cups—are made of earth, though some soils suit the potter better than others. And so the whole world is the Great Potter's field, and Christ's "chosen vessels" were all at first of the earth, earthy. The apostle tells us that he was the chief of sinners, and that he owes all to the grace of God. What hope for all! Splendid vessels are now made from mere rubbish, broken glass, and old bones, and so the Divine Potter's art can triumph over the rudeness of the most unpromising materials. II. ITS MAKER. 1. That beautiful cup is not self-made. The potter took the clay, tempered, moulded, baked, painted, and fired it, and then put his mark upon it. And Christians "are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus." I have known a boy saying to his minister, "Please will you convert me too." "I am one of your converts," a man smelling of whisky once said to Rowland Hill. "I can believe it," replied Mr. Hill, "you look very like my bungling work." 2. In making chosen vessels, the potter attends to the chief parts of the work himself; for all depends on the skill of the workman. With his own hand he mixes the materials, and trims the fire. 3. The potter must also have complete power over the clay, and travellers in the East notice how thoroughly it is in his hands. Many vessels are made partly of flint or granite, but these rocks have first been ground into the softest powder. And Christ's chosen vessels are all fashioned in contrite hearts. Contrite means

rubbed together and made soft, exactly as stones are ground into the softest clay in our potteries. And youth is the yielding and moulding time in life. The world has a strange power of hardening the soul into an unbending frame. III. ITS USE. 1. None of Christ's vessels are for ornament only, they are all "meet for the Master's use." A great house has some choice vessels, preferred for their size, strength, or beauty. Such a vessel was the apostle. Christ's name was the water for the thirsty and balm for the wounded, and Paul was the vessel in which that heavenly treasure was carried round and offered to all. But the humblest vessel has its use. A poor broken cup may hold the water that saves the life of a dying man, and the humblest Christian may carry Christ's name to a perishing sinner. 2. The vessel of the heart is already full, and must be emptied ere it can be filled with this heavenly treasure. The Rev. Narayan Sheshadri tells us that as a young Brahmin he was full of pride and self-righteousness. But as he began to think for himself he was emptied of one thing after another, till he was left with nothing in which he could trust. Then the name of Christ filled his soul, and he longed to bear it to the heathen around him (comp. Phil. iii. 4–9). 3. Again, an emptied vessel cannot be filled unless it be rightly set and open a-top. It is a Chinese saying that "the light of heaven cannot shine into an inverted bowl." Let your soul be opened heavenwards widely and hopefully, and then the abundance of grace will fill and warm your whole being. IV. ITS BEAUTY. 1. Our makers of vessels strive to unite the useful and the beautiful. Our text may mean that Christ's name was to be carried on as well as in the vessel, just as the costly vases in palaces bear the name and fame of the maker before kings. Bernard Palissy once saw a white enamelled cup, and resolved to discover the secret of so beautifying vessels. He spent all his money and sixteen years of his life in making the discovery. He was often at death's door, had burnt all his furniture for fuel, and his body was lean and dried up from hard work. At last he made some of the chosen vessels, and these have borne his name among nations and kings even to this day. Thus Paul bore his Creator's name far and wide, and multitudes "glorified God in him." 2. Christ's vessels are not all made in one mould. Every Christian should have a beauty of his own, and the charm of that beauty lies in its individuality. Some of the most beautiful of Christ's vessels are found among day-labourers and cottagers. Many a face deformed by lifelong hardship and disease has been brightened outwardly from inward joy and goodness. The coarsest features have often been adorned by the beauty of the soul within. Such was the case of Joan of Arc, who, the historian says, grew beautiful when the great idea entered her. 3. You can hardly believe what efforts great potters have made to add beauty to their vessels. A Duke of Florence spent ten years in discovering the way to make porcelain. Louis XIV. was so interested in this work that, greatest monarch in Europe as he was, he seriously proposed becoming a potter himself. Many have reached perfection in this field, and have ennobled clay as if by miracle. Their masterpieces have an incorruptible beauty; no liquid can stain them, no fire can blacken them, no knife can scratch them. Yet they are as smooth to the touch as an infant's flesh. Place a candle behind them and they resemble a fine face lighted up with the best emotions. If potters have done so much for clay, shall they not condemn us if we do not earnestly seek to have the beauty of the Lord our God upon us? If a heathen philosopher reproached a rich man with having silver plate and earthenware principles, should we not reproach ourselves that we are so eager to possess every sort of beauty, except the beauty of the soul? When shall the "beauty of holiness" find as passionate admirers as the beauty of art has in all our cities? Piety is the finest art under heaven. Many there be who say, "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever," yes, this chosen vessel is a joy for ever to its possessor and to all beholders who know its worth. 4. The secret of making some choice vessels has been lost because it died with the man who had it; but the secret of spiritual beauty is open to all. God is the Great Beautifier, and He will perfect what He begins. He will give the finishing touch to His chosen vessel—perhaps in the sacred fires of affliction—and, having thus perfected its comeliness, He will place it in His mansions above. (*J. Wells, M.A.*) *Vessels chosen, charged, and used:* —1. A VESSEL. 1. The world is full of the instruments which God employs. Every flower, leaf, tendril is designed and fitted for carrying on some process in the vegetable economy. 2. In animals every member of the body is a tool with which Creator and creature alike work. The eye, ear, tongue, foot hang at hand in the workshop ready for the worker's use. 3. Each separate part of creation, again, is an instrument of God. The internal fires of the globe are His instruments for

heaving up the mountains and making the valleys. The clouds are vessels carrying water from the ocean to every portion of the thirsty land. The rivers are waste-pipes for carrying back the soiled water that it may be purified for subsequent use. The sun is an instrument for lighting and warming a troop of revolving worlds, and the earth's huge bulk a curtain for screening off the sunlight at stated intervals, and so affording to weary workers a grateful night of rest. 4. Chief of all implements is man—made last, made best for his Author's service; broken, disfigured, and defiled by sin, but capable of working wondrously yet, when redeemed. God has not cast away the best of all His instruments because it was marred and polluted. A soul won is the best instrument for winning souls. II. A CHOSEN vessel. God can employ the evil as His unconscious instruments, or make them willing in the day of His power. When He had chastised Israel by the King of Babylon, He broke the rod and threw it away. In other cases He turns the king's heart as a river of water, and then accepts the willing homage of a converted man. It was a polished and capacious vessel that the Great King wrenched from the grasp of the arch-enemy near the gate of Damascus. He was Christ's chief enemy in the world. God looks down from heaven on this man, not as an adversary whose assaults are formidable, but as an instrument which may be turned to another use. Arrested at the crisis of its course by a hand unseen, it is turned upside down, emptied, and then filled from heaven's pure treasures, and used to water the world with the Word of life. Saul of Tarsus, called to be an apostle, is a conspicuous example of Divine sovereignty. He did not first choose Christ, but Christ chose him. III. A vessel UNTO ME. Two things lie in every conversion; the man gets an Almighty Saviour, and God gets a willing servant. The true instinct of the new creature burst forth from Paul's breast—"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" The answer, sent through Ananias, indicated what he should be, rather than what he should do: "He is a chosen vessel unto Me." We get a glimpse here of the two tendencies, the human and the Divine. I shall do, says the disciple in the ardour of a first love; thou shalt be, answers that wise and kind Master, who knows that the spirit is willing, but the flesh weak. I shall bear the vessels of the Lord, volunteers the ransomed sinner; the reply is, Thou shalt be the vessel of the Lord. It is a great thing that I should take up instruments and do a work for Christ in the world, but it is a greater that Christ should work out His purposes with me. This is our security alike for safety and usefulness. The star that is in His right hand is held up so that it cannot fall, and held out so that it shines afar. IV. A vessel to BEAR MY NAME. Paul was a vessel firmly put together, and filled to overflowing, before Jesus met him. At that meeting he was emptied of his miscellaneous vanities, and filled with the name of Christ. See an account of the whole process by his own pen (Phil. iii. 4–8). Nature abhors a vacuum; and in nature, whether its material or spiritual department, a vacuum is never found. Each man is full either of his own things, or of Christ's. The name of Christ is the precious thing wherewith the vessel is charged. So full was Paul of this treasure that he determined to know none other. V. To bear My name BEFORE GENTILES, AND KINGS, AND THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL. This bread of life, like the manna which fell in the wilderness, is given to be used, not to be hoarded. To be ever getting, ever giving, is the only way of keeping both the vessel and its treasure sweet. 1. The form of the expression indicates that in this ministry self-denying courage is required. Perhaps the series, in this respect, constitutes a climax. It is easier to speak of Christ to the Gentiles than to kings, and to kings than to His own chosen people. In our day, too, there are various classes who need the testimony of Jesus. Those who possess it should be prepared to bear it about in every place, and hold it forth in any company. If we quail where the majority profess to be on our side, what would have become of us if our lot had been cast when its disciples were obliged to comfort an adverse world? But perhaps we should not speak of more courage being required to maintain a good confession in one place, and less in another: for with God it is as easy to keep the ocean within its bed, as to balance a dewdrop on a blade of grass; and the same principle rules in the distribution of grace to disciples of Christ. Without it the strongest is not sufficient for anything, with it the feeblest is sufficient for all. Our martyr forefathers who were enabled to make good confession at the stake would, if left to themselves, have denied their Lord under the blandishments of a godless drawing-room. Not before Gentiles and kings, &c., are we summoned to bear witness for Christ; but in a place and presence where the temptation to deny Him is equally strong. A Christian young man in a great workshop, a Christian young lady in a gay and fashionable family,

is either carried away like chaff before the wind, or stands fast by a modern miracle of grace. 2. We are so many vessels labelled on the outside with the name of Christ, what we are really charged with may not be seen at a distance, or discovered in a day. Those, however, who stand near these vessels will by degrees find out what they contain. By its occasional overflowings, especially when violently shaken, the secret will be revealed. Some are looking on who do not believe that the Spirit which fills us is the Spirit of Christ; and they lie in wait for evidence to prove their opinion true. For their own sakes let them find it false. 3. But an indolent, earthly selfishness, under pretence of humility, cunningly suggests the distinction between a common ungifted man and the great apostle of the Gentiles. He was a worthy witness, but what could we do, although we did our best? If you are a sinner forgiven through the blood of Christ, in the greatest things Paul and you are equal, unequal only in the least. In the economy of grace a shallower vessel serves nearly every purpose as well as a deeper, if both are full of Christ. In nature the shallowest lake, provided it be full, sends up as many clouds as the deepest, for the same sunlight beams equally on both their bosoms. Nay, more; as a lake within the tropics, though shallow, gives more incense to the sky than a polar ocean of unfathomable depth, so a Christian of few gifts, whose heart lies open fair and long to the Sun of Righteousness, is a more effectual witness than a man of greater capacity who lies not so near, and looks not so constantly to Jesus. Conclusion: In the coarser work of breaking up His own way at first, God freely uses the powers of nature and the passions of wicked men; but for the nicer touches near the finishing, He employs more sensitive instruments. A work of righteousness is about to be done upon a jailer at Philippi. Mark the method of the omniscient Worker. The earthquake rent the outer searing of the jailer's conscience, and made an open path into his soul. But what an earthquake could not do, God did by a renewed human heart and loving human lips. From the same chosen vessel that Ananias had visited at Damascus, the ointment was poured forth which healed the jailer's wound. Thus God works to-day both in individual conversions and in wide-spread revivals. Bankruptcies, storms, diseases, wars, are charged to batter down the defences, and then living disciples go in by the breach to convert a kingdom or win a soul. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *Saul and Luther chosen vessels*:—I. How He PREPARED THEM. 1. He selected the right materials—a Pharisee for the destruction of Pharisaism, a monk for the overthrow of Popery, yet in both cases the right man. 2. He laid hold of them at the right time—(1) When the enemies of the faith were at their strongest. (2) When the need of the Church was deepest. 3. He forged them in the right fire. The fire was the flame of repentance kindled by the Holy Ghost, the hammer was God's Word. By these means was Paul, as the noblest Damascus blade, forged at Damascus, and Luther in the cloister cell at Erfurt. II. How He USED THEM. 1. To the confusion of His enemies; Paul and Luther both warriors of the Lord, cutting swords, different from a John and Melancthon. 2. To the protection of His friends: the faithful pastorate of Paul, the loving zeal of Luther. 3. To the use of all: not by attaching ourselves to human means and swearing to human words, but by being directed to Him, whose servants and instruments Paul and Luther were. (*K. Gerok.*) *The character of St. Paul*:—I. He is a VESSEL. The word means either an "instrument" in the hands of the Divine Agent to carry out His purposes, or a "vessel" into which the Lord Jesus poured abundantly of His mind and His love. We are not fountains which give forth. "All our springs are in Thee." God is an infinite Spring giving inexhaustibly forth; men are empty vessels receiving everlastingly of His fulness. The difference between men is not in their power to originate, but in their power to take in. II. A vessel UNTO ME, *i.e.*, Paul was now the actual possession of Christ. Heretofore he was in the service of the great enemy, and was the ablest and the most dangerous opponent the young Church had yet encountered. But the vessel was wrested from the enemy, and henceforth is a vessel separated unto and honoured in the service of Christ. III. A CHOSEN vessel. 1. A choice vessel; "earthen," it is true; but there is a great difference in the quality of even earthen vessels. Chemical analysis, it is said, discovers considerable difference in the quality of human brains. The brain of the rustic is coarse and gritty, whereas that of the man of genius is fine, smooth, silky, and sensitive. Be that as it may, Paul was a vessel manufactured with the greatest care out of the finest materials. He was "separated unto God from his mother's womb." God even then thought of the purpose to which he was to be devoted, and proceeded to fashion him accordingly. The same law runs through grace as through nature—the perfect adaptation of

means to ends. If God has any special design to accomplish, He always seeks to bring it about by the most suitable means. Saul would have been a public man if he had never been an apostle. He would have been an orator if he had never been a preacher. The raw material of an apostle was wrought into his original make. 2. He was chosen or ordained of God unto the work of the apostleship. "He is a vessel of election unto Me." The doctrine of election has been wrongly taught and falsely apprehended. The Scriptural doctrine is that God chooses man before man chooses God, and the latter is only the faint echo of the former. The Divine election should be viewed in much the same light as the Divine love. "We love Him because He first loved us." "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." The fundamental principle of all false religions is that man chooses his God. IV. TO BEAR MY NAME. Paul bore the name of Jesus—1. In his intellect. His capacious mind had no room for anything else. "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge," &c. The glorified Form appearing unto him on the way to Damascus photographed itself so deeply upon his mind that it could never afterwards be effaced. "To me to live is Christ." Sir David Brewster says that Sir Isaac Newton once gazed so steadfastly on the sun that for days after, turn which way he would, he constantly beheld the image of the sun. And Jesus impressed Himself so deeply in the "great light" on the mind of Paul that ever afterwards, whichever way the apostle looked, he always perceived the reflection of Christ. 2. In his heart. Paul may be compared to an "alabaster box of precious ointment"—the box is valuable, but the ointment is more precious. "The name of Christ is like ointment poured forth." Paul was possessed of much genius. But only when he received the unction from the Holy One did he fill the world with his perfume. You can quote other ancient authors of surpassing beauty, but I defy you to quote any where the fragrance is so sweet and so abundant. Carry the rose about you and you will scatter scent wherever you go. And Paul's writings are sweetly scented with leaves from the Rose of Sharon. Christ is an "offering of sweet smelling savour" to men as well as to God. A lump of clay has been made fragrant by being thrown into the midst of a bed of flowers. And although Christians in their original state are not a whit better than other men, yet by holding fellowship with Him whose "garments smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia," they catch the fragrance. 3. In his ministry. He "shall bear My name before Gentiles," &c. And in ver. 28 we see him beginning to fulfil the prediction. What then prompted him so powerfully to bear the name of Christ to perishing millions? To return an adequate answer, two factors must be taken into consideration. The first was a vivid, heartfelt conviction of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Where the sense of sin is weak the sense of ministerial responsibility is shallow. But the second and more powerful element was his intense love to the Saviour (2 Cor. v. 11, 14). The terror moved, the love constrained. The mill-wheel may be turned either by a current of water flowing underneath or else by a stream falling upon it from above. But of the two the latter is the more efficient. In Paul the two currents worked together—the terror from beneath and the love from above; and as a consequence imparted unusual impetuosity and rapidity to his revolutions. V. BEFORE GENTILES, AND KINGS, AND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL. The wide scope of his ministry required—1. Certain social qualifications which the other apostles did not possess. Paul enjoyed all the privileges and oxemptions of a Roman citizen. Born at Tarsus, he became master of the Greek tongue and sensible to all that was refined in classic life. A pupil of Gamaliel, he was deeply versed in Scriptural and rabbinical lore. Thus in him all that was best in the three dominant types of civilisation met—the freedom of the Roman, the language of the Greek, and the theology of the Jew. 2. Great intellectual culture. The sphere of his labour embraced all classes and ranks of men. Moses, the founder of Judaism, was "learned in all the learning of Egypt." Paul, too, the foremost apostle of Gentile Christianity, was learned in all the learning of his own and other nations. We are here introduced to a grand evangelistic principle—the Saviour ordained the most accomplished of the apostles to be His missionary among the heathen. The greatest knowledge is always the best instructor of ignorance. 3. Much moral courage. Before, literally in the face of, Gentiles and kings. Paul would have to encounter innumerable obstacles which only the greatest courage could surmount. And perhaps true courage never towered more sublimely than in his life. Conscience was keen and strong in him, and scrupulous fidelity to its voice marks his whole career. Indomitable strength of his will is nowhere seen to better advantage than in the presence of difficulties. The eagle never soars so high as he does on the day of tempest—the wilder the gale the loftier

his flight. Lord Chatham, it is said, made his crutches add to the grandeur of his oratory; and Paul, dangling his chains in the face of his judge, made the most impressive peroration in the literature of eloquence. (*J. Cynddylan Jones, D.D.*)

Ver. 16. **For I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake.**—*The service of suffering*:—I. SUFFERING IS ONE OF THE WAYS IN WHICH WE MAY SERVE GOD. 1. The remarkable feature here is, that though it is a part of St. Paul's call to his mission, God does not say, "I will show him how great things he must do," but "how great things he must suffer." The service of work is subordinated to the service of suffering. And whenever St. Paul makes a retrospect of his own life he always takes the same view. As, for instance, in that catalogue in 2 Cor. xi., the hardships and sorrows far outstripped the actions—the active being literally only two—"journeyings often," "the care of all the churches,"—the passive at least twenty-seven. 2. And no wonder that St. Paul accounted more of the service of suffering than of the service of work. Was not it so with his Master and ours? What makes the Saviour what He is to us, is not what He wrought, but what He encountered; not what He did for the Father, but what the Father did to Him. 3. And in a world like this it must be so always. Every man being witness, it is a harder thing to suffer than to work. Much greater is the number of them that work well, than of them that suffer well. In the fruits of the Spirit the passive grow the highest. For four thousand years, the service of God was the service of sacrifice; and the service of sacrifice was essentially the service of suffering. And living, as we do, in a dispensation in which still "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now," &c., it would be sad indeed if we could not believe that there is a way in which every suffering thing does service to God. 4. Or take the same thought a step higher. What makes any word, or any work, or any thought which man ever offers to God, service? Is not it the Cross of Christ, the gathering-point where the suffering of the whole universe meets? Is not, then, all service ultimately the service of suffering? The worship of a world of sin must be, to a very great extent, the service of pain. And we cannot thank God too much that the service of suffering which sin has made may, through Christ, go up the best of all service to Almighty God. 5. But if any man be tempted for a moment to think that his sufferings can add ought to the efficacy of the death of Christ, or that anything he can ever bear will give the slightest degree of merit to the kingdom of heaven, let that man carefully study that account of the saints in Rev. vii. II. HOW MAY WE, BY GOD'S GRACE, MAKE SUFFERING SERVICE? Have faith that your suffering, in some way, known or unknown, is service, and by that faith it is. And indeed, if you accept your suffering from Christ, and bear it in and consecrate it to Christ, it will have such a savour of Christ in it, that it cannot help to go up and to be service in heaven. The service of suffering may be divided thus—1. The direct service of suffering to God is to accept it from a Father's hand. Ask no questions, but look up trustingly. Say if it be but "Amen," and as soon as you can, "Hallelujah." Think, "This suffering of mine is Christ suffering in me. It makes me more one than I ever was before with Jesus Christ." 2. The service of suffering in sanctification. Whenever you pass into it, let your first prayer be, "Lord, for whatever end Thou hast sent this trial, let that end be fulfilled to me, in me, by me, to Thy glory." The purposes of suffering for sanctification are—(1) Humiliation. To that end you must connect your sorrow with what? Sin? Not most. With the pardon of sin, with the love of God. (2) Purity. Sorrow, passing through the heart, acts like a moral chemistry—the sin precipitates to the bottom; and so it leaves the water of the cup of life pure. Or rather, it is fire, to destroy the nature and self which, thank God, are consumable; and to leave the gold of grace, which, thank God, is not consumable. The best service which ever goes up to God is His own image. And God's image is purity. (3) Consecration. The Christian, passing through suffering, is a servant gone into his Master's presence to receive orders. 3. The service of suffering to man, or more strictly, to God through man. (1) Intercession. You are sent up to your room, to a lonely place on the mount, to pray for others who fight in the plain. Therefore you cannot work that you may pray. (2) Testimony. Bear your witness—by silence, by looks, by speech, by a sweeter smile than when all was bright, by a kinder accent to the faithfulness of God, and the sufficiency of His grace. David was very great in the service of testimony. "It is good for me that I have been in trouble." "In the multitude of the sorrows which I have in my heart, Thy

comforts have refreshed my soul." (3) Sympathy. We never truly sympathise with what we have not felt. Therefore Christ sympathises with all, because He felt all. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *Suffering for Christ's name's sake:*—When Dr. Mason, a missionary in India, asked his converted boatman whether he was willing to go to the Bghais, a neighbouring tribe, to tell them of a Saviour's love, he reminded him that, instead of twelve rupees a month, he would receive but four rupees. "Can you go to the Bghais for four rupees?" asked the missionary. The heathen convert went by himself and thought and prayed, and came back to Dr. Mason. "Well, Chapon, what is your decision?" "My father, I cannot go to the Bghais for four rupees a month, but I can go for Jesus." And for Jesus he went.

Vers. 17–23. **And Ananias, . . . putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul.** —*Saul converted:*—I. THE MINISTRY WHICH HELPS TO COMPLETE THE GREAT CHANGE. If the appearance of the Lord to the persecutor was miraculous, the work was not completed without ordinary instrumentalities. "There was a certain disciple named Ananias." This indicates—1. The Lord's interest in the prayer, confession, and sadder experiences of the contrite heart. He heeds the sighing of the imperfect, even while receiving the adoration of the perfect. "Behold, he prayeth!" 2. The Lord's wisdom in His dealing with the penitent. He dealt with him in the way of revelation. He inspired the vision of human help coming to aid the convicted man in his extremity. After great marvels, Christ leads Saul on by means of common Church agencies. The pride of Pharisaism was here directly attacked. This man's religion was not to rest on any mere human authority. In Christianity the ordinary is more essential and valuable than the special and extraordinary. 3. The characteristics of the ministry of Ananias. (1) It was conceived and performed in the spirit of true brotherhood. "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." Brotherhood is a note of valid Christianity. (2) Its authority was found in the commission of the Lord. This humble man felt the dignity of his Divine office, but he knew that he had only fulfilled it when Christ alone was exalted. (3) It was one of enlightenment. "There fell from his eyes as it had been scales." The physical change was only the type and symbol of the change perfected within. "The entrance of Thy Word giveth light." Here, then, is intelligence, devotion, brotherhood, the common ministry of the faithful; these present the conditions of healthful Christian life. II. FORGIVEN, BUT DISCIPLINED. One tendency of Christian society just now is towards a neglect of due and careful Christian culture. Men want a gospel which confers a boon, but does not demand a duty, which secures forgiveness, but does not provide for holiness. Saul's early Christian history supplies important lessons concerning Christian culture. "Then was Saul certain days with the disciples." Here is—1. Believing fellowship. Saul became a disciple and was baptized. He was designated as a learner in the school of Christ. When a man feels the throb and impulse of the Divine life within him he is moved to seek Christian fellowship. To stand aloof is contrary to the spirit and genius of Christianity. A fitful attendance at the Table of the Lord does not satisfy the requirements of Christian obligation. 2. Special culture and training for the life-work. Although Saul had been constituted a disciple, and had received spiritual gifts, he was not therefore equipped for life-long ministries. Spontaneous fellowship does not imply spontaneous readiness for Church ministers. The quiet life of brotherly fellowship was followed by a season of silent, sedulous, earnest, secret preparation for the appointed task. Between the "certain days" of fellowship of verse 19th, and the "straightway he preached Christ" of the 20th, you have interposed the time of retirement spent by him in study, meditation, and prayers in Arabia. A scholar among the most learned of his age and country, he must commune with his own heart and God before he can calmly and fully, with that marvellous wisdom which all the ages have admired, preach the gospel to the people. A sacred reticence is becoming and healthful. There is no encouragement here to the presumption of a glib ignorance, which waits neither for the Divine calling, nor the Church's sending. Silence in the desert prepares for the usefulness of thirty years. 3. The life-long spiritual and moral discipline. Forgiven, there were yet consequences of the old life to be borne and endured. He went to Damascus to persecute. At Damascus he was persecuted. He took part in the stoning of Stephen. At Lystra he was stoned. He imprisoned many; he was himself a prisoner. He went about to establish his own righteousness, and the Judaizing teachers of his own old doctrine poisoned the founts of his joy in the churches he founded, and tried to turn away from him the grateful love

of his converts. (*W. H. Davison.*) *Christian brotherliness*:—I. THE BROTHERLY MOVEMENT. As soon as his difficulties were removed Ananias "went his way," &c. 1. Many who are required for beneficent ministries to the sick, poor, or sinful never hear the call of duty. 2. Others hear it, but do not go. Either they do not care to go, or regard it the duty of the object to come. Saul was not sent to Ananias, but Ananias to Saul. The nations were not told to go to the apostles to be discipled, but the apostles to go and disciple the world. Some cannot come, many will not. Hence the example of Him who "went about doing good." 3. True brotherliness goes—(1) Promptly. Ananias questions no more. (2) Courageously. "Went into the house." Many who are brave enough to meet a certain class of people in the street, hesitate when they come to the house. Street preaching requires less courage than house-to-house visitation in the slums. (3) Without ceremony. It mattered not whether Judas' house was a palace or a cottage, Ananias was on business that must not be hampered by social etiquette, so he entered into the house. The Christian worker must not be rude, but he need not be servile. The business of the King of kings should give His servant an *entrée* anywhere, and that business often requires haste. II. THE BROTHERLY TOUCH. "Putting his hands upon him." Many good and kind people go, but they are at a loss what to do when they arrive. This is due sometimes to clumsiness or sheer nervousness. Owing to this often the very thing is done which should be left undone, and needless embarrassment and pain is often innocently given. But the spirit of brotherliness should be educated, and then there will be no difficulty about brotherly contact. A brother of low degree should have no hesitation at shaking hands with a brother of high degree; nor should a wealthy or cultured Christian withhold his hand from a poor or ignorant brother. Saul's social status, gifts, &c., were altogether beyond those of Ananias, yet Ananias "put his hands upon him." A touch will sometimes go farther than a word or even a gift, or when it accompanies them will double their worth. III. THE BROTHERLY WORD. "Brother Saul." There is nothing, perhaps, more pathetic in all sacred literature than this utterance under these circumstances. The word has become vulgarised, and in certain lips is a mere official or cant expression; but there is life and power in it yet. And may the time be far distant when in our Church gatherings "Mr." shall supplant "Brother," and "Gentlemen" "Brethren." The term is significant of—1. Common relationship to a common Father. 2. Common rights to the same privileges. 3. Common duties. 4. Common hopes. IV. THE BROTHERLY SERVICE. 1. Ananias was the means of restoring Saul's sight, and thus symbolises the work of all those who, having light themselves from "the Father of lights," impart it to the mentally, morally, or circumstantially blind. 2. Ananias was the means of communicating the Holy Ghost, as are all those who strive for the conversion, holiness, or consecration of others. 3. Ananias was the means of introducing Saul to the society of the believers. Without arguing the vexed question whether Ananias was a layman, and by baptizing Saul vindicated the validity of lay baptism, we may assuredly trace the good man's influence in verse 19. Conclusion: 1. "Sirs, ye are brethren." 2. Act as brothers. (*J. W. Burn.*) *Divine brotherhood*:—I. A BROTHER RECEIVED BY CHRIST, though not acknowledged by Christians. 1. We ought to reject none. Those "far off" may be "made nigh." 2. We should not look too closely at a man's past. Change is possible in any case when grace works. II. A BROTHER SUDDENLY ADOPTED. 1. God's grace is mighty and sudden, so do not gauge another's condition by your own experience. Do not construct rules for the Holy Spirit's working. 2. Do not judge of another's conversion by your own. III. A BROTHER THROUGH THE APPOINTED MEANS. 1. He submitted to Christ. 2. He prayed. 3. He believed. All who desire to join the brotherhood must submit to these conditions. Otherwise he is an alien. IV. A BROTHER IN SUFFERING AND LABOUR (2 Cor. ii. 23–28). (*J. W. Munday.*)

Vers. 19, 20. **Then was Saul certain days with the disciples. . . . And straightway he preached Christ.**—*The society of the good*:—I. THE TENDENCY TO CHRISTIAN INTERCOURSE IS GENERATED BY THE LOVE OF CHRIST. The love of Jesus in the heart is the magnet. Dr. Doddridge asked his little daughter how it was that everybody loved her. She answered, "I know not, unless it is that I love everybody." It is a great task to reconcile sinners to each other. We love the brethren because He loves us all. II. CHRISTIAN SOCIAL INTERCOURSE PRESERVES THE BEST ASSOCIATIONS. The tabernacle of Moses, the harp of David, the cross of Jesus, the faith of Abraham, the experience of Paul, are all heirlooms which

preserve the family history. Bring all the drops of water together and you have an ocean; so the experiences of the Church when gathered form a great store. III. CHRISTIAN SOCIAL INTERCOURSE POINTS TO THE LASTING FELLOWSHIP OF HEAVEN. Christians never say, "Good-bye." The last petition in the upper room before the crucifixion was, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am." (*Weekly Pulpit.*) *Damascus to Cæsarea*:—I. THE EVENTS INTERVENING BETWEEN DAMASCUS AND CÆSAREA. 1. As soon as Saul was baptized he joined the Christian brotherhood, and publicly declared his new conviction that Jesus was the Christ. I do not think that that continued long. Either through the force of external persecution, or by Divine intimation and guidance, probably by both, he was led to leave Damascus. And in Gal. i. he tells us that he left Damascus and went into Arabia. Arabia lay round about Damascus and my own expression is, that he did not go further from Damascus than would secure safety and solitude. He was not employed in preaching, but in receiving those communications from Christ which were to perfect his knowledge of the gospel. There he studied the Old Testament under a new teacher; reading it by a different light from that which had been held in the hand of Gamaliel. 2. Then, when fully prepared for all that he had to do, he returned to Damascus, and there, with greater boldness and vigour, proclaimed that Jesus was the Son of God. But the Jews could not stand this, and determined to kill him. And we learn from a passing allusion in 1 Cor. xi. 23, xv. 3, that in their plans against his life they got the co-operation of the political and military powers. But in a basket, let down from the window of one of the houses, which in Eastern cities very often overhang the wall, Saul was placed by his friends, and, descending, so escaped his enemies' hands. 3. He then put into execution what he had cherished as a purpose. He determined to go to Jerusalem to see Peter (Gal. i. 18, 19). It is probable that he had seen Peter before the Sanhedrin. He knew that he was one of the foremost men amongst the apostles, and therefore he wished to visit him—not to acknowledge his supremacy, nor to get from him any authority, but as an intimate friend and disciple of Jesus. On his arrival Saul very naturally wished to join himself to the disciples. But they were in doubt and fear about him. But Saul met with Barnabas, who believed Saul, and believed in him, and who introduced him to Peter and James, who were probably the only apostles who happened to be then at Jerusalem. Saul was then received with cordiality and confidence, and had at once accorded to him fraternal recognition. 4. The apostle was only at Jerusalem for a fortnight (Gal. i. 18, 19). He lodged with Peter, who, as a married man, could perhaps best accommodate him. It is rather odd that he should have become representatively the head of a priesthood who are not allowed to marry! It was very natural that Saul should suppose himself peculiarly fitted for preaching in Jerusalem that faith which, a little time before, he sought to destroy. He made the attempt, and, Grecian as he was, did the very thing that Stephen had done before, and perhaps in the very same synagogue using probably many of the martyr's arguments. His hearers were not subdued by his appeals. It was not his work; Christ had something else for him to do. There was a conspiracy, too, against him in Jerusalem, as there had been at Damascus; and, in addition, there was a concurrent Divine intimation urging his departure (chap. xxii. 17-21.) The apostle was at once "obedient to the heavenly vision," and his friends got him safely out of Jerusalem and "brought him down to Cæsarea." II. THE POINTS WHICH REQUIRE EXPLANATION. 1. In the history there is no mention of the journey into Arabia, a very important event in the life of St. Paul. But note—(1) An omission is not a contradiction. When two writers, referring to the same time, are found to differ only in that the one omits what the other records; the one may be only the supplement to the other. (2) The history in the Acts is so constructed that an actual journey somewhere may possibly underlie it. There are two periods mentioned. "Then was Saul *certain days* with the disciples at Damascus," giving the idea of a limit to the period. He was "certain days" there with the disciples—well, what then? Why, at the end he was not with them. Then he had left them. Then afterwards—though this is not mentioned, it is implied—he was with them in Damascus again; and this time, after "*many days*" there occurs the conspiracy. Between the "certain days" and the "many days" a journey, because an absence from Damascus, may come in, which might be into Arabia as well as to anywhere else. (3) Then, again, the Epistle to the Galatians and the history in the Acts are perfectly independent productions. Neither was written from the suggestions of the other and made to harmonise with

it. If the historian had invented this story from reading the letter he would have put in the journey to Arabia; if the letter-writer had invented the letter from reading the history he would not have put in the journey. This independence being admitted, all the coincidences rise into strength as evidences of the perfect truth and trustworthiness of both. (4) There can be no doubt that Galatians was written previously to the Acts. Now Paul and Luke were very often "companions in travel," and there is every probability that the historian wrote under the eye of the letter-writer, and yet neither of them sees the inconsistency between the account given by the one and the known contents of the letter of the other. Neither of them thinks it worth while with a stroke of the pen to put it all right. It is perfectly evident that they who knew all about it did not see any difficulty in what perplexes us so much. 2. The difficulty of accounting for the way in which Paul was received by the disciples at Jerusalem. Surely they might have had such full information of all that had occurred, as to receive with acclamation the illustrious convert. But observe—(1) That the Jewish way of talking about time is worth recollecting. Fourteen months would be three years, if the first month was the last in one year, and the last month was the first in another, with one whole year lying between. But three years, even thus reckoned, is a long time. Yet the possible compression of the period, in the way indicated, is worth being referred to. (2) But will it not be curious if the visit into Arabia—which is itself a difficulty—should be just the very thing which enables us to explain the more difficult point before us? I will not say that Paul was running before he was sent; but he might be trying to speak before he was fully equipped for his work. Hence it was, that his Master told him to go into seclusion that he might fully learn all that was necessary for him to know. In consequence of this, he disappeared from Damascus. It is quite possible that none of the disciples knew what had become of him. His companions would go back with some story or other of a strange occurrence which had happened on the road. Whatever it was, it had led him seemingly to recant his opinions. But he was gone off. It was impossible to say what it all meant, or in what character he might next appear. Of course the enemies of the truth would know how to make the most of this, and to frighten the faithful by dark insinuations of what their emissary might yet do. Supposing, therefore, that he was not very long in Damascus, even the second time, he might preach in the synagogues, and yet, in the confusion and disorganisation of the period, intelligence of this might not reach Jerusalem in any authentic or reliable form. The disciples would thus necessarily be in the state in which we find them. Fears, which simple ignorance might engender, would be strengthened if their unscrupulous enemies were known to insinuate that Saul was only playing a deep game. 3. The difference between the statement in the text of the circumstances under which Paul left Jerusalem, and the account which Paul gives of it in chap. xxii. Luke attributes it to a conspiracy, Paul to a vision. But this is only the two sides of the same event—the Divine and the human. There is the historian naturally confining himself to the outward fact. But Paul is letting you into the interior. In the complete view we get the united action of Divine authority with human love. It is nothing, after all, but the old story over again of the gold and silver shield. 4. Paul told Agrippa that he "showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judæa, then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God." But in the text he went up to Jerusalem, was taken down to Cæsarea, and sent forth to Tarsus. In Galatians, he says, that after going up to Jerusalem, he went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, and was unknown by face unto the churches of Judæa which were in Christ. How is this to be reconciled? (1) When Paul is writing to the Galatians he is confining himself to the period which transpired before his going to Tarsus. Well, the letter and the history perfectly coincide. We find here that he had gone up to Jerusalem, had been there a short time, had gone hurriedly down to Cæsarea, and went thence into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. Of course he was unknown to the churches of Judæa, and all that they knew about him would be what they might happen to hear. (2) But when he stands before Agrippa and says, "And then to the Gentiles," he refers to his great distant missions. Now, previous to his doing that, you will find afterwards that he came up from Antioch through Judæa to Jerusalem, and then went back again, perhaps a different way. On this journey he would have an opportunity of preaching in the villages and towns of Judæa, of which, we may be sure, he would fully avail himself. Thus both accounts are perfectly true and consistent, only they

refer to different times. (*T. Binney.*) *Straightway*:—I. THE IMPORTANCE AND DUTY OF PROMPTITUDE IN RELIGIOUS MATTERS. This quality standing at the beginning of the new course, and for the carrying out of the new convictions, has much instruction for us. 1. There are many beginnings in the world which stand alone, or which shine out in mocking contrast to all that comes after. Many a rosy morning becomes a cloudy noon, precursor of a stormy night! Many a man who starts in life well, swerves and wavers as he goes on. The divine life has to our eyes the same uncertainties about it. We have to wait for proof, for fruits, and for patient continuance to the end. Yet in some beginnings we can see conditions which, continued, lead to a triumphant issue. One of these, very prominent in the history of St. Paul, is promptitude. 2. Promptitude is a pre-requisite of success. A beginning is only a beginning, and yet much depends on how it is made. Some beginnings are like the spring on the mountain-side, gushing into life and flowing clearly; some are like waters from a mossy soil, trickling, oozing, so little visible and so uncertain, that you cannot tell where they begin. But here is a vigorous, clear beginning. As soon as Paul saw his duty he did it. "What wilt Thou have me to do?" had been his prayer. The answer is, "You know Me now. You have persecuted—now preach"; and he did so "straightway." In giving the history of this very time, Paul himself tells us in the Epistle to the Galatians that "immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." If he had so conferred, it is almost certain that his whole course would have been different. Some would have said: "Stay awhile until the memory of your career as persecutor has died away." Others would have said: "Be cautious. Do not commit yourself thus early. Your present convictions may be only transient. It can do no harm to wait." Had he gone to Jerusalem, Peter, who said to the Master, "Not so, Lord," would have been quite as ready to say "Not so" to the servant. And probably all the apostles would have advised caution and delay. But Paul was right, and his promptitude saved him from many difficulties which else would have beset his course. It raised his conversion above suspicion. It opened his way. It confirmed his faith. It enlarged his knowledge. It gave him an advantage against any who might be his enemies. It put him in possession of the ground. It made retreat more difficult. It made him a fit example for all who are beginning the Christian course to the end of time. The first sign of a rectified condition will always be the prayer, "What wilt Thou have me to do?" The next will be to do it "straightway." 3. The thing to be done will, of course, be different in different cases. In a sense, every one who receives the gospel must preach it. There are some who favour reserve in regard to religious feeling and conviction. It is said that such things ought to be felt rather than expressed. That is not the teaching of the Bible. "We believe and therefore speak." "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." "Ye shall be witnesses," &c. —not silent witnesses surely. Such was the original law, and there is no reason to believe that it has ever been changed. Are, then, men who can now speak best on such a subject to speak least? Because thoughtless people sometimes talk not wisely and not well on religion, must thoughtful people seal their tongues in silence and keep all dark till the day of death? Each man ought, in his own measure and way, to preach. For a quiet man to speak in conversation, is as much as for a public man to write. For one man to offer prayer in a house, would be more than for another to preach in a pulpit. Or with some, a change of habit and life may be the most expressive thing they can say or do. The question as to the form which the duty of the new state shall take is a question which one can never settle for another. But the principle is this—that there is to every one something to be done, by look, or speech, or action, or habit—or all of these together—to be done for Christ as soon as you believe in Him; and that that thing ought to be done without delay. II. ITS ADVANTAGES. 1. "Straightway!" And your new consciousness will become clear, as it never will do by repression. Doubts gather around the inactive mind, over the slumbering reluctant will, as mists above the stagnant pool. Work in spite of them; work through them on to duty—and they are gone. 2. "Straightway!" And the outer difficulties will be dispersed, and you will see them no more. He who begins on the yielding system will find that the difficulties that hinder the soul's first alacrity will hinder it more and more. There are some animals which will not molest you if you face them, but they will follow you if you flee. 3. "Straightway!" And you will give to your soul one of the first and most indispensable conditions of growth. Children would sicken and die if they were kept in a state of inactivity. 4. "Straightway!" And you

will lay the first stones in the great edifice of habit. We are in a large measure the creatures of habit; but would it be better if we were all impulse and emotion? No. It is no small part of our greatness that we can build our life into strength as well as beauty by the stones of habit. 5. "Straightway!" And you will end no small part of the lesser miseries of life. For, not a little is the result of duty undone—a word unspoken, an action postponed. 6. "Straightway!" And the enemies of our true life and of the gospel of Christ are taken at advantage. All their plans are broken, their prophecies of evil are set at nought—by the simple yet sublime plan of going, without hesitation, right on to duty or endeavour. 7. "Straightway!" And timorous friends — the discouraged, the weak, the halting—receive, as it were, a new inspiration. (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*)

The new convert:—History is made up of epochs and eras. An epoch is a pause in the sequence of events; a marked moment, at which the reckoning of time rests and begins anew. An era is the interval between two epochs; the period which intervenes between two of those milestones of history, by which the memory assists itself in keeping count of time. In all good histories the epochs are strongly marked. Give the great turning-points of a life, and we can almost fill up the era for ourselves. The conversion of St. Paul is a pause and a signal memorable for all time: the years that follow, while he is a learner even more than a teacher in Christ's school, need but briefer notice, though one full of instruction for us who ponder it thoughtfully. St. Paul himself adds some particulars in Gal. i. 17–24. 1. He states that three years elapsed between his conversion and his first visit to Jerusalem as a Christian. The history in the Acts speaks only of "many days." But this is no contradiction. In 1 Kings ii. we read that Shimei "dwelt in Jerusalem many days"; and then the next verse opens thus, "And it came to pass at the end of three years." The expression "many days" is large enough to cover a period of three years. So it is here. 2. In the same passage St. Paul mentions a journey into Arabia, of which we have here no notice. The region intended is differently understood: it may have been that Arabia which borders very closely upon Damascus itself. And the purpose of his journey is not mentioned—whether it was undertaken as a first missionary enterprise, or whether to afford him a season of secluded meditation. St. Luke's account of St. Paul's life is full of omissions, except during that part of it in which he was with him. We are thankful for what he tells, and we are glad to supplement it from the Epistles of St. Paul himself. 3. The same passage tells us the length of his stay at Jerusalem, and with which of the apostles he then became acquainted (Gal. i. 18–20). Why this earnestness of expression? Because St. Paul is vindicating the independence of his own apostleship. He did not receive his gospel at second hand. It was three years before he saw one of the apostles; when he at length visited Jerusalem it was but for fifteen days, and during the whole of that visit he saw but Peter and James the Lord's brother. Thus was verified Gal. i. 1, 11, 12. Notice in the text—I. PAUL PREACHING (ver. 20). "We preach not ourselves," he said some years afterwards, "but Christ Jesus the Lord." St. Paul never found it necessary to change his subject. It lasted him for his life. But what was it? The dry monotonous repetition of one doctrine? Need I ask this of any reader of his Epistles? Well may he speak there of "the unsearchable riches of Christ"; of "all the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in Christ bodily." He found in Christ an inexhaustible wealth of comfort, of sympathy, of help, an unlimited supply of grace. And this was what he sought to communicate. That is true preaching; the endeavour to unfold a reality and a happiness first felt within. And he could do this at once—"straightway." He could tell, as a matter of plain proof, that he who had come out to persecute had been arrested by a stronger hand, and constrained to confess that One whom he had scouted as a crucified and dead man was indeed living in the fulness of strength at the right hand of God. II. PAUL IN SECLUSION. We are not to suppose that St. Paul's knowledge was at once complete, or his spiritual life perfected. Doubtless it was during this interval of three years that he learned many of those things of which he has left the record in his Epistles —many of those "revelations of the Lord," *e.g.* And may it not have been that that deep experience of the conflict with indwelling sin, which he details so strikingly in Rom. vii., was then especially gained? It is a great error to suppose that an apostle, because he was specially called and equipped, was therefore raised out of the ordinary experiences of the Christian life within, was exempted from the trials which other men endure in rising from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. And the same error runs on into a province in which it is not a mere loss of com-

fort, but a grave and sometimes fatal deception. Men talk as if conversion were the whole of a Christian life. Conversion is a great thing, but conversion must be tried by these tests—first, is it the commencement of a change? and secondly, is it the commencement of a progress? A conversion which begins and ends with itself lacks every sign of that which Scripture so designates. A conversion trusted in as a security for salvation, usurps the very place of the Saviour Himself, and becomes at once a delusion and a snare. III. PAUL MISTRUSTED. How lifelike are the lessons of Scripture. Which of us cannot understand the shrinking of ver. 26. St. Paul felt heart and soul with the disciples, and longed to exchange with them that sympathy which only Christians know, and which it is misery to them to be constrained to hide. "But they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple." It was natural: the memory of their beloved Stephen, and of many others, hunted down by his relentless rage, could not but rise within them at the sight of him, and make it difficult to believe that the professed change was real. But these things turn to the gospel for a testimony: the thought of what Saul was only increases the miracle of what he is; such a change, so thorough, so astounding, is one of the standing evidences of Jesus and the resurrection. But at the time it was hard to credit. This was the punishment of long hostility to the Saviour. Doubtless he bore it meekly and confessed that it was his due. But ought not the record make us all fearful of discouraging the nascent faith of others? Take heed not to quench the smoking flax. IV. PAUL ENCOURAGED. How well does Barnabas justify the appellation "Son of Consolation." He knew the whole history of the new disciple, and therefore he lost no time in mediating between him and those who doubted him. He brought him to the apostles, and declared to them his history. Thus, like Andrew, he acted as the encourager and helper of another in coming to Jesus. It is a blessed office this of the peacemaker; more especially when the peace made is not of earth only; when it affects the soul also, whether in its dealings with Christ Himself, or in its relations to Christ's servants. What is the aim of a visitor of the poor, in its highest aspect? Is it not this—to bring to the apostles—in other words, to bring to Christ Himself—those who, but for such aid, might be lost sight of, and be left in disregard, in suspicion, in darkness? How often has the work of Christian charity been privileged to perform this highest office! A Christian care for the body may be made available to save the soul. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *The marks of true conversion*:—I. JOYFUL CONFESSION OF CHRIST (ver. 20). II. WILLING ENDURANCE OF THE ENMITY OF THE WORLD (ver. 23). III. HUMBLE INTERCOURSE WITH BELIEVERS (ver. 26). IV. GODLY CONDUCT IN THE SERVICE OF THE LORD (ver. 28). (*J. P. Lange, D.D.*) *Evidences of conversion*:—When Saul, in answer to his inquiry, "What wilt Thou have me to do?" was told that he was to go as best he could into the city and seek for further advice there, it was a trial of his faith which ranks alongside of that of Abraham. For where in the great town of Damascus was there a place or a comrade to receive a lonely blind man into shelter? Who would tell him his duty? But hope begins with any Christian the moment he follows up the light he has. I. WHAT WAS THERE IN THIS STORY SPECIALLY BELONGING TO SAUL, AND HENCE OF NO ESSENTIAL VALUE IN ORDINARY USE NOW? 1. It arrests the imagination to think of such a reception for one who had reasonably supposed he would come in triumph as the Inquisitor-general from Jerusalem. But it is not necessary for any one now to pass through those personal trials. 2. His intense fright and prostration. The words "trembling and astonished" do not belong to the Bible. Indeed, much more than this is left out of verses 5 and 6 (see R.V.). In his own accounts of his conversion, given before Agrippa, and before the mob, he did use the expression, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks," and he did ask, "What shall I do?" but he never in any instance said he trembled, for he was not that sort of man. He was contrite and submissive, but he was not scared. 3. His vision. We must carefully discriminate between what belonged to this man's commission as an apostle, and what belonged to his conversion as a man. If the Lord ever makes a new apostle, it is possible He may deal with another man in the same way; but it is not necessary to see a luminous sign, nor to hear a supernatural voice, in order to be a faithful, honest, and even an assured follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. 4. His physical catastrophes. The circumstances of any conversion are quite separate from the conversion itself. It cannot be a necessity now to be violently thrown on the ground. Suffering is not necessarily repentance. II. WHAT WAS THERE WHICH WAS ESSENTIAL AND EXEMPLARY FOR PERMANENT USE? 1. His entire intellectual acceptance of the doctrine of Jesus Christ as the Saviour of men. And

that carried the whole Christian creed with it. Jesus Himself pressed this necessity in His name (Luke vi. 46). He admitted it to be His own rightful designation (John xiii. 13). And the apostles made it to be the form of doctrinal confession of Christianity (Acts ii. 36). When Saul saw Jesus, he suspected his terrible error, and asked, "Who art Thou, Lord?" And when the answer came, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest," then he knew the truth, and took it to his heart as he called that Being, knowing Him to be Jesus—Jehovah. 2. His immediate commencement of first Christian duty (ver. 9). The earliest low cry of an infant is the definite evidence of life: it breathes. So we sing, "Prayer is the Christian's vital breath." Paul knew the importance of an evidence like this; for he wrote afterwards about it (1 Tim. ii. 8). 3. His change of purpose. Saul's life swung around instantly and entirely both in feeling and in fact. He had loved to persecute Christians: now he loved to love them. He had hated and derided Jesus of Nazareth; now he accepted Him heartily as the promised Messiah. He had been "exceedingly mad"; now he was commensurately humble and penitent. He had been under commission from the chiefs of his bigoted nation; now he said simply enough, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" 4. His one ambition. He had been thinking that he verily did God service by his laborious and passionate zeal in persecution; now he kept at work for the mere joy of doing some loving thing for God. He rested by faith in the merits of a Redeemer crucified (Gal. ii. 20). He put off the old man, he put on the new (Col. iii. 9, 10). He now desired only to be found in Christ, and to be found like Christ. In one lengthy passage of an epistle, he discloses his clear purpose, his passionate wish, all condensed into a single paragraph which really is worth studying word by word (Phil. iii. 7–14). 5. He gave himself at once by public committal to the friends of the Lord Jesus. He told over and over again the story of his conversion (Gal. i. 20–24). At Damascus he was "with the disciples" (ver. 19). Even under cold prejudice at Jerusalem, he "assayed to join himself to the disciples" (ver. 26). (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Saul preaching*:—I. THE PREACHER AS EVIDENCING THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY. 1. What were the moral antecedents of this man? In general terms he was what we all are by nature—the children of wrath, even as others. But in addition to that there was a strong development of the carnal mind which brought out his enmity against God in a most striking light. He was a virulent enemy of Christ and of His Church. Such a sworn foe must have been the last man the Church had supposed would have become not only a convert, but a preacher. One could almost as soon have expected Caiaphas or Pilate. By no previous process of training was this wonderful work accomplished; but in a moment when his heart was bound with enmity against Jesus and the truth, the proud heart and the rebellious will were broken and subdued. To what can you ascribe it but to the power of God? The hand that had just grasped the weapon that was to slay was now clasped in prayer. The knees that never trembled when he stood by Stephen were now smiting for fear. The eyes that had gloated on the agonies of martyr were now overflowing with tears of penitence. I pause to ask you if this is not a fact in evidence which must carry to every ingenuous mind the conviction that the religion that could change such a heart as that of Saul of Tarsus must be Divine? 2. What was his subsequent course? Follow his career from the moment that he said, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" till he closed it by a martyr's death, and there is not in the annals of the Christian Church a character so evidencing the truth of the gospel as that shown in Saul. 3. It is of little consequence what may have been our antecedents—whether we have been persecutors of Churches, or Pharisees, wrapping ourselves up in our own righteousness—we must all pass through the same spiritual change that he did. II. THE PREACHING AS ILLUSTRATING THE NATURE OF CHRISTIANITY. 1. "Straightway." He asked no authority from man. He applied for no orders. He passed through no theological training. From the moment of the discovery of Christ he became His preacher. I would not have you infer that a man may devote himself to the ministry apart from a previous training; for the conversion of the apostle was miraculous, and he had been trained in one of the first schools of the times; so that when by the power of Christ his heart was changed, he had all the intellectual discipline that was essentially necessary to become an able minister of the New Testament. And yet, if it please God to convert a man of intelligence, I see no reason why that man, now his heart is glowing with the love of Christ, should not straightway preach Christ. The authority that we receive is not from man. Ordination is but a recognition of the Church; a pledge on the part of our brethren of their prayers, sympathies, and

confidence. 2. But what did Saul preach? "Jesus." There may be much preaching so denominated that claims no title to the character. Man may preach theology without God, Churchianity without Christianity, Christianity without Christ, the Bible without revelation, the Cross without atonement. Man may do all this, and not preach Jesus. The theme of this newly awakened convert was all summed up in one precious and Divine name—Jesus Christ. III. THE PLACE OF PREACHING AS MANIFESTING THE POWER AND TRIUMPHS OF CHRISTIANITY. 1. He had to cope with (1) the pharisaical Jews. There was much that the Jew had to allege in favour of his religion. He could claim the oracles of God's Word as sustaining him. And yet the apostle adapted not his subject to meet the prejudices or objections of the Jews, but he met them by a simple uplifting of Christ and unfolding of the gospel. (2) The Greek philosophers. It was here that his learning came to his help. If God gives a man intellect and furnishes his mind with learning, God intends that he shall employ these powers in the advancement of His truth. But mark, although his reasoning was logical and profound when he confronted the philosophers of Athens, his theme still was Christ. (3) And thus this man, wherever he went, whoever were his audience—whether he confronted the Jews in the synagogue, the sceptics of Athens, or the jailor at Philippi, Christ Jesus was his grand, his only theme; and no theme but this will ever meet and overcome the enemies, the false religions, and the oppositions of the world. Let men go forth, making Christ their great theme, and such is the voice of that, accompanied with the power of the Spirit, that it would silence all the enemies of the Church. 2. What is it so to preach Christ? (1) Saul preached Christ as the Son of God, and we cannot properly preach Christ without in the very foreground placing this grand article of our creed—that Christ is essentially Divine. The whole fabric of Christianity rests upon this. Cut this from under us, and on what do we stand—in what is the sacrifice for sinners? in what our hope for eternity? But if my Saviour is God, then my hope is resting on Deity, and I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I commit unto Him until that day. (2) We must preach the sacrifice, the atonement of Christ, without qualification or reserve. This is a day of much reserve in the statement of those great cardinals of our faith. But the work of Christ is what it ever has been. No change in modern modes of thought or of opinion has altered the essential doctrines of Christianity. We are not to adapt our preaching to the education or the politics of the times. We are to preach the same glorious gospel which Paul preached when he uplifted the Cross of Christ as the only hope of a lost and ruined world. What a grand feature was that in his ministry—Christ the Saviour of sinners! "This is a faithful saying," &c. (*O. Winslow, D.D.*) *Saul preaching Christ:*—I. THERE IS AN UNOFFICIAL PREACHING OF CHRIST INCUMBENT UPON EVERY ONE WHO IS CONVERTED BY HIS GRACE. As soon as one experiences the renewing power of the Spirit, he is brought under the most powerful constraint to make known the benefits he has received, and to commend to others his Saviour. Saul is a noble example of this generous testimony for Christ. 1. It was prompt. "Immediately." There was no dalliance with duty, no waiting upon frames and feelings. Love, gratitude, joy, a desire to retrieve the wrongs of the past, a yearning to direct others, above all a desire to honour Christ, led him at once to herald forth the name of Jesus. 2. It was brave. He did not simply enter his name upon the roll of the disciples, nor content himself with speaking privately to his former acquaintances, nor open some private apartment where the Jews might hear his testimony; but on the Sabbath day, when the synagogues were thronged, Saul, in the face of friend and foe, made public confession of Jesus. 3. It was uncompromising. He did not undertake to strike a balance between his own convictions and the prejudices of his hearers. He did not confess Jesus as a good man, or as an inspired prophet, or as a supernatural being above angel. He "proclaimed Jesus that He is the Son of God." II. A HIGHER AND OFFICIAL PREACHING OF CHRIST IS INCUMBENT UPON THOSE, AND THOSE ONLY, WHO ARE DULY CALLED AND QUALIFIED TO ENTER UPON IT. This is the preaching which Saul did after his return from Arabia. A study of his course throws much light upon the prerequisites to the gospel ministry. It must be preceded—1. By a Divine call. The call of Saul was extraordinary in its method (Acts xxvi. 16), but in essence the same that every minister must have. There must be an impression deeply wrought by the Spirit that it is our duty to serve God in the ministry—a conviction that grows stronger as it is prayerfully deliberated upon, and does not yield in prospect of the sacrifices which such a life entails. 2. By thorough preparation. One would have supposed that Saul,

graduate of the school of Gamaliel, a man of broad literary culture, a master of the law, an acute theologian, a ready debater, an eloquent orator, might receive his commission at once. But there were schools for the ancient prophets. The twelve were for three years under the personal tuition of our Lord. Saul must first go into Arabia, and, like Moses and the Baptist, come under the immediate tuition of Heaven. There he received what he so expressively calls "my gospel" (Gal. i. 11). If such tuition were needful for one so thoroughly furnished, what shall we say of those who would have young converts rush into the vows and responsibilities of the ministry? 3. By orderly commission. The usual method then, as now, was through the Church authorities. But with the ordinary office of the preacher Saul was to unite the extraordinary office of the apostle. His commission, therefore, was made an extraordinary one. Instead of going up to Jerusalem to receive ordination from the apostles, he went into Arabia, and there received it immediately from the hands of the Lord (Gal. i. 1). A Divine commission is as necessary now as it was then. III. THE MATTER, MANNER, AND EFFECTS OF PREACHING CHRIST ARE THE SAME IN ALL AGES. They are strikingly illustrated in the passage. 1. The matter is the same. Saul sounds here the keynote of his whole after-ministry. He preaches "Jesus, that He is the Son of God." Upon His Deity he bases the whole system of doctrines that he proclaims. To this he adds the evidence of His Messiahship. He establishes His claim as the anointed Prophet, revealing the Father; the anointed Priest, making atonement; the anointed King, reigning until all enemies are subdued. This is the gospel which every minister is commissioned to preach, which every layman is under obligation unofficially to teach. Nothing can supersede it. It will bear no admixture of human philosophy, it will submit to no arraignment at the bar of human reason. It, and it alone, goes down to the deep necessities of the human heart, and has power to lift man up into the life of holiness and into the light of hope. 2. The manner is the same. Saul's preaching was (1) Scriptural. He confounded the Jews by proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ. He who does this stands upon high vantage-ground. It is the men who are "mighty in the Scriptures" whose teaching is crowned with success. (2) Fearless. "Boldly." He did not hesitate through fear of prejudice or opposition. He did not consult the partialities or caprices of his hearers. Never was such preaching needed more than now. It requires courage to deal faithfully with the consciences of impenitent sinners and worldly-minded church-members. (3) Humble. "In the name of the Lord Jesus." He assumed no authority or superiority of his own. He was but the mouthpiece through whom Christ spake. He relied upon the power of Christ to make his message effectual. 3. The effects are the same. (1) The apostle found in Damascus and at Jerusalem what he did everywhere else, "To the one we are the savour of death," &c. In every community two classes will appear—enemies and friends. (*a*) With the former the enmity of the carnal heart will be aroused, and will lead on to persecution. If the Jews in Damascus and Jerusalem cannot gainsay Saul's arguments, they can at least "lay wait to kill him." (*b*) But very different are the effects upon another. Saul soon found himself surrounded by a body of disciples—"his disciples," as the R.V. teaches us in ver. 25. Faithful work for Christ will not be left without result. (2) The fruits of faithful teaching are gathered after the teacher is gone. Saul has been "brought down to Cæsarea, and sent away to Tarsus," but the Church of God remains, and "has peace, being edified," &c. (*T. D. Witherspoon, D.D.*) *The testimony of Christ*:—I. THE SOURCE FROM WHICH IT MUST PROCEED. A heart apprehended of Christ and converted. II. ITS CONTENTS. Christ the Son of God and the Saviour of men. III. ITS SUCCESS. 1. Astonishment. 2. Blessed fruits. (*K. Gerok.*) *Paul's ministry at Damascus*:—I. THE CHARACTER OF HIS SPIRITUAL CHANGE. 1. It was radical. He preached Christ as the Son of God, what he had previously given his whole being to deny. Saul the persecutor becomes Paul the apostle. 2. It was genuine. He preached in the synagogues, where he was well known as the High Priest's commissioner—the worst place for an impostor, but the best place for one who wished to make some atonement for his past life. 3. It was startling. The people were "amazed," as well they might be. II. THE NATURE OF HIS NEW FAITH (ver. 22). It was—1. Growable—"he increased." The more he examined Christ's claims, and reflected on His truths, the stronger grew his confidence and affection. Christianity is not a dry notion, but a living germ. Once planted, every earnest thought about it will only serve to strike its roots deeper. 2. Discussable. It was a thing Paul felt he could take into the synagogues and submit to competent critics. Christianity is no mystic sentiment that admits of

no explanation, nor a musty sentiment that totters on scrutiny; it is intelligible in its facts, and rational in its theories. 3. Demonstrable. "Proving." By manifestation of the truth he commended himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. III. THE SPIRIT OF HIS FIRST AUDITORS (ver. 23). Their malignity was—1. Deadly. They sought to kill him. Violence has always been the argument of bigotry, which no man knew better than Saul; but truth ever seeks to kill error by saving the advocate. 2. Deliberate evil as well as good has its plans. 3. Frustrated (ver. 25). In his deliverance we see—(1) The way in which Providence delivers the good. God could have launched a thunderbolt and crushed Saul's enemies; but as is usually the case God saved him by his own caution and the assistance of the disciples. (2) The inevitable doom of evil. God "taketh the wise in their own craftiness." (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The first essay of a warrior of Christ*:—He must—I. INVIOLABLY SWEAR ALLEGIANCE TO THE BANNER (vers. 20, 23). II. DILIGENTLY EMPLOY HIS WEAPONS (ver. 22). III. MODESTLY TAKE HIS PLACE IN THE RANKS (vers. 26, 28). IV. COURAGEOUSLY LOOK THE ENEMY IN THE FACE (vers. 22, 29). V. OBEDIENTLY RETIRE AT THE SIGNAL. (*K. Gerok.*) *The probation years in the ministerial office*:—Note here the first official—1. Tasks. 2. Joys. 3. Sufferings. (*Ibid.*) *Conversion leads to Christian activity*:—Sir James Young Simpson, Bart., M.D., is a name that will shine in the annals of Scotland, and as a star of the first magnitude among her numerous eminent men. The son of a poor baker in Bathgate, who had much ado to keep his head above water, he rose to receive the honour of a baronetcy from the Queen, "in recognition of his professional merits, especially the introduction of chloroform." His public life was always marked by outward consistency, and by an observance of the externals of religion, numbering among his friends some of the leading divines of Edinburgh, where he lived and laboured. But he was unacquainted with the power of religion until 1861, and the person who was most instrumental in the marked change which was wrought was an invalid lady, one of his patients, whose quiet words spoken, and whose letters of grateful Christian interest written to him, took hold of his heart, by the power of the Holy Spirit. In one of her letters she said, having written in the kindest possible way concerning him and his household: "What is to fill this heart to all eternity? When benevolence shall have run its course, when there shall be no sick to heal, no disease to cure: when all I have been engaged about comes to a dead stop, what is to fill this heart, and thought, and these powers of mind? Only the God-Man! If then, why not now?" In this way he was led to Christ, and soon began to undertake active and public Christian work. The grass was scarcely green on the grave of his long-afflicted son Jamie, when we find him giving a public address to medical students, speaking of himself as "one of the oldest sinners and one of the youngest believers in the room," and earnestly entreating them to open the doors of their heart and receive the Saviour. "In Christ," said he, "you will find a Saviour, a Companion, a Counsellor, a Friend, a Brother, who loves you with a love greater than human heart can conceive." (*The Quiver.*) *"And straightway he preached Christ"*:—Henry Ward Beecher left college with no thought of the Church, was rather a wild youth, and, with two companions, followed the pioneers to the backwoods to shoot, hunt, and fish. In the midst of this wild life he happened to hear a Methodist minister, and the truth struck home to his heart. The effect was instantaneous. Like Saul, when he was struck down on his way to Damascus, his first question was, "What wilt Thou have me to do?" Beecher's enthusiastic nature admitted of nothing else. He sold his rod and gun for a horse, and began to move from place to place, preaching to the backwoodsmen. This was the beginning of Beecher's ministry.

Vers. 23–25. **And after many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him. . . . Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.**—*Paul's deliverance by the basket*:—I. GOD WAGES WAR WITH PRIDE IN EVERY FORM. 1. There is, perhaps, no greater wonder than that man should be proud. Turn where we will, everything seems to teach humility. The grass whispers, "You are dependent on us for food." The beasts say, "You have to borrow our strength." The clouds drop down a voice: "If we descend not upon you, you die." 2. And God, from time to time, makes man learn this lesson, whether he be His friend or foe. Frogs, flies, lice, locusts—all petty in themselves, become terrible to proud Pharaoh; and worms become fatal beneath the royal purple, when the proud Herod is to be destroyed. 3. To none does God more unmistakably teach the folly of pride than to His own people. A great part of life's discipline is

just a self-emptying in this respect—that man may learn that God is all-in-all. The greatest of God's servants are, from time to time, reduced to be dependent upon the poorest earthly instrumentality—Elijah upon a handful of meal; Jeremiah upon old rags and clouts, as he is drawn up out of the pit; Paul upon a basket. God so often uses poor instrumentalities for accomplishing the deliverance of His people, because the tendency of man is to glorify the instrument (Hab. i 16). 4. God will fix man's eye upon Himself. 5. God would show His lordship in energising them. II. THE GOOD EFFECTS OF A KNOWLEDGE OF THIS. If we see plainly that God often uses very poor earthly instrumentality—1. We shall not despair in great troubles, because great ways of deliverance are not opened up before us. Goliath, armed in his panoply of brass, must surely be met with something in proportion; but God teaches the secret of the smooth stones of the brook—the proportion that He knows of, though we knew it not. Many a child of God is like the lion entangled in the meshes of the net, that found deliverance by the nibbling of the mouse. 2. We shall be very cheerful in our times of trial, feeling that there are possibilities of deliverance all around us. "With God all things are possible." The man of God is taught that he has resources in everything. 3. We shall be in a very humble frame of mind, ready to receive help from any direction. Sometimes God has to make His people ready. The spirit of Naaman is too much in them; they have Abanas and Pharpars of their own, which they think better than anything else, unless it be something very striking and grand. And, sometimes, our blessing comes by a very humble hand. During one of his severe illnesses, Bengel, the great commentator, sent for a student, and requested him to impart a word of consolation. The youth replied, "Sir, I am but a pupil; I don't know what to say to a teacher like you." "What," said Bengel, "a divinity student! and not able to communicate a word of Scriptural comfort!" The student, abashed, contrived to utter the text, "The blood of Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin." "That is the very word I want," said Bengel; "it is quite enough"; and, taking him affectionately by the hand, dismissed him. The great commentator was ready to receive the blessing from the hand of the humble student; and God was ready to give it. 4. We shall be hearty to use the means we have at hand. We never know what such means will do until we try. There is a wonderful elasticity in little means, when God is giving them His blessing. In taking down the scaffolding of a huge mill chimney, the men forgot to affix the rope by which the foreman, directing their operations from the top, was to descend. Amid the frantic cries of the poor fellow above, and of the crowd below, the shrill voice of his wife was heard exclaiming, "Tak' off thy stocking, lad, and unravel it, and let down the thread with a piece of mortar." Presently the little thread came waving down the chimney, and reached the outstretched hands waiting for it; then it was attached to a ball of string, which Jem was asked to pull gently up. To the end of the string was attached the forgotten rope, which was drawn up in turn, and amidst cries of "Thank God!" was fastened to the iron, and bore the man safely to the ground. That is as good an instance as we could find anywhere of making good use of little means, and let us follow it ourselves. 5. The circle of possible aids will be enlarged. We are very apt in time of trouble to take very contracted views of the circle in which God is likely to work. We shut out all the little ways of help, and then the great ones are reduced to very few indeed; and as a necessary consequence, down sinks our heart in distress. We need continually to be reminded that even the stones can be made bread. 6. We shall be kept humble in the day of prosperity, not knowing when, and for how much, we may be indebted to little things. (*P. B. Power, M.A.*) *Humiliating deliverance*:—(*Cf.* 2 Cor. xi. 32, 33). Saul had returned from his Arabian retirement, and his powerful preaching aroused the animosity of the Jews. The Ethnarch, under the king of the Nabothæan Arabs, sided with them, and watched the gates of the city to take Saul. It was a close investment, and with such powerful enemies the chances were all against him. At this juncture a device occurred to his friends, recalling that of Rahab (Josh. ii. 15), and David (1 Sam. xix. 12). It was a humiliating circumstance, and is placed by Paul amongst "the things that concern my infirmities." Most men would have banished it from their thoughts and concealed it. Of such odd and inconvenient things the religion of Christ can make splendid use. This was—I. AN INSTANCE OF PECULIAR DISCIPLINE. 1. That there was something in Paul's mental constitution requiring to be so dealt with we may be certain—over-sensitiveness, a sense of personal dignity, pride of race. In such ways we get the starch taken out of us. 2. There was need for the most contradictory qualities in an apostle. He had to be strictly upright,

yet "all things to all men"; firm and stern in rebuking sin, yet gentle and forgiving to the penitent; keenly sensitive to the claims of the Master and His representatives, but oblivious to mere personal consideration. Whilst he had to confess that he was less than the least of all saints; he had to withstand "pillars," and those who "seemed to be somewhat to the face" (Gal. ii.). Of the stiff Pharisee God was making a keen and flexible weapon. 3. This circumstance was in a line with his confusion on the highway, when he was "led by the hand." That it made a deep impression on his mind we learn from the minuteness of the description after so many years. He uses the specific word for "rope-work hamper," while Luke employs the more general "basket." 4. Many would have hesitated to avail themselves of such a means of escape as making them ridiculous, and thus detrimental to authority and usefulness. II. A TEST OF THE FAITH OF THE DISCIPLES. There are many who cannot receive the truth for its own worth. Moral influence is with them bound up with personal position and external dignity. Yet a humble exterior is no proof of real lowering. Splendour may cloke corruption and spiritual death. The appearance of an apostle dangling in a rope-basket was therefore a trial to the new converts. One might fancy themselves exclaiming, "Where is the miracle, the sign?" So Paul banters the Corinthians—I am a fool! "bear with me." With men God ever pursues this separative process, dissolving the temporal and accidental from the essential and eternal. III. A SPECIMEN OF THE IRONY OF PROVIDENCE. In certain historical events one seems to detect such a mood, especially in the cries of nations and churches. The O. T., *e.g.*, in the stories of Moses, Jacob, Gideon, is full of them. The means of checkmating the enemy of souls is reduced to a minimum—a ridiculous, preposterous circumstance, but it is sufficient. And when one compares the huge preparations and complex machinery of Satan with the simplicity of the Divine instrumentalities, the power and wisdom of God are thrown into relief. There are traces of a contempt for Satan in the Bible. Let us take heart, then, as we think of the grim laughter of the angels over abortive schemes and transparent blunders of the prince of darkness. (*A. F. Muir, M.A.*) *The methods of Divine providence*:—I. NEVER INVOLVE AN UNNECESSARY MIRACLE. Had occasion required it, all the forces of the universe would have been at Paul's disposal. The circumstances were apparently desperate, but not beyond the God-directed ingenuity of brotherly hearts. God helps those who help themselves—and God's ministers. A chariot of fire is not harnessed when a rope-basket will do. In trouble or work expect deliverance or help, not from some striking supernatural interposition, but rather from some humble source overlooked because so commonplace and seemingly inadequate. II. OFTEN INVOLVE CURIOUS EXPEDIENTS. An ambassador of Christ making his escape in a rope-basket! Yet spies, defeated warriors, and kings have been glad of the even more ridiculous disguises. And God's people in escaping persecution or seeking truth must not be, and have not been, particular as to what people think. Carey posed as an Indigo planter, Zacchæus perched himself in a sycamore tree, and the Bible had to be smuggled into Italy under a lady's crinoline. III. ARE FREQUENTLY THE SIMPLEST AND THE EASIEST OF ADOPTION. There would be no trouble in getting a basket. Saul would have had no difficulty in making one if necessary. And when hit upon, how much more effective this plan must have seemed than a score of others that possibly may have been entertained—bribing the governor, dodging the guard, &c. How often God rebukes us by setting aside our apparently clever but really cumbrous contrivances, and using the humblest instruments. Shamgar's ox-goad, Samson's jaw-bone, David's sling and stone, wrought wonders at times impossible to the whole might of Israel. IV. ARE ALWAYS THE BEST UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES. The question for Saul is the question for this practical age—not "How does it look?" but "How will it do?" And the rope-basket did admirably. It was soft, light, strong, and no one would dream of looking for an apostle in it. Do not then criticise the form which a given method of providence may take? Whatever it may be, it is the best because God employs it. V. DIFFER ACCORDING TO VARIOUS REQUIREMENTS. Paul was often afterwards in peril, but never had occasion to use the rope-basket again. This would have been useless in a similar crisis (chap. xxiii.), where a band of soldiers was required. Because God delivers us in a given fashion, or blesses us in a certain way at one time, it does not follow that the specific acts will be repeated. There is as much variety in the methods of providence as in the methods of nature; both deal with needs as they arise. (*J. W. Burn.*) *Providence: its methods strange only to us*:—I looked upon the wrong or back side of a piece of arras (or tapestry); it seemed to me as a continued

nonsense. There was neither head nor foot therein, confusion itself had as much method in it—a company of thrums and threads, with many pieces and patches of several sorts, sizes, and colours; all which signified nothing to my understanding. But then, looking on the reverse, or right side thereof, all put together did spell excellent proportions, and figures of men and cities; so that, indeed, it was a history, not wrote with a pen, but wrought with a needle. If men look upon some of God's providential dealings with a mere eye of reason, they will hardly find any sense therein, such their muddle and disorder. But, alas! the wrong side is objected to our eyes, while the right side is presented to the high God of heaven, who knoweth that an admirable order doth result out of this confusion: and what is presented to Him at present may, hereafter, be so showed to us as to convince our judgments in the truth thereof. (*T. Fuller, D.D.*) *Providence, interposition of*:—A story is related—in connection with the ejectment of the two thousand ministers from the Church of England—of Henry Havers, of Catherine Hall, Cambridge. Being pursued by enemies who sought to apprehend him, he sought refuge in a malt-house and crept into the kiln. Immediately afterward he observed a spider fixing the first line of a large and beautiful web across the narrow entrance. The web being placed directly between him and the light, he was so much struck with the skill of the insect weaver, that for a while he forgot his own imminent danger; but by the time the network had crossed and recrossed the mouth of the kiln in every direction the pursuers came to search for him. He listened as they approached, and distinctly overheard one of them say, "It's of no use to look in there; the old villain can never be there. Look at that spider's web; he could never have got in there without breaking it."

Vers. 26–30. **And when Saul was come to Jerusalem he essayed to join himself to the disciples.**—*Saul's emotions on returning to Jerusalem*:—He was returning to it from a spiritual as Ezra had from a bodily captivity, and to his renewed mind all things appeared new. What an emotion smote his heart at the first distant view of the Temple, that house of sacrifice, that edifice of prophecy. Its sacrifices had been realised, the Lamb of God had been offered; its prophecies had been fulfilled, the Lord had come unto it. As he approached the gates, he might have trodden the very spot where he had so exultingly assisted in the death of Stephen, and he entered them perfectly content, were it God's will, to be dragged out through them to the same fate. He would feel a peculiar tie of brotherhood to that martyr, for he could not now be ignorant that the same Jesus who in such glory had called him, had but a little time before appeared in the same glory to assure the expiring Stephen. The ecstatic look and words of the dying saint now came fresh upon his memory with their real meaning. When he entered into the city, what deep thoughts were suggested by the haunts of his youth, and by the sight of the spots where he had so eagerly sought that knowledge which he had so eagerly abandoned. What an intolerable burden had he cast off! He felt as a glorified spirit may be supposed to feel on revisiting the scenes of its fleshly concern. (*J. S. Howson, D.D.*) *Saul's first visit after his conversion to Jerusalem*:—I. HIS ADMISSION TO CHURCH MEMBERSHIP. 1. Sought. "He essayed," *i.e.*, endeavoured to join himself to the disciples. Amongst them was Peter—an object of special attraction (Gal. i. 18). He had heard, doubtless, of his wonderful sermon at Pentecost, and otherwise from the Christians at Damascus. James was there, too, the Lord's brother. This endeavour to get into the new fellowship indicated—(1) A wonderful change in his social character. Three years before, the disciples were the object of his indignation. (2) The law of social life. There is a craving for intercourse with those of kindred thoughts, sympathies, and aims. 2. Obstructed. "They were all afraid of him." It would seem that he had no letters of commendation from Damascus, owing to the hurried manner of his escape. So that we are not surprised at the panic here. This obstruction, however, must have been—(1) Painful to him. He had been a Christian three years, had held fellowship with the disciples at Damascus, had preached boldly there, and had studied the Christian faith and cultivated the Christian life in the solitudes of Arabia. So he must have felt it hard, though just, to have been now suspected. (2) Natural. Purity and peace required caution, and the apostle's case was a suspicious one, with the persecution fresh upon the memory. 3. Attained. This was through the kind offices of Barnabas, a man known and honoured by them, and possibly an acquaintance of Saul's. As Cyprus was only a few hours' sail from Cilicia, Barnabas, in introducing Saul, pleads on his behalf

the only sufficient qualification for Church membership (ver. 27). 4. Enjoyed (ver. 28). He would—(1) "Come in" to them with some new thought, new impressions, new deeds wrought for Christ, which would stimulate and cheer the brethren. (2) "Go out" with their prayers, counsel, love, bracing him for heroic work. Blessed the man who has a spiritual home. Such homes are where moral giants are trained. II. HIS PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL (ver. 29). 1. The subject of his ministry. "In the name of the Lord Jesus"—a subject he once hated, and which he preferred to many subjects which, as a man of genius and learning, he might have taken. He viewed everything through it, and judged the world by it. 2. Its sphere—"Grecians"—Hellenistic Jews. The same zeal which had combated Stephen now defended the cause for which he died. 3. Its style. (1) "Boldly." Nothing but an invincible courage could have enabled him to appear before such an audience on such a theme. (2) He "disputed." He did not, as a fanatic would, declaim, but submitted theses for discussion. 4. Its results. (1) Persecution to himself. (2) Increased sympathy of the Church (ver. 30). (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Saul at Jerusalem*:—1. It was in blindness that he had first entered Damascus, and now he is forced to flee from it under the friendly cover of darkness. As he proceeded to Jerusalem, he could not pass the scene of his conversion without a holy shudder. Every turn of the road must have reminded him of his eastward journey. But he hurries westward a changed man. And he must have wondered how he should meet his instigators, and have surmised how they would curse him. And if he passed the place of Stephen's martyrdom, his soul must have trembled in its gratitude to sovereign mercy. 2. His arrival created as much doubt among the Christians as it had done at Damascus. He did not attempt to take them by storm, and parade the glory of his conversion, but humbly sought admission, but his veracity was questioned, and they deemed him to be a wolf in lamb's clothing—no small trial for one who had done and suffered so much under his new convictions. But Barnabas kindly interfered and vouched for his sincerity, and then was he admitted to fellowship. 3. The apostle of the circumcision and the apostle of the Gentiles dwelt for "fifteen days" under one roof. What conversations, discussions, and projected enterprises from two minds so unlike in structure and discipline, and yet so very like in zeal and courage! Peter loved Palestine, yet Paul loved it none the less that his heart embraced the world. The former felt at home in the sphere of the Old Testament, the other stretched beyond it while he did not forsake it. Peter did what he knew to be his duty in repairing to the house of Cornelius, but he did not feel at perfect liberty to repeat such deeds; while the untrammelled Paul exclaims, "Inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles I magnify mine office." In a word, Peter was like the Jordan, the stream that belonged exclusively to his fatherland, though a foreigner, like Naaman, might once be healed in it; but Paul resembled the "great sea," which washes the shores of the three continents. Saul stayed only a fortnight in Jerusalem, but he was not and could not be idle. Four features of his preaching come into view. I. THE CLASS TO WHOM HE ADDRESSED HIMSELF WERE THE HELLENISTS. The Jews born in Judæa were victims of narrowness and prejudice; the "genius of the place" held them in bondage. But the Jews born and brought up in other countries had mingled with other races, and their minds were expanded with literary and commercial intercourse. As one of them, Saul specially appealed to them. For there are certain ties of blood, education, and language which are to be recognised even in the advocacy of the truth. Saul did not fling the gospel in the face of the high priest, nor go to the temple and harangue the fanatical crowds. He was no unreasoning fanatic, unable to hold his tongue or control his temper; no agitator, reckless as to circumstances. He was, indeed, a man of one idea, but it did not so overmaster him that he knew not when, how, and where to develop it. II. HIS PREACHING TOOK THE FORM OF DISPUTATION. He did not come forth simply with a "set speech," but after he spoke he allowed the free criticism of all his statements. He met his opponents openly and fully, prepared to reply to their questions and to respond to their challenge. One opponent might question his interpretation of the law or the prophets; or another would affirm some base thing about our Lord's life, or some stupid and malignant thing about his religion, while to the one and the other Saul would speak with loving soul, reasoning out the validity of his interpretation and teaching the truth as to the facts of the Master's career and death. And though another disputant, with a leer and a frown, should refer to his conversion, the allusion could neither shame nor intimidate one who "had seen that Just One, and heard the voice of His mouth." III. HIS PREACHING

WAS BOLD, for his convictions were thorough. He believed, therefore he spake. Had there been any suspicions that possibly after all he might be in error—then his preaching might have been faltering. But Saul's mind could not admit the possibility of a doubt; and the glorified Jesus being his shield, he was not alarmed at "what man shall do." He could not modify, and he would not recant. Pressed on every side by the Grecians, he was impervious alike to execration and ridicule—a mighty man of valour, clad in "the whole armour of God." IV. HE WAS BOLD IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS, *i.e.*, he not only preached Christ, but he claimed His express authority for so preaching Him. Timidity would be treachery to his Master, cruelty to the world, and unfaithfulness to his own convictions. And all this brave outspokenness was not the arrogance of a "novice," but the courage which one feels who has vowed fidelity both to God and to man, and who is supported by the grace which never fails. Conclusion: That Saul's appearance should impress some needs not be doubted, but the multitude refused to believe. Nay, they went about to slay him. In the meantime he had enjoyed a remarkable vision in the Temple, in which he saw Christ and heard Him say, "Get thee quickly out of Jerusalem, for they will not receive thy testimony concerning Me." As Saul had been only two weeks there, he wished to remain a little longer, and, probably with the advice of Peter, thought of selecting Jerusalem as a field of labour. Another scene like Pentecost might be anticipated, and Peter might be hoping much from the ardour, erudition, and eloquence of his junior colleague. Man proposes, but God disposes. But as Saul did nothing without a reason, he honestly tells the Lord why he had come to labour in Jerusalem (chap. xxii. 19, 20). The ground taken by Saul is very intelligible. The population of Jerusalem had known what he was, and he wished them to know what he had become. Therefore he thought that on the spot where such points were notorious, he had a special claim to be heard against himself and in favour of that system which he had adopted from the best of all reasons. Moses, when summoned to go to Egypt, pleaded want of eloquence; Gideon would not march till the fleece had been wetted, nay, till the omen had been reversed; Jeremiah urged his youth and inexperience when called to the prophetic office; Jonah set sail for Tarshish, instead of proceeding to Nineveh; Ananias, when bidden to seek out a stranger who had recently arrived at Damascus, demurred; and Saul, thinking himself possessed of special qualifications for a sphere of labour which he preferred, was backward toward that very work for which he had been born and called, and in which he so soon achieved signal success, and won imperishable renown. "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?" "The right man in the right place," has become a popular expression for mutual adaptation. Saul did not verify the saying either in Damascus or Jerusalem, but it might be truly predicted of him through his whole subsequent career, when he spoke, travelled, toiled, and suffered, as one "appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity." (*J. Eadie, D.D.*) *Church membership*:—I. THE CHARACTER OF THE PERSONS ON WHOM THE DUTY OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP DEVOLVES. 1. It is the duty of all who call themselves Christians to separate themselves from the world and to unite themselves with a particular Church; yet, before they can do this in a scriptural manner, they must exercise repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; they must "first give themselves to the Lord, and then to His people according to His will." Personal must precede social religion. "A Christian is the highest style of man"—he is a disciple of Christ; he believes His gospel; he loves Him; he imitates His example; he yields obedience to His commands; and he lives, not unto himself, but unto Him who died for him and rose again. 2. That none but such persons are qualified for Church membership is evident from the New Testament. In the case before us, when "Saul essayed to join himself to the disciples," they did not receive him till they had ascertained from Barnabas that he was a disciple indeed. And when the apostle wrote to the Churches he had formed he addressed them to "the saints"—to the "beloved of God"—to the "faithful in Christ Jesus," &c. And if persons of another character gained admission, they were "to put away that wicked person," and to "withdraw from every brother that walked disorderly." 3. Besides this direct evidence that personal piety is an essential prerequisite for Church communion, there are other considerations to show its necessity. Without personal piety—(1) A man can have no spiritual communion with the Church—"for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" (2) He is morally unable to promote the great objects

for which the Church of Christ was established. (3) His Church membership may only serve to confirm his self-righteousness and self-deception. 4. The Church would soon lose its distinctive character, and possess nothing of religion but the name. II. THE INDISPENSABLE DUTY OF ALL SUCH PERSONS TO UNITE THEMSELVES IN MEMBERSHIP WITH A CHURCH OF CHRIST. This appears—1. From the fact that the Christian Church is instituted by the authority of Christ. He is "the head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." "Upon this rock," says He, "I will build My Church." "The Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved." Besides, when Christians are addressed, it is not only in their personal, but also in their social capacity. They are described not as scattered stones, but as a spiritual temple—not as a house only, but as a city—not as distinct and separated individuals, but as "fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." And the will of Christ, in this respect, is quite in accordance with the social character of man, and with the natural tendency and influence of personal piety. Not to unite with His Church, therefore, is to disregard His authority, to impeach His wisdom, and to set an example of spiritual celibacy, which, if followed by all, would subvert his institutions, and render a Church of Christ entirely unknown. 2. The uniform conduct of the primitive Christians. In the pure and primitive ages of Christianity, the several Churches contained the whole number of the faithful. Then every one who acknowledged himself a Christian felt it to be a duty to join himself to the disciples of Christ, though he thereby risked his property, his liberty, and his life. 3. The command of Christ, relative to the celebration of the Lord's Supper, "Do this in remembrance of Me," was a command given, not to an individual, but to a society. It was to be celebrated by "those who came together in the Church." The same authority which commands, "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is," also commands this, and you act in defiance of that authority, whether you forsake the public worship of God, or neglect communion with the Church of Christ. III. THE ADVANTAGES WHICH A PROMPT PERFORMANCE OF THIS DUTY WILL SECURE. Your communion with the Church of Christ —1. Will warrant the exercise of confidence in prayer, and authorise you to expect the blessing of God. Whilst you live in the neglect of this duty, I do not see how you can consistently exercise the one, or expect the other. When we reverence the Redeemer as our Lawgiver, we may consistently expect Him to become our Intercessor, and when we ascend the hill where His blessing is promised, we may confidently expect that there it will be commanded. 2. Will furnish you with additional means and motives for perseverance in holiness. You will be brought under the immediate charge and care of the pastor, and become associated with brethren who will watch over you with charity, and sympathise with you in your sorrows and your joys, and pray for you. Besides which, you will be surrounded with obligations to circumspection, arising from the sacredness of your relationship. You will then be no longer an isolated individual, like a flower in a wilderness, wasting its sweetness in the desert air, dimmed in its beauties, and stunted in its growth; but, being planted in the house of the Lord, you will flourish like the palm tree, and grow like a cedar in Lebanon, still bringing forth fruit even in old age. 3. Will be a source of much holy peace and joy. There is a sweet and sacred pleasure which springs from the conviction of having acted according to the Divine command. IV. THE OBJECTIONS AND APOLOGIES BY WHICH THOSE WHO NEGLECT THIS DUTY ATTEMPT TO JUSTIFY OR TO EXCUSE THEIR CONDUCT. 1. "I am not yet qualified for Church membership." If by this you intimate that you are not Christians, then your fear is just; or if you refer to the righteousness which is of the law, you have not yet attained it, and you never will. But perhaps you mean a more mature and perfect character. If so, you have mistaken the design of the institution. The Church is formed expressly for the reception of all who repent and believe the gospel; and they are commanded to enter it, not when their Christian graces are matured, but in order that they may be matured. It is at once a nursery for the babe in Christ, a school for the education of the young man, and a sanctuary for the refuge and repose of "such an one as Paul the aged." 2. "I can go to heaven without being a member of a Church." Does not the ingratitude and presumption which this objection manifests, render it unworthy of a reply? Is there not a degree of haughtiness and flippancy in such a sentiment, which betrays a heart which is not right in the sight of God? Suppose you do go to heaven without it—will the recollection of your neglect and disobedience be any source of pleasure to you when you get there? Go to heaven without

it! Shame on the man who professes to follow the Lamb, and yet tells us that he can travel to heaven by trampling on His institutions, and enter there, not by the door, like an honest man, but by some other way, like a thief and a robber. 3. "I have a relative or friend who is not willing that I should become a member of the Church." Now, if you were to state this apology fully, you would add, "and therefore I have determined to consult his will rather than the will of Christ." But further, if your relative or friend be not pious, is your present conduct likely to make him so? Will he not suspect your loyalty and love to the Redeemer, and learn by your example to be negligent and disobedient? If your relative or friend will not accompany you to the Cross and to the Church, you must go alone. 4. "I fear that the Church will not receive me." No Church constituted according to the New Testament will refuse to receive you if you profess and manifest repentance and faith. If you are a Christian, however young and feeble, Christ has received you, and it would be at our peril to reject you, for the Church is not ours. 5. "I fear that, at some future time, I may bring dishonour on the cause of Christ." But is there nothing dishonourable in your present conduct? Besides, are you more likely to be safe in the world than in the Church? And is Christ less likely to preserve you when you are keeping His commandments? (*J. Alexander.*)

Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles.—*Barnabas and Saul:*—The first association of two names, afterwards linked together for good or evil, is fraught with interest. How much more the earliest combination of Barnabas and Saul—to issue in widespread blessing for the Church and the world. It is significant, however, that Barnabas alone had the genius to detect the genuineness of Saul's conversion, and his latent possibilities. How many splendid lives have been gained for the Church, in the teeth of the Church's opposition, by the kindness and sagacity of some one man. I. WHAT BARNABAS DID; as exhibiting the conduct of a true brother. 1. "He took him." (1) Sympathised with his painful position. (2) Relieved him from his embarrassing isolation. (3) Identified himself with him by taking his stand on the same platform. And thus—(4) Effectually helped him in circumstances, where from his previous record he was powerless. 2. He "brought him to the apostles." He was not satisfied with sending a letter of recommendation, or with telling Saul to "mention his name"—a cheap and easy method often adopted nowadays—but went with him to vouch for his character, and to accept all responsibility for him. How many good Christians to-day are outside the fold because of the unjust suspicions of their fellow Christians! And how much room there is for a Barnabas in those Churches where mere orthodoxy or respectability rule instead of the Spirit of Christ. II. WHAT BARNABAS SAID: as defining the character of a true convert. 1. "How that he had seen the Lord." The vision of Christ as Saviour and Lord essential to true conversion. Paul himself confesses as much (Gal. i. 15, 16). 2. "That he had spoken to Him." "Behold he prayeth" was the assurance Christ gave to Ananias of Paul's conversion. 3. "That he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus." Paul tells us that when a man believes, he will speak. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." (*J. W. Burn.*) *Sympathy: its practical value:*—To the generosity and clear-sightedness of Joseph of Cyprus, on this and on a later occasion, the apostle owed a vast debt of gratitude. Next only to the man who achieves the greatest and most blessed deeds is he who, perhaps himself wholly incapable of such high work, is yet the first to help and encourage the genius of others. We often do more good by our sympathy than by our labours, and render to the world a more lasting service by absence of jealousy, and recognition of merit, than we could ever render by the straining efforts of personal ambition. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*)

Ver. 31. **Then had the Churches rest.**—*Quiet times:*—The right use of quiet times is a great secret of Christian living. Human life is made up of alternations of storm and calm, of trouble and rest. It is so with the life of an individual, a nation, or a Church. The earlier part of this chapter indicated a time of trouble. But now the chief persecutor has himself felt the force of truth. Then again the Emperor Caligula was making an impious attempt to place his own image in the Temple, and so the attention of the Jews was wholly occupied with plans for frustrating his design. They had no time to persecute. So the Churches had peace: how did they use it? Did it make them indolent, unfruitful, unfaithful, quarrelsome? Two things are said of them: they were—I. EDIFIED. 1. The whole Church is one building, planned by one Architect, carried on by one Builder, designed for one end,

to be the habitation of God. This thought is full of comfort. It shows us that however small the place of each one, yet each one has his place, and that, if it be not filled, there is a blank, be it ever so small. Is not that honour enough? Does it not say to each, See that thy place be not a blank, or worse? 2. The Church of each land, age, town, is a building. It may be but a fragment, a buttress, or a pinnacle of the universal Church; but you all know how any building would look if one buttress fell; and therefore you will not count it a small thing if some such position belongs to our community. This congregation of ours is a building. Is it then being built up? is it rising, in solidity, unity, beauty? is it giving signs, more and more, of its destination as a habitation of God? 3. Each human soul is a building. What a question is it, for each one, How is that building which is I myself, getting on? Are the foundations deeply and soundly laid in the faith of Christ? Is the superstructure rising day by day gradually, regularly, quietly, yet consciously, perceptibly, visibly? Am I growing in grace? more and more prevailing over sinful passions? better able to do the work which He has given me? Times of tranquillity ought to be times of edifying: alas! too often they are times of suspended energy. II. MULTIPLIED. A time of peace ought to be a time of outward as well as inward progress. It was so of old. How is it now? Is there zeal in founding or reinforcing missionary institutions? Alas! you know that with much philanthropy there is little gospel zeal amongst us; that, where a thousand pounds can be gathered for a work of charity, it is hard to collect ten for a work of piety. And is the Church at all multiplying at home? Can we point, by tens, or fives, or units, to new persons brought to be worshippers by agencies now working amongst us? We are not left in the dark as to how this may be done. The Church multiplies, by its own progress, in two things: walking in—(1) The fear of the Lord, &c. Christ deserves not only our love but our fear. Does that seem strange? Is He not our "merciful and faithful High Priest," "the Propitiation for our sins." Yes! The words are written for our comfort, but not to make us careless about our sin. There is nothing which so solemnises the mind as the thought of an absolutely disinterested and unbounded love. It says of itself, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" To "trample under foot the Son of God," to "count the blood of the covenant, wherewith we are sanctified, an unholy thing," must indeed be of all crimes the blackest and the most fatal. And that is what men do every day for want of this very fear of which the text speaks. To walk in the fear of Christ is one-half of Christianity. (2) And then, so walking, there is room for "the comfort of the Holy Ghost." This is not a mere soothing influence within; it is a cheering power without also. The same word is rendered exhortation. God comforts by cheering on; by encouraging to action. We may try the reality of our comfort by this one test: Does it stir me up and spur me on to action? Does it say not, Rest from work, but, Rest in working? (*Dean Vaughan.*) I. THE DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE DESCRIPTION HERE GIVEN. 1. The Churches "were edified." A Church may be edified by the addition of new members. The Church is a building, and those added to it are living stones; and by the addition of such stones the spiritual temple advances to completion. Such, however, cannot be the meaning of the word here; it means rather, "Growth in grace"; advancement in the principles and fruits of Divine love. The Churches were composed of individuals, and as the wealth of a country consists in the aggregate wealth of the individual inhabitants, and the national wealth increases in proportion as the wealth of individuals increases, so with the Church. If we desire the edification of our own Christian society or the Church of God generally, the first requisite is our seeking personal advancement in knowledge, faith, and holiness; and the second is our using all the appointed means for promoting the same among our brethren. Edification includes —(1) Growth in knowledge. All other growth arises from this. There is a kind of knowledge which hinders edification. "Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth." Knowledge that engenders self-conceit tends to the destruction of love; and whatever opposes love is a foe to all genuine spirituality and improvement. Yet there can be no edification without growth in the spiritual discoveries of the mind. The Bible contains the inexhaustible resources of wisdom, and the study of it is indispensable to edification. (2) Increase in faith. This is the natural effect of growth in spiritual knowledge. The Word of God, like His other works, contains in it the marks of its Divine origin, and the more it is known the more its source will be perceived and felt. (3) And connected with growth in faith there is a corresponding growth in all the graces and virtues of the Christian character. All the ingredients in the composition of inward, vital godliness, arise from the influence

of Divine grace upon the heart and life, and must be in proportion to the growth of faith. 2. They walked "in the fear of the Lord." This—(1) Imparted a becoming solemnity to all their social meetings for worship, and a corresponding dignity and propriety to all who were present. (2) Implies a sacred conscientious regard in all things to His authority. (3) Suggests that this was the superior dominant principle, and that the fear of man was suppressed and kept in control. 3. They walked "in the comfort of the Holy Ghost." Edification and practical godliness were associated with spiritual enjoyment. The comfort of the Holy Ghost is comfort of which the Spirit of God is the great Author. To walk in this comfort is to enjoy harmony within, and to display it externally to have the powers of the mind and the affections of the heart engaged in duty. This comfort, then, is not an indolent, inactive enjoyment. It is only to be found in active service, not in a life of ascetic seclusion, or in feelings of spiritual epicurism. There is an intimate connection between walking in the fear of the Lord and walking in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. All pretensions to the latter without the former are vain. There is no true legitimate comfort from the truths of God except to those that walk in the ways of God. II. THE CONNECTION SUBSISTING BETWEEN THEM AND ESPECIALLY BETWEEN THE CHARACTER OF THE CHURCHES WITH THEIR MULTIPLICATION. An undue regard to members has often done incalculable mischief. Increase is desirable, but it must be increase of those whose hearts are right with God. With Him respectability consists not in numbers but in character. He had a few names in Sardis who had not defiled their garments. But, as a corrupt body, the Church of Sardis is admonished, and "there is joy before the angels of God." We rejoice more in an addition to than in the continued safety of the sheep. We delight in seeing all the jewels of the Saviour's crown continuing to shine with pure lustre; but our delight is still more elevated when a new jewel is added to it. It is in this respect that missions to the heathen are so supremely interesting. Notice, then, a connection between—1. Rest and edification. In the Church as well as in the state, times of difficulty and trial often call forth latent powers, and produce remarkable men where they were least expected; but it too generally happens that to the members of a persecuted body such seasons are not times of steady thought, and deliberate and persevering study of Divine truth, and consequently of general improvement. A state of rest, on the contrary, affords opportunities for much study of the Divine oracles; for private and social meetings for conversation, and prayer, and mutual excitement. Let it be a serious question whether the rest which we enjoy is duly improved by us for the purposes of edification? 2. Rest and increase. (1) A state of rest affords opportunities and leisure to attend to the interests of others: for preaching and using without restraint all the means for the conversion of sinners. (2) Rest sets others free from the fear of attending at the proscribed places where the obnoxious doctrine is taught. Good cannot be done to the souls of men unless they are brought under the sound of the gospel. 3. The state of the Church as described—increase. Where these characteristics obtain—(1) The influence of the character of Churches upon the augmentation. In illustrating this we may observe—there is an augmentation of holy and active zeal for the glory of the Redeemer and for the salvation of souls, which God blesses with success. (2) There is combined with the effort to promote the truth the practical exemplification of its influence. When the truth is recommended, not merely in words, but by the exhibition of its power—then, under the blessing of God, it makes a successful appeal to the consciences of men, and finds its way with efficacy to the heart. (3) There must be a most spiritual, strengthening effect on those who minister in holy things, to preach the gospel. The sight of a listless, lukewarm, divided Church, will act like a heavy drag on the spirit of the pastor. But when the Church prospers, when the members become edified, and walk in the fear of the Lord, and when they are united, affectionate, zealous, steady, constant, prayerful—this is the very zest of a pastor's life. (4) The Church will be mighty in prayer. Prayer is a means of edification and a measure of its progressive amount. If believers are not growing in the spirit and exercise of prayer, they are not growing in grace. It is a common observation, and the principles of the Word of God lead us to believe it, namely, that revivals of religion have been preceded by more than an ordinary predominance of prayer among the people of God for the success of His cause in all lands. (5) There is secured an increase of the blessing of the Redeemer, and of supply of His grace. "Every branch in him that beareth not fruit He taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." And this proceeds upon a general principle, elsewhere laid down by Him. "Whosoever

hath, to him shall be given," &c. (*R. Wardlaw, D.D.*) *The characteristics and multiplication of Christian Churches:*—I. THE GRAND CHARACTERISTICS BY WHICH CHRISTIAN CHURCHES OUGHT TO BE DISTINGUISHED. We observe here—1. The Church is governed by the practical influence of religion. "The fear of the Lord" is the scriptural equivalent for the whole of practical religion, and involves devout reverence of the Divine attributes, and continued obedience to the Divine commandments. Churches are places where impenitence and unbelief should never come; where the depravity of the human heart should be expelled by the energy of redeeming grace; where every heart should be imbued with the love, and should be devoted to the service of God, and where every individual soul should be growing and meetening for the possession of holiness in heaven! True it is that, from time to time, there come among our communities those who have not the fear of the Lord, but "these are spots in our feasts of charity." They have no part and no lot in the matter. 2. Churches enjoying the consolations of religion. "The comfort of the Holy Ghost" signifies, of course, the comfort which the Holy Ghost, in His character of Comforter, is intended to bestow upon those who are truly walking in the fear of the Lord; and that comfort must be regarded as consisting in feeling that they are possessors of vital piety: of a personal sense of their interest in the work of redemption; taking away from them the spirit of fear, and implanting within them the Spirit of adoption, administering to them sufficient strength for all circumstances, and filling them with emotions of joy and gratitude. But the enjoyment of the consolations of religion must be regarded as arising from practical devotedness and eminence in piety. The inspired historian mentions one characteristic as a cause and the other as an effect. The Spirit administers comfort where the Spirit receives honour; and where the Spirit is grieved there the Spirit is restrained. His awakening influences precede, His consoling influences follow. II. THE BLESSINGS WHICH CHRISTIAN CHURCHES, AS THUS DISTINGUISHED, MAY ANTICIPATE. These Churches were multiplied. 1. There are two principles connected with this multiplication of Christian Churches. It is intimately connected—(1) With the state of religion amongst those persons who belong to them. They were multiplied because they were walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. The connection between the holiness of Christians and the conversion of sinners is in Scripture most distinctly stated. "Let your light so shine before men," &c. (see also Phil. ii. 14–16; 1 Peter ii. 11, 12). If the unconverted world see you inconsistent they will be disgusted, but let them see you walk in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Ghost, and then the very meanest of you will be himself a powerful minister of religion, will become "a living epistle of Christ, known and read of all men." Your communities will increase in reputation, and in augmenting numbers, and your spiritual privileges will be enjoyed by men, who but for your holiness would yet have remained in "the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity," but whom you shall have to present, finally, as your glory, as your joy, and as the crown of your rejoicing in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ at His coming. (2) With their exertions. Every believer is set apart, not only for holiness, but for exertion; and if Christians be idle, in whatever class of life they may be found, they are guilty of the most shameful breach of trust. The Church at Jerusalem was one mighty mass of activity (chap. ii. 42, &c.). And when they were scattered abroad by persecution, every man was transformed into a preacher of the gospel (chap. viii. 4). Now this is the legitimate consequence of walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost; but it is too much undervalued and forgotten. Are ministers expected to be arduous and incessant, while their Churches are to remain indolent and torpid, just to coolly receive their message, or else to criticise their defects, and to be discontented at their want of success? There wants to be sent another Pentecostal fire, which shall touch all ranks and classes, kindling in their bosom the flame of that zeal which shall never be quenched till death. 2. This multiplication is a most desirable and happy event. There appears to be, in the language of the historian, an element of pleasure, but there are nominal Christians in modern times to whom it produces no pleasure at all to hear of the multiplication of Churches. There are two reasons, however, why this event is so desirable and so happy. Its intimate connection—(1) With the promotion of the glory of God. (2) With the present and final blessedness of man. (*J. Parsons.*) *Rest and prosperity of Churches:*—Our text—I. DESCRIBES THE CHURCHES OF THE HOLY LAND. 1. Their nature. (1) They were "congregations," or "assemblies," of good people. And they are described as being more than one in the same country. (2) They were not material edifices; although I do not object to, but

prefer, that application of the word. (3) They were not promiscuous associations, constituted by chance, nominal profession, outward and involuntary rites; they were real Christians. (4) They were not national communities, for we read not of "a Church," but "Churches." 2. Their quiet. "Then had the Churches rest." (1) This denotes the commencement, not the continuance, of a state of peace. "Then"—after the persecution of chap. viii. 1–4. It was the calm after the storm, the joy coming in the morning, after the weeping that endured through the night, and therefore the more precious. (2) The causes of this return of quiet. (*a*) The conversion of Saul. "The grace of God was exceeding abundant towards him." His opposition was destroyed, not by his punishment as a foe, but by his transformation into a friend. Is there no encouragement to us in this? His conversion is set forth by himself as a "pattern" of the power and the mercy of the gospel. Then let Christians pray. (*b*) The solicitude and alarm of the Jews. At Alexandria the Jews suffered dreadfully from the Egyptians, and in Judæa and elsewhere were in imminent peril of ruin. An attempt was made to bring the statue of Caligula unto the Holy of Holies, in consequence of some offence he had taken at the conduct of the Jews. Nothing could produce greater consternation. So they were too concerned about their own affairs to meddle with those of others. God can "restrain the wrath of man," as well as make it "praise Him." He can control the circumstances as well as change the character of our foes. "Saul returned from pursuing after David" when the "Philistines invaded the land." 3. Their experience and conduct. (1) "They were edified"—built up "as lively stones, a spiritual house." (*a*) When the storm ceased they set earnestly about the completing of their moral temple. Persecution is unfavourable to religious, as war is to secular, commerce. It dispirits, diverts attention, employs resources, and intercepts communication. Peace, however, permits the full and unfettered employment of the Church's gifts and graces for their appropriate and appointed purposes. The Churches before us were edified when they had rest. Their principles became broader in their base, and more perfect in their symmetry. Their faith increased in intelligence and earnestness. As a natural result of this, they cherished and expressed that filial reverence for God which is called for by His majesty and mercy; and they sought and submitted to all the intimations and the influences of the Spirit of Christ. (*b*) This was their course. They "walked" according to this rule. It was not an occasional, but a constant thing. It described them in their relations as men of the Church and as men of the world. And what was the result? 4. Their increase. "Were multiplied." They received large accessions from the world. There was more Christianity, and so there were more Christians. Saints were sanctified, and sinners became saints. These are the two elements of Church prosperity, the two ends of Church association. Christians are thus connected that they may promote each other's spirituality, and that, by the union of their graces and the combination of their energies, they may be as light to a dark, and salt to a corrupt world. And these two things are inseparably connected. The Church cannot grow in grace without diffusing grace. II. SETS THEM BEFORE US FOR IMITATION. The text was written for our use. Consider—1. The connection between the rest and the edification of these Churches. "They had rest, and were edified." They made spiritual advancement while they enjoyed civil repose. They did not spend the season of calm in luxury and sinfulness. (1) Often quiet deteriorates the Church. The favour of the world has been often far more injurious to her than its hatred and opposition. When the civil sword has been turned against the Church, she has often "lived more abundantly"; when that sword has been turned against the enemies of the Church, she has often as miserably died. (2) Our text, however, says that rest is not ruin, of necessity. And all Churches in their condition may have this character. It is quite a mistake to regard affliction as indispensable to spirituality. And yet how familiar is the language, "The Church is got into a bad state: it wants the fire of persecution to purge it from its dross." And if nothing but persecution would bring the Church into a good state, let it come, and the sooner the better. But Christians should not be dependent on the malice of their enemies for the welfare of their souls; nor can it be imagined that the wicked are the "salt" of the Church, without which it would speedily go into utter corruption. (3) On the contrary, the "rest" of the Churches is both a motive and a means of their prosperity. We should be stimulated by gratitude to a devout and diligent employment of the privileges so peacefully possessed. And then it affords the occasion for devotedness. The attention is not diverted by danger. There is

the power of a regular and undistracted attendance on all the institutions of Christianity. The mind is left free from a dispiriting anxiety to study "the great things of God's law," and the machinery of means can play away without injury or interruption. See you not how all this applies to us? We have rest in a fuller measure than the Churches of Palestine. What is, what ought to be, the effect? Alas! they are not the same thing. 2. The connection between the edification of these Churches and their increase. (1) The piety of a people is necessary to the safe and profitable enjoyment of their increase. A Church not eminently holy may suffer from great multiplication. Enlargement will tend to vanity and self-sufficiency. Perhaps we may find in this the reason why some Churches remain so stationary. It would hurt them to be otherwise. (2) It is for the benefit of those who are added to a Church that it should be greatly good. Who can think without concern and pity of a multitude of souls being joined to a worldly Church? (3) The godliness of a Church is a prime means of its increase. God blesses an eminently spiritual Church. For there will be prayers with labours, not instead of them—the only prayers that God will hear. And those labours will possess a character of earnestness and uniformity. The spirit of self-denying love and zeal will pervade the entire body; "he that heareth will say, Come"; each individual, like his Master, will "seek" in order to "save." Nor is this all. The holy character of a Church in itself has no mean influence in "winning souls." The exhibition of holiness is calculated to arrest attention by its singularity, and to produce impression by its force. The religion of Christ has suffered more from the inconsistencies of its friends than the opposition of its foes; its professors have created more objections than they have answered; and the proof of its divinity may be drawn from its preservation in spite of its adherents. Had all Christians been like Jesus Christ, or anything like Him, the world would have become Christian. And the holiness of Christians is especially important in an age so practical as our own. The question is being asked of everything, "For what good?" Christianity must stand the test—it has always claimed to be tried by it. It depends on Christians, however, what shall be the actual and immediate results of such a trial. For all these reasons, the sanctification of Churches is necessary to their proper spiritual extension. There is an extension which Christ does not approve, and which men do not profit by—an increase of dimensions which resembles that premature growth which issues in consumption, if not rather that extension of the body which takes place at death. But the legitimate enlargement of Churches must come of their internal prosperity. Would you, as Churches, be increased? You must be quickened. A revival of religion must commence with the religious. (*A. J. Morris.*) *Prosperous Churches*:—I. THEIR EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES. "Rest." The hurricane of persecution was now hushed, and under the genial influence of peace they grew. Peace in the nation is the time to build houses and develop resources. Peace in nature is the time for sowing and cultivation. Persecution, like storms, may deepen the roots of piety when it exists, but is unfavourable to the dissemination of seed and the growth of fragile plants. 1. This external condition Churches in England now have. We can sit under our own vine, &c. Once our Churches were very differently circumstanced—*e.g.*, under Mary and the Stuarts. 2. This condition we are bound to improve. Great is our responsibility. All the waste land should be cultivated. Every spot brown with barrenness should be made emerald with life. II. THEIR MUTUAL RELATION. There was—1. Organic independence. These Churches are spoken of as distinct; they were doubtless distinct organisations, each having its own laws, managing its own affairs, and knowing no head but Christ. 2. Spiritual unity. They are all spoken of as belonging to one generic class, subject to one general condition, and pursuing the same order of life. And there is vital unity between all true Churches—the unity of spirit, aim, headship. They were "all members of one body." That which really unites Churches is not "unions," "conferences," &c., but Christ's spirit of truth, love, and goodness. III. THEIR INTERNAL CONDITION. 1. Living in godly reverence. 2. Receiving sacred influences. IV. THEIR LEADING SIGNS. Increase—1. Of strength. 2. Of numbers. Strong Churches, like strong nations, will colonise. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The Churches increased*:—I. What is meant by WALKING IN THE FEAR OF GOD? 1. A habitual and profound veneration for His character and institutions. 2. A humble and unreserved submission to His authority. The influence of this fear will extend to all the powers and faculties of the soul. It will—(1) Constrain the understanding to submit implicitly to the authority of God's revealed will. (2) Influence the will, rendering it pliable and

submissive, and conforming it to the will of God. (3) Control and regulate the affections. (4) Guide and govern the imagination. 3. A holy jealousy of ourselves, and a watchful care to avoid everything which may grieve, displease, or provoke Him to forsake us. Now, as Churches are composed of individuals, it follows that when all or nearly all the members of a Church live under the habitual influence of this principle, the Church will walk in the fear of God; and all the duties which are incumbent on it will be diligently and faithfully performed. These duties are—(1) To provide the means of grace and of religious instruction for itself, its children, and those who are immediately connected with it. (2) To faithfully maintain the discipline of Christ in His house. (3) To assemble at proper seasons for social worship. (4) To take care o fthe religious education of its children. (5) To assist feeble and destitute sister Churches with pecuniary aid according to their ability. II. What is meant by WALKING IN THE COMFORTS OF THE HOLY GHOST? Having—1. Peace of conscience, or peace with God, arising from a persuasion wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit that we are pardoned and accepted in the Beloved. 2. A strong and well-grounded hope, arising at times to a full assurance, that we are adopted into God's family, and that consequently we have a title to all the privileges of His children. 3. Foretastes of the joys of heaven. III. WHEN THE MEMBERS OF CHURCHES HABITUALLY WALK IN THIS MANNER, GREAT ADDITIONS WILL BE MADE TO THEM. This is probable when we consider—1. That such a life and temper will naturally and most powerfully tend to convince all around them of the reality and happy effects of religion, to remove their prejudices against it, and to show them that its possession is highly desirable. 2. That this state of things is exceedingly pleasing to God, and naturally tends to draw down His blessing. Them that honour Him He will honour. 3. That, when Churches walk in this manner, it proves that God is pouring out His Spirit upon them, and that a revival of religion is already begun. (*E. Payson, D.D.*)

Complementary forces in the Christian life:—I. WE ARE APT TO REGARD THESE TWO FORCES—FEAR AND CONSOLATION—AS CONTRADICTORY. 1. "The fear of the Lord" marks an abiding characteristic of the Christian life—*i.e.*, the fear which dwelt in our Lord Himself must dwell in His disciples. Christ "was heard in that He feared." He was penetrated by a sense of religious awe and conscientiousness, and was delicately alive to the will of His Father; and thus He had power with God and prevailed. "The fear of the Lord," like the love or the glory of the Lord, is to be participated in by His disciples, and is altogether a noble thing. It is an anxious state of mind lest we should wound the love of God, violate the law of righteousness, or fail to reach the highest sanctification of character (1 Pet. i. 16, 17). 2. "The comfort of the Holy Ghost" is also an indispensable element. As the name of "Comforter" as applied to the Spirit of God means also "Helper," "Advocate," so the idea of comfort implies that of efficient succour, and the idea of efficient succour that of comfort—the deep satisfaction imparted to the soul by the energy of the Spirit of God—"strong consolation," as we have it in Hebrews. The primitive Christians felt this, and walked in its power. Some praise ancient heathenism because, amid all its absurdities, it was a cheerful religion. Now, it must be acknowledged that Christianity is not a "cheerful religion" in the sense in which they were. Christ brought out the deeper meaning of life, and we have far deeper reasons for seriousness than men could possibly feel prior to the Advent. The superficial hilariousness of pagan worship was an impossibility to those who knew the Holy One of Israel, who had seen the awful beauty of Christ, and who were expecting the manifestation of that perfect universe into which nothing can enter that defileth. But, on the other hand, Christ has given us such reasons for bravery and hope in the moral life as men never knew before. Do we fear lest we fail to realise the wondrous love of God? "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost." Do we tremble lest we fail to recognise the mind of God? "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth." Do we shrink to contemplate the wide gulf which comes between us and the perfection of our Father in heaven? The Spirit assures us of sonship, and gives us the earnest of the promised inheritance, and urges us forward to share in God's everlasting glory and blessedness. II. SO FAR FROM THESE TWO PHASES BEING INCOMPATIBLE, THEY ARE COMPLEMENTARY. In nature apparently contradictory forces blend, and in blending produce the grandest results. Widely as oxygen and nitrogen differ, they are complementary gases, and combined make the sweet and vital atmosphere. Attraction and repulsion are also complementary forces whose combined action preserves the universe in harmonic movement. So the resultant

of the double action of the heart is life and health. Thus is it in Christian experience. 1. Fear is not inconsistent with—(1) Peace. "Then had the Churches rest, . . . walking in the fear of the Lord." (2) Love. The disciple of love fell at his Master's feet as dead. (3) Hope. Peter, who has so much to say about the terrible day of the Lord, is full of hope. (4) The highest world and the fullest felicity. Those who stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of gold, sing, "Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy." 2. And so "comfort" is not inconsistent with any grace of the Spirit. Thoughtfulness and a full assurance; a constant eye to the imperative ideal which is so far above us, and to the glorious grace dwelling so richly in us; a vivid sense of our high and holy calling, and of the dangerous path of pilgrimage which leads up to it; the recollection of "the jealous God," and of the God "keeping mercy for thousands"; the anticipation of judgment and glory, are co-ordinate and co-operative moods in the working out of our salvation. 3. The danger lies in the omission of either. (1) How faulty the piety in which fear has no place! in which there is no trembling before the holiness of God, no overwhelming sense of the gravity of our position, no gazing with awe into the dread eternity how surely mine! The brighter the star, the more it trembles; and the purest saints, the bravest heroes of all times, have stood "in fear and in much trembling." (2) Not less faulty is the piety in which comfort has no place—legal, tormenting, morbid religiousness! Pale sorrow must consort with blooming joy; weakness must lean on strength; sweet comfort must soothe awesome fear. Only in the equilibrium of these opposite forces do we attain the fulness of life and the fulness of its blessing. Our grandest moments arise in the union of two opposing emotions (Gen. xxviii. 16, 17; Matt. xxviii. 8). III. WHILST WE CULTIVATE BOTH SENTIMENTS, WE MUST MAINTAIN BOTH IN DUE PROPORTIONS. Most of us are under temptation to yield this or that undue pre-eminence, and the reason is found both in our constitution and our circumstances. 1. To exaggerate the sentiment of fear is the peril of some. An old writer tells us of a strange tribe which dwelt in caves because they were afraid of the sunshine; many devout people are afraid of the sunshine of the mind. Such are burdened with a sense of imperfection, condemnation, peril, and are slow to consider the gracious aspects of the Divine character, the inspiriting and mighty aid of the Comforter. Let those of a certain temperament watch against this danger. Let God lead you into green pastures. "Abound in hope," and you shall find yourself more than conqueror. 2. The peril of others lies in exaggerating the element of comfort. These chiefly ponder the clement phases of religion, and remember that "like as a father pitieth his children," &c. They dwell more on the promises of Christ than on His requirements. Those need to be reminded of the sterner side of things. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," &c. All our austere thinking must be relieved by gracious hope, and our bounding joy chastened by the hallowed fear. "Rejoice with trembling." IV. THE TEXT EXHIBITS FEAR AND COMFORT, NOT AS ALTERNATIVE, BUT AS CO-EXISTENT AND CONCURRENT MOODS OF THE SOUL. At one and the same time they walked "in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost." 1. The two streams ought to mingle in one full tide of feeling. "Happy is the man that feareth alway," and blessed is he also who rejoices evermore, and in everything gives thanks. In the geologic world, for distinct and protracted periods, different gases prevailed; now you have the Carboniferous epoch, and then some other element predominates: but in the perfected earth the various gases mingle in due proportions, and the life and beauty of the whole orb are secured and perpetuated. In the cruder and more imperfect stages of our religious history, periods of anxiety are succeeded by periods of jubilation; but in the higher and riper development of the soul there is more simultaneousness in our moods, and they happily mingle in one deep and rich experience. In the Psalms we frequently find the most rapid transitions of thought, the mingling of most diverse emotion—gladness suddenly becoming thoughtful, and again, sorrow smiling through her tears. And the same comprehensive experience finds expression in the New Testament (2 Cor. iv. 8–10; vi. 9, 10). So far from deprecating this, we must regard it as God's wonder-working order, and direct our self-culture accordingly. The artist ranges over the whole chromatic scale, and makes his picture so grand because the colours are so skilfully mixed; the musician rapidly passes from key to key, from stop to stop, and because he does so creates commanding music; thus in the believer's life it is the constant concurrent appeal to law and grace, to responsibility and privilege, to the God of righteousness and the God of love, to heaven near and heaven distant, that finally gives to the

character that full and finished beauty of which all artistic perfection is but the coarse figure. 2. The concurrence of these two habits of feeling secures the highest welfare of the soul. It was whilst the first Churches walked in this fear and comfort that they were "edified" and "multiplied." The truest condition of Christian life is not found in the comparative absence of feeling. The text represents the soul as full of force and movement. A uniform experience is thought by some a satisfactory sign. The truth is far otherwise. How much grandeur would be lost to the world if the mountains were levelled; how much fruitfulness, and history, and poetry, and art! Somewhat thus is it with the soul. The true soul is full of great contending emotions, the upheavals and subsidences caused by the Spirit which worketh in us mightily; and in the exaltations and humiliations, the soaring hopes and lowly fears, the confidence which touches the heights and the apprehensions which reach the depths, lies the perfecting of the soul. The more life the more feeling, the more feeling the more life. 3. In an experience which contains the full measure and compass of feeling we secure the stability of the soul. The perfect lighthouse is a mighty column rising out of the rock, the very ideal of strength; yet it is a reed shaken with the wind, and because it bends it stands. It is thus with the highest and safest characters. There must be strength of mind, of principle, of faith, or it is impossible that we should bear the strain of life. And yet with all this there must be that sensitiveness which is ever the sign of sublimest strength. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *Honourable fear:*—There is a filial fear. There is nothing more solicitous than love. A mother knows fear in connection with those children that she loves, but it is not degrading fear. The child, anxious to please, looks with waiting expectancy to see if its task has pleased father or mother. The child that is learning to write, or that is studying art, and, making sketches, brings them to the teacher or to the parent, comes with a kind of trembling apprehension lest they shall not be approved. That is honourable. That has the approval of affection itself, and it is ennobling. But the fear of anger, the fear of penalty, the fear of our own suffering and loss, is admirable only in very remote degrees, and occasionally, when other motives fail. And yet there is a filial fear, a love-fear, which not only is permissible, but is honouring and uplifting. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The Church at rest:*—Some men seem to think that the glory of the Church consists in being let alone. What they esteem above all other things is peace. A green mantling pool of what they call orthodoxy, with a minister croaking like a frog solitary—that is their conception of a Christian Church in a state of prosperity. But, according to the Bible, we are warriors. The battles we fight, however, are not battles of blood, but battles of love and mercy. We are sent to carry, not the sword and the spear, not rude violence, but conceptions of higher justice, nobler purity, wiser laws, and more beneficent customs. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal. With these we contest, and we will contest, against rage and wrath and bitterness, knowing that He that called us and sent us is the God of battles, and will guide us and give us that victory which, if worth anything, is worth achieving in the severest conflict. For victories that are cheap, *are* cheap. Those only are worth having which come as the result of hard fighting. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 32–43. **And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda.**—*Lydda*, the Lud of the Old Testament (1 Chron. viii. 12; Ezra ii. 33; Neh. vii. 37, xi. 35), was a town in the rich plain of Sharon, one day's journey from Jerusalem, founded originally by settlers from the tribe of Benjamin, and retaining to the present day its old name as "Ludd." It is mentioned by Josephus ("Wars," iii. 3, sec. 5) as transferred by Demetrius Sotêr, at the request of Judas Maccabeus, to the estate of the temple at Jerusalem (1 Macc. x. 30, 38, xi. 34). Under the grasping rule of Cassius, the inhabitants were sold as slaves (Jos., "Ant." xiv. 11, sec. 2). It had, however, recovered its former prosperity, and appears at this time to have been the seat of a flourishing Christian community. In the wars that preceded the destruction of Jerusalem it was partially burned by Cestius Gallus, A.D. 66 (Jos., "Wars," ii. 19, sec. 1), all but fifty of the inhabitants having gone up to the Feast of Tabernacles at Jerusalem, and was again occupied by Vespasian, A.D. 68 (Jos., "Wars," ii. 8, sec. 1). When it was rebuilt, probably under Hadrian, when Jerusalem received the new name of Ælia Capitolina, it also was re-named as Diospolis (= city of Zeus), and as such was the seat of one of the chief bishopries of the Syrian Church. It was, at the time when Peter came to it, the seat of a Rabbinic school. Gamaliel,

son of the great rabbi who was St. Paul's master, and himself honoured with the title of Rabban, presided over it, and was succeeded by the great Tarphon. The question which we naturally ask, who had planted the faith of Christ there, carries us once more on the track of Philip the Evangelist. Lying as it did on the road from Azotus to Cæsarea, it would lie in his way on the journey recorded in chap. viii. 40, as he passed "through all the cities"; and we may believe, without much risk, that he was Luke's informant as to what passed in the Church with which he was so closely connected. (*Dean Plumptre.*) *Summarised service*:—I. How DID THERE HAPPEN TO BE ANY SAINTS AT LYDDA? That place does not appear before. There are saints in unexpected places. Yet not unexpected to the attentive reader. Lydda lay between Azotus and Cæsarea (chap. viii. 40), and Philip no doubt had founded a Church there. How summarily our work is occasionally mentioned. In many a hurried phrase there are service and suffering, trial and triumph, which only God can recognise. We hear it said of the minister, that he "called and offered prayer." By the clock it was but a few minutes, but into those minutes he condensed the experience of a lifetime, and spared not the blood of his very heart. Suspect any epitome which counts but as small dust the details which make up the service and suffering of the Christian toiler. II. PETER FOUND HIS WAY TO THE SAINTS. How? Do we not all find out our otherselves in every city to which we go? When the surveyor would find out metallic strata, he takes the magnet, and sees how it dips, and says, "Here you will find what you are in quest of." We pine for our own, and fall with second naturalness into the ways of the company of which we form a part. It would do some of us good if we could be shut up with savages for a few days. How we should then yearn for the most defective Christian we ever knew! III. THE SAINTS ARE NAMELESS. There is something better than a name. There is character. There you find no personal renown, but you find a solid quantity of spiritual being. It is towards that estate we should constantly be moving, to the great republic of common holiness. IV. PETER FOUND THE MAN WHO IS TO BE FOUND IN EVERY CITY. Locally called Æneas, but everywhere called the sick man. The genus remains unhealed—a continual appeal to the Petrine spirit. We are not all in the front rank of the ministry; because we cannot do the first and supreme class of work, it does not follow that we are to sit idle. You can bring to Æneas the Christian friend, and there is no grief but one that cannot be mitigated by Christian love. We hear nothing of Peter's doings here except this miracle; but as Philip had done much at Lydda without any record, so Peter may have done much beside this miracle. The miracle itself was a sermon. For "all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord." V. Now WE COME TO JOPPA, where there dwelt a woman who "was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did." 1. She died! How is that? There are some people whom we almost wish would die, and die they will not; and others whom we want to live always wither and die. There seems to be such a waste of nobility and service in this mysterious Providence. But we may be wrong in that outlook as we are in others. Why should not the good ship land? Why should we shed tears when the noble life-vessel touches the shore? It is so that God trains us, prunes us, and prepares us for the wider revelation and the higher service. 2. Peter was sent for. He came the nine miles to see what could be done. How natural was this. There are times when the strong man is sent for, and these are times of darkness, trouble, personal and social despair. But there is always a strong man to send for. In that sense we must have "all things common," and none must say that ought that he has belongs to himself alone. It is in this spirit of Christian communism that we must keep society from putrefaction and souls from despair. There is a hint of the One who "sticketh closer than a brother." When your house is very dark, send for Jesus. But you are not to wait for such crises. Send for Him to-day, when the table is laden with flowers and every corner of the dwelling is ablaze with His own sunlight. Beautiful was the scene in that house at Joppa (ver. 39). 3. How did these widows come to be thus associated? Who took any interest in their welfare? If you read again chap. vi. you will find arrangements made for needy widows, and to the name of Philip. So this man lives in his works. At Lydda he founded a Christian society; at Joppa he organised help for widows. Philip does not appear before us in name; but he leaves behind him memorials of his wisdom and beneficence. 4. How is it that we like the garments better when the seamstress is dead than when she was making them? That is a fact everywhere. The little child's toy becomes infinitely precious when the tiny player can no longer handle it. And the two little shoes are the most precious

property in the house when the little feet that wore them are set away in God's acre. Let us love one another whilst we live! Not a word do I say against the sentiment which enlarges the actions of the dead, but I would speak a word for those who are sitting next you and making your own house glad by their deft fingers and loving hearts. 5. Now we come to the first miracle of the kind to which apostolic strength was summoned. Up to this time the apostles had been healing divers diseases; but now the apostles grapple without the visible Christ with actual death. We may well pause here in the excitement of a great anxiety. "Peter put them all forth." That was what Christ did! Some battles may be fought in public, others have to be fought in solitude; so "Peter put them all forth." "Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet," &c. Have you ever prayed in the death chamber with none there but the dead friend? How eloquent has been your dumbness! When you were weak, then were you strong. "And"—oh, conjunctive that makes one tremble!—"turning to the body," now is the critical moment, "said, Tabitha, arise." "And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up." Let your miracles come through your prayers. Let your prayers always end in the amen of a miracle. What is the use of your solitude and your prayer, if when you turn round you cannot work some miracle of love? (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Peter at Lydda*:—Look at this miracle—I. As EXPRESSING THE GENIUS OF CHRISTIANITY. Æneas, a wretched sufferer for eight long years, Peter restored to health, thus expressing the benign spirit of the new religion. Christianity is—1. The offspring of mercy. It is a stream from the eternal fountain of love. 2. The revealer of mercy. "Herein is love," &c. 3. The organ of mercy. Through it humanity is to be redeemed from all evil. II. As SYMBOLISING THE MISSION OF CHRISTIANITY. It was a restorative miracle. The mission of Christianity is restorative. Christ came to seek and to save. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. It does not create new faculties; but it restores the soul—1. To God's knowledge. 2. To God's fellowship. 3. To God's image. III. As INDICATING THE POWER OF CHRISTIANITY. "Jesus Christ maketh thee whole," &c. 1. The restorative power is derived from Christ. 2. It is derived from Christ by faith. IV. As REPRESENTING THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY. Men "turned to the Lord." This is to turn—1. From the creature to the Creator. 2. From the destroyer to the Restorer. 3. From the wrong and miserable to the holy and happy. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Æneas*:—I. WAS TRULY SICK. 1. Had he not been really sick, the incident would have been a piece of imposture; but he was hopelessly infirm. Now, as there is no room for a great cure unless there is a great sickness, so there is no room for God's great grace unless there is great sin. Jesus Christ did not come into the world to save sham, but real sinners. 2. The man had been paralysed eight years. The length of its endurance is a terrible element in a disease. Perhaps yours is no eight years' malady, but twenty-eight, or forty-eight, or, perhaps, eighty-eight years have you been in bondage under it. Well, the number of years cannot prevent the mercy of God from making us whole. You have a very long bill to discharge, while another friend has but a short one; but it is just as easy for the creditor to write "paid" at the bottom of the large bill as the smaller one. 3. His disease was incurable. Æneas could not restore himself, and no human physician could do anything for him. Your soul's wound is incurable. There is no soul physician except at Calvary; no balm but in the Saviour's wounds. II. KNEW SOMETHING ABOUT JESUS; because, otherwise, when Peter said, "Jesus Christ maketh thee whole," Æneas would have inquired what he meant. Now, lest there should be one here who does not know Jesus Christ, and how it is that He is able to heal sin-sick souls, let us briefly tell the old, old story over again. III. BELIEVED ON THE LORD JESUS. 1. He did not believe in Peter as the healer. Peter does not say, "As the head of the Church, I, by power delegated to me, make thee whole." Peter preached too clear a gospel for that. That is the purest gospel which has the least of man in it, and the most of Christ. 2. Much less had he any faith in himself. He did not say to Peter, "But I do not feel strength enough to get well"; nor "I think I do feel power enough to shake off this palsy." Peter's message took him off from himself. "Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." That was what the man had to believe; and it is what you also must believe. 3. With his faith Æneas had the desires which showed that it was not mere speculation, but solid practical believing; he anxiously wished to be made whole. Oh, that sinners anxiously wished to be saved! I never heard of men reckoning a cancer to be a jewel; but there are many who look upon their sins as if they were gems, so that they will sooner lose heaven than part with their lustful pleasures. 4. And what

did Æneas believe? (1) That Jesus could heal him, Æneas. John Brown, do you believe that Jesus Christ can cure you? I do not care what your faith is about your wife's case. Can you grip that, and reply, "Yes, He is able to save me"? (2) That Jesus Christ was able to save him there and then, just as he was. He had not taken a course of physic, nor been under galvanism to strengthen his nerves and sinews, and prepare him to be cured, but he believed that Jesus Christ could save him without any preparation. When you think what Christ is, and what He has done, it ought not to be difficult to believe this. IV. WAS MADE WHOLE. Just fancy, for a minute, what would have been the result if he had not been made whole. 1. What dishonour it would have been to Peter! Peter said, "Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole"; but there lies Æneas as palsied as before. Everybody would say, "Peter is a false witness." 2. What dishonour would have been brought upon the name of Jesus! Suppose you were to believe in Jesus, and yet were not saved. Then He has broken His word, or lost His power to save, either of which we are unwilling to tolerate for a minute. If thou believest in Jesus Christ, as surely as thou livest Jesus Christ has saved thee. 3. Then the gospel would not be true. Shut up those churches, banish those ministers, burn those Bibles; there is no truth in any of them if a soul can believe in Jesus and yet not be saved. V. AFTER HE WAS HEALED, ACTED CONFORMABLY. "Peter said unto him, . . . Arise, and make thy bed"; and he did so directly. Now, if any of you say to-night, "I have believed in Jesus," remember you are bound to prove it. You are to go home and show people how whole you are. This man had been lying there eight years, and could never make his bed; but he proved he was healed by making his bed for himself. You will have to prove this by—1. A consistent, holy life. 2. An unselfish life. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Peter working miracles:*—I. AT LYDDA. 1. Peter came to the saints at Lydda—an early and favourite title for the disciples of Christ. It has no official application, but belongs equally to all believers, and no disciple should shrink from it. Its primary and principal sense is one set apart as sacred. Believers are called saints, not because they are of eminent sanctity, but because they are set apart as sacred to God. This primary meaning, however, implies the secondary, subjective sense of moral holiness. It is to be regretted that the abuse of this inspired name should have led the Reformed Church into neglect of its apostolic use. 2. In the Church at Lydda, Peter found a case of incurable paralysis. Christianity, by removing causes and supplying antidotes, reduces the area and violence of physical diseases. But the gospel is designed chiefly for the more terrible moral diseases of mankind. Would it impugn the fair name of Æneas if we regard him as the type of a paralysed believer or Church? 3. The profit of faithful pastoral visitation is seen in the discovery of paralysing conditions. This palsy may be any evil quality of character or life sufficient to prevent spiritual activity and growth. There is but one relief—in a miracle of grace, a revival stirring all the depths of the soul. 4. "Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole; arise, upright, make use of the power Jesus gives thee; prove thyself sound by the activities of a healthy life; show to all the saving power of Jesus Christ by acting as one whom He has saved." Peter does not mention himself, but acts in the meekness of a true servant. He thus presents an admirable example of that combination of modesty and power so characteristic of real greatness. 5. The faith of Peter in the power of Jesus is manifest, not only in the positive declaration of what Jesus was doing for Æneas, but also in the imperative "arise" given to one hitherto paralytic. The faith which works miracles on the bodies of men no longer remains with the ministry; but that is of small account to the faith that works miracles on the souls of men. 6. Though no mention is made of the faith of Æneas, it appears in its fruit. The human source of that faith was the faith of Peter. Did all who undertake to speak in the name of Jesus Christ do it with firm conviction in the presence and power of Jesus to save, their faith would never fail to be fruitful in the faith and conversion of others. 7. There was no concealment on the part of Æneas of the Christian work effected in him. The fame of his healing spread through all the region. The multitude thronged to see the paralytic, now whole; and when they learned the Divine name in which it was effected, they were converted, and openly took their stand with the Church of Christ. This result, so natural and logical, is a reason why a converted man should make known Christ's work within him. II. AT JOPPA. 1. The apostolic visitation of Peter was an upward as well as onward progress, a rising from one great work to a greater, until its sublime culmination in the house of Cornelius. In the Church at Joppa was a prominent disciple. Among her Syrian friends she

was known as Tabitha, her Greek acquaintances called her Dorcas, while we would have spoken of her as "the Gazelle." The graceful form and pliant movement, and large, gentle, loving eyes of the gazelle, after all, do not express such attractive beauty as the portrait of Dorcas: "a woman full of good works and almsdeeds"; nor does the rarest physical beauty ever gain such a hold on human affection as is portrayed in the pathetic grief of this Church of Joppa over her untimely death. 2. New Testament biography is brief, but comprehensive. Two pen-strokes describe the supernatural workmanship in Dorcas—she was a disciple and a saint. She was Mary and Martha in one—as a disciple, she sat at Jesus' feet; as a saint, she served Jesus in ministrations of charity. A disciple, she confessed Jesus; a saint, she consecrated herself, in all her possessions and capabilities, to Christ. She did not aspire to the place of teacher or ruler, but took a natural sphere in the abundant and varied womanly work of the Church. Dorcas presents a model worthy the study of every Christian woman. 3. "She was sick and died." This chamber of death is to witness what has been often witnessed since—a natural side, the gloom and grief and agony of bereaved affection; and the supernatural side—the wrestling prayer and submissive comfort of faith in the assured rest and resurrection of the dead. 4. And then the stricken Church sent for Peter. They were expecting no miracle. It was too late for the exertion of the power of a healing like that of Æneas. They were in sore need of light and comfort, and they turned to one on whom Jesus had bestowed other and greater gifts than physical healing. The apostle left a happy and rejoicing Church at Lydda; it was a sad and tearful congregation that greeted him at Joppa. It was said her loss was irreparable. But we know better: Providence is not limited to one Dorcas, or two. The fruit of the Spirit is ever ripening. We do daily meet sisters of charity—not, indeed, flaunting a pharisaic zeal in the garb of a religious order, but dressed as women ought to be—who consecrate their means and time in sacrifices of beneficence. 4. Peter desired to be alone with the dead. Was it the instinct of Christian meekness, or recalling the example of Jesus in the house of Jairus? The crowded presence of this weeping company was not in harmony with the great emotion now surging in the apostle's heart. Alone, he would be more free in prayer for the guidance of Jesus in this crisis. The thoughtful minister, when preparing for Christian work —all the more if it be unusual or critical—prays in the closet, and not before men. Nor does Peter appeal to Jesus in vain. 5. How natural is the story of this resurrection! The eyes of "the Gazelle" once more open. He presented her to the Church alive, her old life of love, sympathy, and beneficence. She would not be less a Christian for having been in Paradise. A few hours of heaven, as was the case with Paul, and John, and Tennent, gives new motives and fresh impulses to Christian consecration. 6. The news thrilled the Church with joy, and all Joppa with wonder. This is not recorded to meet the demands of scepticism, but because of the effect of the miracle on the activity of the Church, and on the many who believed and were added to the saints; to conduct and confirm which work "Peter tarried many days in Joppa." 7. If the life of Dorcas was a blessing to the Church and world, even more fruitful of good was her death. It roused the Church through grief and surprise to tears of repentance, gratitude, and love. It led them to confession and prayer in seeking heavenly sympathy and comfort. The awakening of her body was the awakening of many sleeping souls to life in Jesus Christ. Let the Church hear the cry, "Arise! awake at the word to the work of Jesus." (*G. C. Heckman, D.D.*) *Peter working miracles*:—We are told that faith in miracles is passing away. No doubt in some quarters it is; and unhappily the same is to be said of much else that is good and true. It does not follow, however, that such faith is opposed to human reason, nor that it is likely ever to lose its hold on the human heart. It is certain that, if there be a personal God, He can reveal His presence by signs and wonders; and equally certain that, if occasion requires, He will. I. THE TIME was a season of rest. Saul of Tarsus had been converted; the storm of persecution had subsided; and Peter, with unresting activity, was on a round of Church inspection, imparting courage, and working miracles of convincing and persuasive power. II. THE SCENE was north-west from Jerusalem. Lydda was from Jerusalem about a day's journey. Joppa, nine miles beyond. At both these places there were Churches. So rapid had been the progress of the faith in Jesus! III. THE SUBJECTS were both alike and unlike. The one was a paralytic; the other, a dead disciple greatly beloved for her good works. Both were well known, and known to be beyond human help. Again, while one was a beloved disciple, there is no evidence that the other was a disciple at all. For aught that

appears, Æneas was a common sinner, who had heard of Jesus, but had never attached himself to the company of His followers. Thus the miracle was not only an unmistakable work of Divine power, but also the outgoing of Christian love. IV. THE MANNER. These wonders were wrought by Peter indeed, but in the name and power of another. Never did the apostles claim to work by any other power than that of Jesus. V. THE PURPOSE was twofold. In part it was the simple relief of suffering and cure of sorrow. But Peter had a deeper purpose. If miracles were immediately beneficial, they were also and specially "signs." And, with the apostles, they were signs not only of God's approval of their teachings and work, but also of the continued presence and power of Jesus. VI. THE RESULT. Their twofold purpose was accomplished. Not only was suffering relieved and sorrow turned to joy, but far and near it was seen and owned that Jesus was still at hand and mighty to save. VII. PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS. 1. Jesus is still a living and acting Presence with His people. The continued nearness of Christ is the hope and strength of the individual believer, the warrant of the Church in its aggressive work, and the pledge of its final victory. 2. The breadth of our Christian work. Our Saviour had it as a part of His mission to relieve physical distress. He commissioned His disciples to do the same. More than this, by precept and example He planted the spirit of human kindness in the hearts of His followers. Straightway it began to show itself in them. It did not more truly appear in the miracles of Peter than it did in the good works and almsdeeds of Dorcas. Already this has wrought great changes in the face of society; but by no means has all been accomplished which needs to be done. This, then, is a part of the service which the Master expects of His present followers. The redemption He proposes is for the whole man—body, soul, and spirit. 3. One important way to promote religious conversions and revivals. It was the love, as well as the Divine power, which shone in the miracles of Peter, which won the hearts of so many at Lydda and Joppa. Often does the missionary first win his way to Pagan hearts by ministries of bodily healing. 4. The crowning aim in all Christian service. With the Saviour, this was never the mere relief of physical suffering or trouble. He would have them know that He had power to forgive sins, and raise the spiritually dead to life eternal. So it was Peter's supreme purpose to multiply and confirm Christian converts. (*Sermons by the Monday Club.*) *Working like Christ:*—These two miracles are both evidently moulded upon Christ's miracles; are distinct imitations of what Peter had seen Him do. And their likenesses to and differences from our Lord's manner of working are equally noteworthy. I. First, notice THE SIMILARITIES AND THE LESSON THEY TEACH. The two cases before us are alike in that both of them find parallels in our Lord's miracles. The one is the cure of a paralytic. The raising of Dorcas corresponds with the three resurrections of the dead people which are recorded in the Gospels. And now, note the likenesses. Jesus Christ said to the paralysed man, "Arise, take up thy bed." Peter said to Æneas, "Arise, and make thy bed." The one command was appropriate to the circumstances of a man who was not in his own house; the other a man bed-ridden in his own house. And then, if we turn to the other narrative, the intentional moulding of the manner of the miracle, consecrated in the eyes of the loving disciple, because it was Christ's manner, is still more obvious. Well now, although we are no miracle-workers, the very same principle which underlay these two works of supernatural power is to be applied to all our work, and to our lives as Christian people. I do not know whether Peter meant to do like Jesus Christ or not; I rather think that he was unconsciously dropping into the fashion that to him was so sacred. Love always delights in imitation; and the disciples of a great teacher will unconsciously catch the trick of his intonation, the peculiarities of his way of looking at things—only, unfortunately, outsides are a good deal more easily imitated than insides. Get near Jesus Christ, and you will catch His manner. Love Him, and love will do to you what it does to many a wedded pair, and to many kindred hearts, it will transfuse into you something of the characteristics of the object of your love. It is impossible to trust Christ, to obey Christ, to hold communion with Him, and to live beside Him, without becoming like Him. And if such be our inward experience, so will be our outward appearance. Jesus Christ, when He went through the wards of the hospital of the world, was overflowing with quick sympathy for every sorrow that met His eye. If you or I are living near Him we shall never steel our hearts nor lock up our sensibilities against any suffering that it is within our power to stanch or to alleviate. Jesus Christ never grudged trouble, never thought of Himself,

never was impatient of interruption, never repelled importunity, never sent away empty any outstretched hand. II. Further, note THE DIFFERENCES AND THE LESSONS FROM THEM. Take the first of the two miracles. "Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed." That first clause points to the great difference. Take the second of the two, "Jesus Christ put them all forth, and stretched out His hand, and said, Damsel, arise!" "Peter put them all forth, . . . and said, Damsel (Tabitha), arise!" But between the putting forth and the miracle he did something which Christ did not do, and he did not do something which Christ did do. "He kneeled down and prayed." And Jesus Christ did not do that. And Peter put forth his hand after the miracle was wrought; not to communicate life, but to help the living woman. Christ works miracles by His inherent power; His servants do their works only as His instruments and organs. The lesson, then, of the difference is that Christian men, in all their work for the Master, and for the world, are ever to keep clear before themselves, and to make very obvious to other people, that they are nothing more than channels and instruments. The less the preacher, the teacher, the Christian benefactor of any sort puts himself in the foreground, or in evidence at all, the more likely are his words and works to be successful. And then, further, another lesson is, be very sure of the power that will work in you. What a piece of audacity it was for Peter to go and stand by the paralytic man's couch and say, "Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole"! Yes, audacity; unless he had been in such constant and close touch with his Master that he was sure that the Master was working through him. And is it not beautiful to see how absolutely confident he is that Jesus Christ's work was not done when He went up into heaven; but that there, in that little stuffy room, where the man had laid motionless for eight long years, Jesus Christ is present, and working? But do we believe that He is verily putting forth His power, in no metaphor, but in simple reality, at present and here, and, if we will, through us? We are here for the very purpose for which Peter was in Lydda and Joppa—to carry on and copy the healing and the quickening work of Christ by His present power, and after His blessed example. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Vers. 36-43. **Now there was at Joppa.**—*Joppa* or *Yafa* means beauty. The modern name is Jaffa or Yafa. It is a seaport town of Palestine, about forty miles north-west of Jerusalem, of which city it was the port in the days of Solomon, and has so remained down to the present day. At Joppa was landed the timber from Lebanon used in the first building of the temple (2 Chron. ii. 16), and in its rebuilding after the captivity (Ezra iii. 7). At Joppa, Jonah took ship for Tarshish (Jonah i. 3). Here lived "Simon the tanner," by the seaside, upon whose housetop Peter had his "vision of tolerance" (Acts x. 9-16). During the Crusades, Joppa was taken and re-taken several times by the opposing forces. It has been sacked three times since coming under the rule of the Turks—once by the Arabs in 1722, by the Mamelukes in 1775, and by Napoleon I. in 1799. The modern town is increasing in numbers, its population now being estimated at above eight thousand. (*S. S. Times*). **A certain disciple named Tabitha.**—*Dorcas*:—I. "TABITHA, which by interpretation is called DORCAS." 1. The historian bestows considerable care on the name. "Tabitha, Dorcas, Gazelle"—they are the Aramaic, Greek, and English equivalents. Whereas we in the present day go to the flowers for names, the ancients went to animals. A bold man would be compared to a lion; a beautiful woman to a "gazelle." 2. That St. Luke directs special attention to the name is a presumptive proof that it was expressive of the rare beauty of the maid who bore it. She was comparable to the gazelle—the most exquisite figure in poetry to set forth high physical attractions. Read the Canticles, and the poet has no apter figure to set forth the glory of Solomon or the beauty of his bride than roe, hart, hind, gazelle. In Dorcas, then, we behold beauty allied to Christianity; and beauty is recommended to us, not because it is beautiful, but because it is good. The classic theory of life exalts beauty above all things; but the gospel theory makes goodness paramount, and makes beauty itself pay homage to goodness. II. Tabitha WAS A DISCIPLE. From the sphere of beauty we pass to the sphere of knowledge. 1. She was a disciple. Discipleship is common to all believers. The apostles in their relation to Christ were on a level with ordinary believers. 2. She was a female disciple. The word here used is not found anywhere else. The masculine form is used often enough, but not the feminine. In ancient Greek the word was not used because the thing was not known. (1) Christianity has given woman what Plato and Aristotle never did—the rank of discipleship. The schools of the philosophers were made up

exclusively of men, but "honourable women, not a few," sit at the feet of Jesus and learn of Him. Judaism truly had its "court of the women," but that was more like a sheep-pen. The genius of Judaism was separation, not communion. But "in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female, but a new creature." (2) But though the gospel has lifted woman to the rank of discipleship, it has not raised her to the rank of apostleship. Dorcas also did much good; but she still continued in the privacy of discipleship. The moral rather than the intellectual is the true sphere of womanhood. The "rights of women" have been much pushed to the front lately; and women are not without danger of forgetting their "duties" in the more exciting question of their "rights." Considerable tact is necessary delicately to balance the two. In the text the Church accords to Dorcas her rights—she was a disciple; but Dorcas only thought of her duties, and right faithfully did she fulfil them. III. Tabitha was a disciple FULL OF GOOD WORKS. We now ascend from the region of beauty and faith to the region of character. 1. Mention is specially made of Dorcas's works. In her are perceived the true development of the Christian life. Her natural powers are hallowed in discipleship; her discipleship is perfected in beneficence. When the Christian life stops short in discipleship, it remains in the embryo stage, and is in danger of dying of inanition. Knowledge gets refined, chastened in work. Water is filtered as it flows onward in its channel. Water stagnant breeds miasma. In like manner knowledge, as long as it remains mere theory, becomes morbid and unhealthy; but let it run out in good works, and it will grow healthful and clear. 2. Dorcas's works are said to be good. Upon what then does the goodness of an action depend? (1) Upon the manner of doing it. Dorcas did not undertake to accomplish a thing and then leave it in disorder and confusion. No; she finished her task neatly and pleasingly. A slovenly life cannot be said to be a good life; its negligence seriously detracts from its goodness. Quality is of greater importance in the kingdom of God than quantity. "Well done," not much done, "thou good and faithful servant." In creation "God saw," not that it was great, but "that it was good." "Be ye imitators of God like dear children." Every night review the work of the day to see if it is good. (2) Upon the character of the doer. "Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit." A bad man—bad works; a good man—good works; that is the established law of the moral world. Dorcas was first a disciple, next full of good works; she was first made good, then she did good. Herein consists the vital difference between Christianity and Utilitarianism. Utilitarianism proposes to improve the surroundings of men—to secure them better houses, wages, food, &c. Christianity proposes to improve the men themselves, being fully persuaded that if it can better the men, the men will soon better their circumstances. 3. Dorcas not only did good works, but was "full" of them, implying that her heart was the source of her works—the faith of her discipleship flowed out in deeds of benevolence. Look at the natural and the artificial tree. The fruit adorning the one is the ripe unfolding of the inward vitality; but the fruit suspended to the other has no union of life with the tree. No one can be inwardly full unless there be a spontaneous overflow in the daily life. And Dorcas's faith in the Saviour gushed out in works of beneficence to man. There was no spasmodic strain, no painful effort—doing good seemed to be natural to her. Christ's "meat was to do the will of Him that sent Him." The birds in May are so full of life that they feel inwardly constrained to give it free vent in song. And there are men and women, too, who find it their chiefest pleasure to do good. It is as easy for them to bless their fellows as it is for the sun to shine. And then every attempt to do good, whether it succeed or whether it fail, returns back upon the soul in an increase of solid strength. The leaves, which in spring come out of the life of the tree, in autumn fall thick around its roots and enrich the soil for it to draw nourishment therefrom the ensuing year. "Mercy is twice blessed—it blesseth him that gives and him that takes." Faith and good works, discipleship and usefulness, represent the receptive and the transitive sides of religion. One without the other is dead. IV. "Tabitha was a disciple full of ALMSDEEDS WHICH SHE DID." Here we come to the sphere of action. 1. "Almsdeeds," not almsgifts. "When thou doest," not givest, "alms." Throughout the Saviour lays stress not on giving but on doing alms. "Blessed is he that *considereth* the poor." The charity must come, not merely from the treasury, but from a tender and sympathetic heart. 2. They were not almsdeeds which she purposed or of which she talked, but almsdeeds which she "did." No mention is made of parents or husband; she was probably a maid leading a solitary life. Will she then spend her days in idleness or vain sentiment? No; she will adopt the orphans for her family, and serve Christ in the

persons of the poor. She will translate sentiment into practice. In the ironworks steam is not blown off at once into the air; it must first do work, and it is worth nothing except it work. And in our public services it is good to have our emotions well boiled at times. But we are not to let the steam blow off into the air, but to utilise it for the practical purposes of life. Sterne could weep over a dead ass, and yet allow his mother to starve for want of bread; but John Howard was never seen to shed a tear. 3. These almsdeeds consisted principally in coats and garments for the poor. The primary meaning of "spinster" is one who spins, and if need be, sews for the benefit of the family and society. The imperfect tense "was making" shows that Dorcas made sewing for the poor the main business of her life, and thus redeemed dressmaking from the degraded service of the world. St. Paul exhorts women to be "stayers at home"; on the margin, "workers at home." It is not enough that they stay at home; they should also work at home, and save themselves from the cankerous miseries of *ennui*. Some people possess genius for goodness—they create and invent, whereas others can only travel in the beaten paths. Robert Raikes, the founder of Sunday Schools; Charles of Bala, the founder of the Bible Society; William Wilberforce, the liberator of the slave—they all had a marvellous genius for striking boldly out in new directions. To the same class of benefactors belongs Dorcas—she invented a new method of doing good; and her method has been perpetuated and her name immortalised in the annals of the Christian Church. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might." You should endeavour to find work for yourselves, and the work for which you are best adapted. But if you possess not the genius to find work, follow diligently in the paths already marked out. Dorcas was only a sweet violet blooming in the shade; but her fragrance has filled all the churches of Europe. And Christian charity is quite competent to deal with honest poverty; but no efforts of the Church can ever overtake guilty pauperism. Our duty, then, is to dry up the fountain. You may give coats and garments, food and fuel; but the evil will remain unabated till the traffic in intoxicating drinks is restrained. V. Tabitha BECAME SICK, AND DIED. 1. In the prime of life. The words leave the impression upon one that her sickness was short and violent. Probably she caught a fever on one of her visits to the poor, and suddenly died. But mark—nothing is said of the frame of her mind in her sickness; indeed, the Scriptures are generally reticent about the deaths of the saints. Men who live piously and devoutly must die in the peace of God. 2. In the midst of usefulness. Why, we cannot tell. Theology and philosophy have faced the question, but cannot solve it. But if theology cannot solve it, it can help to bring the heart to acquiesce in it. "Why were you born deaf and dumb?" asked a gentleman of a young lad. A strange light flashed in the boy's eyes, and he wrote quickly, "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in Thy sight." 3. Dying in the midst of life and usefulness, she was naturally much lamented. The Church hurriedly sent a deputation to Peter; and when he arrived the "widows wept, and showed him the coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was with them." They could not speak much for their tears; but they could exhibit the work; and the widows' tears and garments were more eloquent than any panegyric. The poor have no grand way of manifesting their sorrow; but they can weep genuine tears, and point to the coats and garments graciously given them by the hand of Charity. VI. Dorcas WAS RAISED TO LIFE AGAIN. The Church at Joppa sent to Peter. They did not tell the apostle in words what they wanted; but their acts showed it, and he understood it. Thereupon Peter turned them all out, and turned himself to the Lord in prayer; he afterwards "turned to the body, and said, Tabitha, arise." The miracle of resuscitation was performed: "and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her to them alive," and doubtless she continued the same good work as before—she finished the coats and garments she had only begun. The thread that was broken was mended—the good work still went on. This incident reduces the vast drama of the world to a scale we can grasp. Men and women die; the work of life remains incomplete. Reason staggers. Is there a time of restitution coming? Yes; they that are in their "graves shall be raised up"; the thread of life will be mended—the work begun will be finished. "We spend our years as a tale that is told." But alas! many die in the midst of telling their tale, they die before fully disclosing the rich meaning of their existence. Shall it never be continued? Oh, yes; "the voice that is dumb shall again speak, the hands that are cold shall again serve. We can write on the tombstones of our friends—"to be continued." (*J. Cynddylan Jones, D.D.*) *Dorcas*:—I. HER CHARACTER: "a certain disciple." But in her case, discipleship included not only the belief and

profession of Christ's doctrine, but also a conformity to His example. Her religion was not only real, but eminent. She "was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did." There are many whose life is filled up with vanity and vice, but is entirely void of godliness. And there are others who are satisfied with low and common attainments. Dorcas "was full"—not full of pretences, words, hearing sermons, and public assemblies, all of which are often the mere "form of godliness." Hers was the religion of the heart and life. 1. The particular objects of her beneficence. "Widows"—a class of claimants upon kindness and charity more often mentioned in the Book of God than any other, unless it be "the fatherless," who are commonly noticed along with them. And, surely, none have greater demands upon our tenderness and compassion, and none have richer promises. It would seem that Dorcas peculiarly selected this class of characters for her beneficence. And as the charity of an individual cannot be universal in its efforts, would it not be well for those who wish to do good to have some definite plan of usefulness to pursue? Only, here, two cautions are necessary. The one is, not to bind ourselves down so exclusively to any one class of beneficiaries as to be unable or unwilling to aid other claimants. The other is, not to lay such stress upon our own objects of charity as to think slightly or meanly of those which may be preferred by others. 2. The nature of her charity. Furnishing the poor widows with clothing. There are many cases in which it will be found much more useful to supply the poor with necessaries than to give them the value of these things in money. Many poor persons have a wish to appear decently clad; and upon this ground they excuse themselves from the house of God. How desirable is it to meet their wants in this respect! 3. The manner in which she supplied the relief. The benefits were of her own manufacture. She did not get them made; her alms were not only her *gifts*, but her deeds. There are some who are ready enough to give who never do anything. Others there are who can do nothing in a way of pecuniary assistance. But there are innumerable ways of being useful; and if you are compelled to say, "Silver and gold have I none," it becomes you to add, "Such as I have I give; my prayers: my tears; my attentions; my exertions." 4. The promptitude of her beneficence. It was immediate, not deferred or delayed; but "while she was with them." Some are future benefactors. They do not refuse, they only procrastinate. "Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give," for in the meanwhile he may be no more, and you may be no more. Some are benevolent when they leave us. But dying alms are commonly suspicious: they arise from necessity rather than choice. There is little merit in distributing what you can hold no longer. Be, therefore, your own executors. II. HER DEATH. Religion does not exempt us from the common calamities of life. This peculiar consideration, indeed, attends the death of the godly, that they are disposed of infinitely to their advantage. But this very consideration also aggravates our grief. In proportion to their gain is our loss. There is nothing, perhaps, in Providence more mysterious than this: that the useful should be snatched away in the midst of their days, while the unprofitable and mischievous are suffered to continue; that a Voltaire should live upwards of fourscore and ten years, while a nation prematurely mourns over a Josiah, the poor widows over Dorcas, their friend and helper. But God has a right to do what He will with His own; and very often these dark dispensations are enlightened and relieved by some effects which serve to discover their design. At this season Peter was sent for and came. It seemed useless, but he knew it was well to be "ready to every good work," and he knew that "the things which are impossible with men are possible with God." No sooner was Peter arrived than a scene was presented that was sufficient to melt a heart much less tender than Peter's (ver. 39). Here we may remark that the value of persons is sometimes not known till they are gone. This is the case, indeed, with all our mercies. The praise of this good woman was like her alms, real and sincere. Here are no hired mourners, no verses, no eulogy; but garments which her own hands had made; and widows with their tears. The best posthumous fame you can acquire is derived from the commendation of facts; from a child you instructed, a sinner you reclaimed. The best proofs of your importance are to be found in the affections and benedictions of your fellow-creatures while you live, and in their regrets and lamentations when you die. I hate dry-eyed funerals. Though it is distressing, it is also satisfactory to see genuine grief. Do all thus die? Do oppressive masters? Do the hard-hearted, and the close-fisted? Peter happily can do more than "weep with them that weep"; and he applies himself to his work. He "put them all forth." First, from a principle of humility; he did not

wish to be seen. And, secondly, from a principle of importunity; company might have hindered the intenseness of his devotion. III. HER RESURRECTION. Peter prayed and Dorcas arose; and then Peter "gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and presented her alive." Oh! for the painter's pencil! Oh! to see him giving, and them receiving this present! "There, take your benefactress, and dry up your tears." This is very instructive. It shows us that kindness was the principle of the miracle; not self applause. Then Peter would have required her to follow him as a standing proof of his supernatural powers: but he resigns her to those who stood in need of her services. And does not this show us the importance of beneficence? Were we left to judge, we, perhaps, should have thought it better for Stephen to have been raised up than Dorcas. But God revives the one and leaves the other in the grave, perhaps, to teach us that our thoughts are not His thoughts; that persons whose excellencies are of a retiring character may be more important in the eye of Heaven than those who are more brilliant and marvellous; and that, in some cases, a good life may be as valuable as good preaching. Whom does He, by a miracle, bring back from the arrest of death? A hero? a politician? a philosopher? No! One who made garments for the poor! And does He not hereby show us that He takes pleasure in those who, like Himself, delight in mercy; and that "He is not unrighteous to forget their work and labour of love, in ministering to the saints"? In a word, does He not say, "Them that honour Me, I will honour"? But you ask, was this a privilege to Dorcas?—to be brought back into a vale of tears, and again to have to "walk through the valley of the shadow of death," after she had happily passed it?—I answer, Yes! It was a marvellous distinction conferred upon her; and it added to her usefulness, and to her reward. The saints on earth have one privilege above the saints in heaven. It is in the means and opportunities of doing good. (*W. Jay.*) *Dorcas raised to life*:—The faith of this woman was of the highest type; her belief was more than a theological assent to the truth; her faith worked by love and purified the heart. "This woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did." Notwithstanding the faith of Dorcas, "It came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died." There are several considerations that press upon us in view of these facts. Sickness is not necessarily an indication of sin on the part of the individual attacked by disease; neither is illness to be attributed to a lack of faith. It is God's purpose to let the physical forces of the universe take, in most instances, the natural courses He has made; He has good reasons why diseases should be allowed, in the majority of cases, to develop through the various stages of their natural history. Sometimes we can see the good that comes to us from illness; not unfrequently it brings forth the fruit of a new purpose. There are times, however, when for His glory God interferes with the natural order of things, and brings to pass supernatural results. As the Church members turned their faces heavenward, God put it into their hearts to send for Peter, a dozen miles away at Lydda. Perhaps Peter had not the slightest idea what he would be called upon to do, but he started out. By the time he had reached the city he had received Divine illumination as to the course that ought to be pursued. Entering into the house, "Peter put them all forth," that his mind might not be distracted from any suggestion that the Spirit might make to him, and he "kneeled down and prayed." Others equally deserving a resurrection had died and were buried without a word of prayer for their resurrection. Stephen, "a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost," was not called back from the spirit-world. It was for the glory of God that the first martyr was taken by "devout men" from the bloody stones that had been hurled at and upon him, and carried "to his burial." It was for the good of the kingdom of God that Peter was inspired to ask for the return of Dorcas to her work, and Christ heard the petition He had Himself put into His servant's heart. The results. There was joy in the household of Dorcas; the night of weeping had passed, and the morning of joy had come. The results abundantly justified the exhibition of miraculous power in the cities of Lydda, Joppa, and Cæsarea. The inferences drawn from the healing of Æneas and the raising of Dorcas, so far as the topic in hand is concerned, may now be stated. 1. Holiness is not a bar to disease, although a Christian life tends to health and longevity. 2. Remedies are to be used under the advice of skilled physicians. 3. God usually permits diseases to run through the varied stages of their natural history. 4. There are times, however, when it is for the glory of God's kingdom that the Head of the Church should arrest disease by the direct action of His own Spirit. 5. When it is the purpose of Christ to "bear our sicknesses," He illuminates the minds of certain faithful disciples, impressing them with the belief that a

petition offered for healing will be granted. 6. Faith exercised upon the gift of especial illumination will be honoured. 7. No person has been raised from the dead since apostolic times; therefore no illumination has been given for this purpose; supposed illuminations have been hallucinations. 8. The highest type of faith expresses its needs according to the best knowledge at the time, and trustfully leaves the outcome to Him who has said, "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him." (*J. M. Durrell.*) *Dorcas:*—I. THE LIFE OF DORCAS. The brief biography is exceedingly full, though it is comprised in a single verse (ver. 36). 1. Her appearance. It is a most absurd notion that useful women must be commonplace in their looks. The name given to this excellent Christian worker suggests that she was attractive and graceful. 2. Her character. One word is here employed, nowhere else to be discovered, that some assert it was here invented for this occasion—"a disciple"; in its ordinary application this means a learner, but the term here is new, and signifies a female learner. Those were days of degradation for the weaker sex until Christianity came. 3. Her activity. She could not have merited the name of the agile denizen of the desert, if she had not been as brisk as she was affectionate. 4. Lessons. (1) "Handsome is that handsome does." When a Christian lady gives herself to real work for those who are in trouble, there springs up a rare, new, unconscious beauty even in her features, which spreads over her whole life like sweet, bright sunshine. (2) Dorcas was "full of good works," and not of good wishes alone. So her needle was as noble as Moses' rod, or David's sling, or Shamgar's ox-goad; for it was her answer to the Lord's question (Exod. iv. 2). (3) All these works were done by, not the "Dorcas Society of Joppa," but by Dorcas. Evidently this was not a woman who bought off from labour by a contribution. Perhaps she was so busy in making "coats and garments," that she had no time to make an association. Some people lose a great deal of force in running around to get machines, and then lose more yet in running the machines they get. Organisation sometimes helps; but too much is apt to hinder. It has been known that the election of one secretary has taken more of zeal than would have fitted out three missionary boxes. II. THE DEATH OF DORCAS. 1. Even the best of people may die early. 2. Even Christian people may mourn sometimes. 3. We are bound to weep with those that weep. Very fine example is this of the oneness of sympathy among the primitive believers; they sent up to Lydda for Peter to come and aid them with counsel in their sore distress. III. THE RESURRECTION OF DORCAS. Peter's action must be laid alongside of Elisha's (2 Kings iv. 33). Also with Christ's (Mark v. 40, 41). 1. It was done by the sovereign and miraculous power of God. All talk about collusion, trick, animal magnetism, is not worth discussing. 2. But Simon's faith shines more illustriously than ever. When the rationalists point to his close imitation of the "Talitha" of Jesus in his "Tabitha" we may thank them for a beautiful suggestion; it is likely he did think of his Master then. 3. Imagine Dorcas's surprise when she first opened her eyes. How strange it is that no one of those persons who were raised from the dead ever attempted to tell the story of what they saw or heard. As one of the ancient Christian poets said of Lazarus, she was *superstes sibi*—her own survivor. 4. Still she did not set up for a saint, and go on exhibition. She simply went to work once more among the widows. All Joppa heard of it, and many believed in the Lord. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Dorcas: the lessons of her life and death:*—I. THE GOOD ARE THE REALLY RICH. Those who are full of good works and of almsdeeds are better off than those with full bank accounts. II. GOOD WORKS ARE THE TEST OF CHRISTIAN LIFE. If one is not fruitful in good works, he is not joined to Christ. III. THE GOOD ARE NOT SPARED BY DEATH because of their good works. His sickle cuts down the fairest flowers as well as the obnoxious weeds. IV. DEATH SHOWS HOW MUCH THE GOOD ARE APPRECIATED, as it shows, also, the little value of a money popularity. V. THE DEEDS OF THE GOOD REMAIN TO TESTIFY FOR THEM after death has taken them away. (*S. S. Times.*) *The Christian needlewoman:*—There is in Joppa a woman with her needle, embroidering her name ineffaceably into the charities of the world. In the room where she sits are the pale faces of the poor. She listens to their plaint, and with gifts she mingles prayers and Christian encouragement. Then she goes out, and all through the street the cry runs: "Dorcas is coming." That night a half-paid shipwright reaches home; sees his little boy well clad, and they tell him: "Dorcas has been here." But there is a sudden pause in that woman's ministry. All through the haunts of wretchedness the news comes: "Dorcas is sick!" And now, alas, for Joppa! there is wailing. That voice which had uttered so many cheerful words is hushed; that hand, which had made

so many garments for the poor, is cold and still. In every place in that town, where there is sickness, or hunger, or guilt, or sorrow, there are despairing looks and streaming eyes as they cry: "Dorcas is dead!" They send for Peter. He urges his way through the crowd, kindly orders that the room be cleared, prays, and in the strength of Him who is the resurrection, exclaims: "Tabitha, arise!" We see in this subject Dorcas—I. THE DISCIPLE. If I had not seen the word "disciple," I would have known this woman was a Christian. Such music as that never came from a harp which is not stringed by Divine grace. I wish that the wives, and mothers, and daughters of this congregation would imitate Dorcas in her discipleship. Before you sit with the Sabbath-class, or cross the threshold of the hospital, &c., attend to the first, last, and greatest duty—the seeking for God and being at peace with Him. II. THE BENEFACTRESS. 1. History has told the story of the crown and of the sword; the poet has sung the praises of nature; I tell you the praises of the needle. From the fig-leaf robe prepared in Eden, to the last stitch taken last night, the needle has wrought wonders of kindness. It has preached the gospel, it has overcome want with the war-cry of "stitch, stitch, stitch." Amid the mightiest triumphs in all ages and lands, I set down the conquests of the needle. 2. I admit its crimes. It has butchered more souls than the "Inquisition"; it has punctured the eye; it has pierced the side; it has struck weakness into the lungs; it has sent madness into the brain; it has pitched whole armies of the suffering into crime and wretchedness. 3. But now I am talking of Dorcas, I shall speak only of the charities of the needle. This woman was a representative of all those women who make garments for the destitute, knit socks for the barefooted, prepare bandages for the lacerated, who make up bales of clothing for missionaries. 4. What a contrast between the benevolence of this woman and a great deal of the charity of this day! Dorcas did not spend her time planning how the poor of Joppa were to be relieved; she took her needle and relieved them. She was not like those who sympathise with imaginary sorrows, and then laugh at the boy who has upset his basket of victuals, or like that charity which makes a rousing speech on the benevolent platform and goes out to kick the beggar from the step. The sufferers of the world want not so much tears as dollars, not so much smiles as shoes, not so much "God bless you's" as jackets and frocks. There are women who talk beautifully about the suffering of the world, who never, like Dorcas, take the needle and assault it. 5. I am glad that there is not a page of history which is not a record of female beneficence. The Princess of Conti sold all her jewels that she might help the famine-struck. Maud, the wife of Henry I., went down amid the poor, and washed their sores and administered to them cordials. But why go so far back or so far away? Before the smoke had gone up from Gettysburg the women of the North met the women of the South on the battle-field, forgetting all their animosities while they bound up the wounded and closed the eyes of the slain! III. THE LAMENTED. There may have been women there with larger fortunes and handsomer faces; but there was no grief at their departure like this at the death of Dorcas. There are a great many who go out of life and are unmissed. There may be a large funeral, high-sounding eulogiums, a marble tomb, but the whole thing may be a sham. The Church has lost nothing; the world has lost nothing. It is only a nuisance abated, or a grumbler ceasing to find fault; or an idler stopped yawning, or a dissipated fashionable parted from his wine-cellar. While, on the other hand, no useful Christian leaves this world without being missed. When Josephine was carried out to her grave, there were a great many women of pride and position that went out after her; but I am most affected by the story that two thousand of the poor of France followed her coffin, wailing until the air rang again, because they lost their last earthly friend. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord; they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them!" IV. THE RESURRECTED. In what a short compass the great writer put that, "she sat up!" What a time there must have been when the apostle brought her out among her old friends! How the tears of joy must have started! You and I have seen the same thing—not a dead body resuscitated, but the deceased coming up again after death in the good accomplished. If a man labours up to fifty years of age serving God, and then dies, we are apt to think that his earthly work is done. No! Services rendered for Christ never stop. A Christian woman toils for the upbuilding of a Church through many self-denials and prayers, and then she dies. Now hundreds of souls stand up and confess the faith of Christ. Has that Christian woman who went away fifteen years ago nothing to do with these things? The good that seemed to be buried has come up again. Dorcas is resurrected. After a while all these

womanly friends of Christ will put down their needle for ever. After making garments for others, some one will make the last robe for them. Then, one day there will be sky rending, and that Christian woman will rise from the dust, and will be surrounded by the wanderers whom she reclaimed, by the wounded souls to whom she administered. The reward has come. Dorcas is resurrected! (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*) *The appropriate duty and ornament of the female sex*:—1. I shall not inquire whether the female mind is, in all respects, the same with that of the other sex. Whatever opinion may be formed on this subject, we shall all agree that women ought not to be considered as destined to the same employments with men; and, of course, that there is a species of education, and a sphere of action, which more particularly belong to them. There was a time when a very different doctrine was growing popular: viz., that in education and employments all distinctions of sex ought to be forgotten and confounded. This delusion, however, is now generally discarded. But an error of an opposite kind has gained a lamentable currency. This is, that the station of females is so humble, and their sphere of duty so limited, that they neither can nor ought to aspire to extensive usefulness. This is the mistake of indolence or of false humility, and is plainly contradicted by reason, Scripture, and experience. 2. The contrast between the representations of Scripture and the sentiments of the world seldom appears in a stronger light than it does on the subject of which we are now speaking. In the codes of modern infidelity and licentiousness, as well as among uncivilised nations, woman is exhibited as the mere servile instrument of convenience or pleasure. In the Bible she is represented as the equal, the companion, and the help-meet of man. In the language of worldly taste, a fine woman is one who is distinguished for her personal charms and polite accomplishments. In the language of Scripture, she is the enlightened and virtuous mistress of a family, and the useful member of society. The woman who is formed on the principles of the world, finds no enjoyment but in the circles of affluence, gaiety, and fashion. The woman who is formed on the principles of the Bible, "goeth about doing good." The business of the one is pleasure; the pleasure of the other is business. The one is admired abroad; the other is beloved and honoured at home. From the representations of sacred writ it is manifest that the ornament and the duty of the female sex are as appropriate as they are important, and that they pertain especially to the relations which they bear as—I. WIVES. On their temper and deportment, more than those of any other individuals, it depends whether peace, affection, order, and plenty reign in their dwellings, or waste, confusion, discord, and alienation disgrace them. II. MOTHERS. Children, during the first years of their lives, are necessarily committed almost entirely to their care. And the impressions which are then made generally decide their character and destiny for this life and for that which is to come. III. DOMESTIC RELATIONS. 1. How much may every daughter, by dutiful and affectionate conduct towards her parents, promote the happiness of the whole household, and by her example contribute to the improvement of all around her! 2. How much solid good may every sister daily accomplish by assisting to educate her younger brothers and sisters, in promoting the regularity, order, and comfort of the family, and in recommending, by her whole deportment, the wisdom of economy, the sweetness of benevolence, and the purity of holiness! 3. How much may every female servant contribute to the advantage of the family! It was a little maid in the house of Naaman, the Syrian, that directed her master to the prophet of the Lord. IV. AS MEMBERS OF SOCIETY. Let no woman imagine that she has nothing to do beyond the sphere of her own household. 1. In every walk and hour of life she may be contributing something to the purity, the order, and the happiness of the community. The influence of the female character in forming public taste and public manners is incalculable. No false sentiments can have much prevalence against which they resolutely set their faces. No corrupt practices can be general or popular which they are willing to expel from society. 2. To the female sex also properly appertains a large portion of those offices of charity to which we are constantly called. They are best acquainted with domestic wants, and are the best judges of domestic character. They have more sympathy, tenderness, leisure, and patience than men. Let me apply this subject—1. By inferring from what has been said, the unspeakable importance of female education. If the female character be so important, then the formation of that character must be equally so. 2. By recommending the character which has been drawn especially to the young. It is a character which involves the highest honour, and which embraces its own reward. It ought to be your ambition to possess and to evince a sound understanding, and a respectable

portion of literary knowledge. But it ought to be more especially your ambition to cultivate your hearts. To be so many Tabithas, adorning the doctrine of God your Saviour, and diffusing happiness among all around you, would be infinitely more to your honour, as well as your comfort, than to stand in the list of those masculine females who, while they gain a proud civil pre-eminence, really disgrace their sex. 3. By encouraging those who are engaged in female charitable associations. "Be not weary in well-doing." Your task is arduous; but it is still more delightful, and shall "in no wise lose its reward." 4. In conclusion, "the time is short, and the fashion of this world passeth away." Like Dorcas, we all must soon sicken and die. Do we resemble this excellent woman, in our character and hopes, as well as in our mortality? We cannot resemble her unless we are disciples indeed. We may "give all our goods to feed the poor," and "our bodies to be burned," and yet be nothing more than "a sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal." But those deeds of charity which spring from a living faith in a living Redeemer; those works of obedience which are performed from a principle of love for His name—these are "the good works and the almsdeeds" which shed a lustre around the bed of death. (*S. Miller, D.D.*) *The useful are sometimes snatched unexpectedly away* (ver. 37):—With many it is ebb-water before the tide be at full. The lamps of their lives are wasted almost as soon as they are lighted. The sand of their hour-glass is run out when they think it is but newly turned. But success before God depends not on the duration of one's life. The husbandman may pluck his roses and gather his lilies at midsummer, and he may transplant young trees out of the lower ground to the higher, where they have more of the sun. The goods are his own. The heavenly Husbandman makes no mistakes. (*S. Rutherford.*) *The poor should be cared for* (ver. 36):—Charity should be warmest when the season is coldest. That is the time for coals and blankets. It will warm your heart to warm poor people's bodies. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Power in the gospel*:—Here is a lesson which shows the power of the gospel in two directions—the elements of gospel power and the effects of gospel power. I. THE ELEMENTS OF POWER IN THE GOSPEL. What forces are disclosed in these verses? 1. We see the power which dwells in organisation. This is hinted in Peter's journey "throughout all quarters." The bands of disciples throughout Judæa were united under a central head and with a form of discipline. Unity gives power. 2. We see the power in sympathy. Peter found the palsied Æneas; Dorcas sought out the needy and sorrowing; and in the Church we note the interest which prompted the sending for Peter. This care for others has ever been an element of power in Christianity. 3. We note also the power in character. A character like that of Dorcas could not remain concealed. One who lived to do good could not help exerting an influence. The character and influence of God's people are most potent factors in the spread of the gospel. 4. But mightier than all human elements is the Divine power of the gospel. Æneas arose to health, and Dorcas was called back from death through the supernatural power of a living Christ. These were the tokens of a power for which no human philosophy can account in the history of the Church. Miracles more wonderful in the conversion of souls are of daily occurrence. II. What EFFECTS OF GOSPEL POWER do we see in this story? 1. Holiness; expressed in the name "saints" applied to the followers of Christ. Christianity has given to the world a new ideal of character. 2. Practical works of usefulness. Christians have been at work feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, relieving the needy, ever since the days of Dorcas. Every hospital and asylum and charitable institution on the earth is a tribute to the power of the gospel. 3. Growth. Verses 35 and 42 call attention to the growing numbers of the Christian Church. The gospel is a seed reproducing itself by the million. This is another result of its inward power. 4. Victory over death. The restoration of Dorcas to life was only a feeble type of the more wonderful triumph of the Christian over the grave. Hers was a few hours after death; ours may be a few centuries. Both her restoration and our resurrection are wrought by the same power. (*Monday Club Sermon.*) *A devoted woman*:—An American paper tells the story of a woman who, because tired of a life mainly employed in dressing and eating, resolved to devote herself and her money to a nobler purpose. At the close of the war she went to a sandy island off the Atlantic coast, where about two hundred persons were living in poverty and ignorance, and established her home there, with the intention of benefiting the inhabitants. She began with teaching, by example, how to cultivate the land lucratively, and was soon imitated. Next she established a school for the children, and afterwards a church. Now the island is a thriving region, with an industrious and moral population, the change being the work of one woman. *Noble womanly service*:—When even the old coloured woman

Katy, who earned her own livelihood; who sold cakes from day to day; who in her lifetime took forty children out of the poor-house, and taught them trades, and bound them out in places of prosperity; who took no airs upon herself; who lived on the abundance of her poverty—when she died out of her sphere nobody thought to ask, "What has become of her?" She was buried, perhaps, so obscurely that no person could say, "I am sure here is where her old rattle-bones lie." But there went up heavenward a radiant procession, amidst an outburst of song, heralding the approach of some bold conqueror, crownless and sceptreless. It was the resurrected spirit of this servant of God. She lived at the bottom here, but there she lives in eternal fame. At last she broke into her crown of light, and ascended her throne, and took her sceptre. Thou that art doing noble things and asking no praise; thou that art living to do good because it is sweet to do good, and be like Christ, and bear His cross, and walk with Him in sorrow, go up, thy Christ waits for thee. And come down, thou hoary-head of power that on earth art despoiling God's fair creation as food for thy lowest appetites, and living in selfishness for thyself alone; there is no road between thee and God that does not break short on the gulf between earth and heaven. The last shall be first, and the first shall be last. Seek for glory, but be careful what kind of glory you seek. Work for fame, but look out that you work for the fame that addresses itself to the top of the brain, instead of that which addresses itself to the bottom. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Traits of a noble woman:*—We have seen many beautiful tributes to lovely woman, but the following is the finest we ever read: Place her among the flowers, foster her as a tender plant, and she is a thing of fancy, waywardness, and folly—annoyed by a dewdrop, fretted by the touch of a butterfly's wing, ready to faint at the sound of a beetle or the rattling of a window-pane at night, and she is overpowered by the perfume of a rosebud. But let real calamity come, rouse her affections, enkindle the fires of her heart, and mark her then! How strong is her heart! Place her in the heart of the battle; give her a child, a bird, or anything to protect, and see her in a relative instance, lifting her white arms as a shield, as her own blood crimsons her upturned forehead, praying for her life to protect the helpless. Transplant her in the dark places of the earth, call forth the energies to action, and her breath becomes a healing value, her presence a blessing. She disputes, inch by inch, the stride of stalking pestilence, when man—the strong and brave—pale and affrighted, shrinks away. Misfortune haunts her not. She wears away a life of silent endurance, and goes forward with less timidity than to her bridal. In prosperity she is a bud full of odours, waiting but for the winds of adversity to scatter them abroad—pure gold, valuable, but untried in the furnace. In short, woman is a miracle, a mystery, the centre from which radiates the charm of existence. (*Great Thoughts.*) *Caring for others:*—You have heard it said, and I believe there is more than fancy in the saying, that flowers only flourish rightly in the garden of some one who loves them. I know you would like that to be true; you would think it a pleasant magic if you could flush your flowers into brighter bloom by a kind look upon them; nay, more, if your look had the power, not only to cheer, but to guard them. And do you think it not a greater thing than all this you can do for fairer flowers than these—flowers that could bless you for having blessed them, and will love you for having loved them, flowers that have eyes like yours, and lives like yours, which once saved you save for ever. Is this only a little power? Far among the moorlands, far in the darkness of the terrible streets, these feeble florets are lying with all their fresh leaves torn, and their stems broken—will you never go down to them, nor set them in order, nor protect them from the fierce wind? (*J. Ruskin.*) *The work for Christian women:*—A Christian lady, who was engaged in work for the poor and degraded, was once spoken to by one who was well acquainted with both the worker and those whom she sought to reach, and remonstrated with for going among such a class of people. "It does seem wonderful to me that you can do such work," her friend said. "You sit beside these people, and talk with them in a way that I do not think you would do if you knew all about them, just what they are, and from what places they come." Her answer was, "Well, I suppose they are dreadful people; but if the Lord Jesus were now on earth, are they not the very sort of people that He would strive to teach? And am I better than my Master? Would He feel Himself too good to go among them?" A poor, illiterate person, who stood listening to this conversation, said with great earnestness and simplicity, "Why, I always thought that was what Christians were for." The objector was silenced, and what wonder? Is not that what Christians are for? If not, then what in the name of all that is good are they for? (*Christian*

Herald.) **Tabitha, arise.**—*The resurrection of Dorcas—a type:*—I. THERE PRECEDES—1. Sorrow and sympathy of a mourning Church: the weeping widows. 2. Prayer of God's believing servants: the praying Peter. 3. The awakening call of the Divine Word: Tabitha, arise. II. THERE FOLLOWS—1. The first signs of life in an awakened soul: she opened her eyes, saw Peter, and sat up. 2. Friendly assistance for the life yet weak: he gave her his hand and lifted her up. 3. Loving reception into the Church: he presented her alive. 4. A blessed impression upon many. (*K. Gerok.*) *The home-mission, a call to our time:*—I. TO WHOM ADDRESSED. Arise, spirit of love. Hear its evangelical Christianity. And if men will not hear it, then shame them, ye women, who from the days of Tabitha have always been foremost in works of love and heroic deeds. II. WHEREFORE ADDRESSED. Great is the need of the time, and great the obligation of rescuing love. III. WHENCE ADDRESSED. Not from without. The work of home mission is no mere matter of fashion; the arm of the world can be of no use in it; the Lord Himself must be present, Peter must come; God's Word with its strength, the Church with its blessing, the spiritual office with its love. (*Ibid.*)

CHAPTER X.

VERS. 1–48. **There was a certain man in Cæsarea called Cornelius, a centurion.**—*Peter's vision:*—The record of the advance of the young Church gives in quick succession three typical conversions: first, that of the eunuch, a foreigner, but a proselyte to the Jewish faith; secondly, that of Saul, born and bred a Jew; thirdly, this of Cornelius, a Gentile seeker after God. Within the range of these experiences the whole world was compassed. The highest apostolic sanction for an unfettered gospel was the need of the hour. I. THE VISION OF THE ROMAN (vers. 1–8). The home of Cornelius lay thirty miles north of Joppa. Built by Herod the Great in honour of Cæsar Augustus, the seat of the Roman rule in the land of the Jews, a city of splendour, with spacious artificial haven, having a temple erected to the emperor that held his statue as Olympian Zeus, and lying, as it did, within the sacred territory, yet a centre of Grecian influence and plagued by the corruptions of a pagan worship, Cæsarea afforded every possible phase of contrast to the age-long intolerance of Peter's countrymen. Rome's wide empire flashed before the eye of this true-born Italian, nor could he dream that faith in a Nazarene peasant would give the Cornelian name its truest honour. Yet he was one of those rare souls of whom not a few have illuminated the darkness of heathenism, whom heart-hunger leads to the truth. He was a "devout" man. He "feared" God. The second word is simply a closer definition of his religious character. His "fear" was not a superstitious dread of the wrath of God, but a brave man's dread of failing to do the will of God. Furthermore, his piety had power in it, and this, mingled with peace, won over to his faith "all his house." No man's religion can, without great hurt, fail to set forth the two sides of the character of his God. In the man who orders his household in the fear of God "mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Cornelius, constant in almsgiving and prayer, draws near to the kingdom of God's Son. The kingdom is about to be entered. The order is, "Now send." The time had come. The outlying Gentile world had grown sick at heart. The "middle wall of partition" was falling to the ground. Cornelius, for the pagan world, was to learn that the Cross was the centre of the circle, and Peter, for the Jewish world, that the circle was as big as the globe. The Divine direction is very exact. Both of the apostles' names are given. Whether Cornelius knew it or not, Philip, a resident of Cæsarea, might have been called to his side within an hour. But Philip was not the man for the occasion. Of all men Peter was best fitted to preach Jesus to Cornelius, of all men the one most needing the results of his preaching. "He will tell thee what thou oughtest to do." These words emphasise two important truths: 1. They point to the value of human agency in the salvation of men. The value of human testimony to a historic fact was never lost sight of in the foundation of the Church. The answer to Hume and Strauss may be found in the meeting of these men. A man not a myth has entered our world, and God has committed to men first of all, not to books, nor papers, nor tracts, the publishing of the gospel. The true witness

of true men is the surest way of redeeming China to God. A shipload of Bibles sent to Africa will, unaided, amount to little. Ten holy men turned loose will leaven it for the twentieth century. The man and the book together are invincible. 2. They point to Jesus as the consummate revelation of God. When He can be found all else is insufficient. And it was because He could be found that Cornelius was not, could not be, allowed to remain where he was. His devoutness was not enough. No one dare teach that faith in specific doctrines of Christianity is superfluous. The opening words of Peter's sermon cannot be bent to prove that all religions are of equal value or that faith in the Redeemer is needless. II. THE VISION OF THE JEW (vers. 9–20). God's providences make a perfect fit. The messengers reached the tanner's door not an hour too soon, not a moment behind time. Was the man on the house-top ready? A great thing was about to happen. A huge prejudice had come to its death. Let us pause to scan the past life of the fisherman. He had been in part prepared for the nearing duty. A more scrupulous Jew would not have entered a tanner's house. Peter lodged there. He had not been without much previous training. He had been taught, tried, had fallen, had been forgiven and restored to honour. Yet he was not ready for a world-wide need. The words of Jesus never took the place of the educating activities of after life. Peter had been called to be a "fisher of men" (Matt. iv. 19). He had heard the centurion commended (Luke vii. 7). He had learned how meats defile, and how they do not (Mark vii. 18). Near the tragic close of his Lord's life he had seen that certain Greeks sought Him (John xii. 20), and that in them the Gentile world was welcomed. Yet he was not ready. Like his fellows, he saw in the direction of his prejudices. "It required the surgery of events to insert a new truth into their minds." Yet he was God's best man for this hour, for, as Bruce has well said, "Everything may be hoped of men who could leave all for Christ's society." To learn that spirit is more than form, and that God is not partial, was a great lesson. Through the opening in heaven a "great sheet" was let down, held "by four rope-ends" (Alford), or "attached with four ends, namely, to the edges of the opening which had taken place in heaven" (Meyer). In it were all kinds of animals without exception, clean and unclean. From these Peter was told to choose. With old-time bluntness he refuses. He knows not who speaks, but calls him "Lord." What did it mean? Little wonder that he was "perplexed." The most outward mark of difference between Jew and Gentile had been set at naught. He knew why these regulations had existed (see Lev. xi. and Deut. xvi.). The descendants of Abraham were not alone in making distinctions of animals. Yet none others were so thorough as those of the Jews. "The ordinance of Moses was for the whole nation. It was not, like the Egyptian law, intended for priest's alone; nor like the Hindu law, binding only on the twice-born Brahman; nor like the Parsee law, to be apprehended and obeyed only by those disciplined in spiritual matters. It was a law for the people, for every man, woman, and child of the race chosen to be a 'kingdom of priests, an holy nation' (Exod. xix. 6)." He "thought" on. Was the "hedge" between races to be destroyed? Possibly. Was the vision meant for his own enlargement of privilege? Surely not. The sight, the order, shocked his sanitary creed, his patriotic sentiment, his conscience. It was hard for a Jew to yield even to a command from the skies. His "thought" may have taken in the city spread below. (*R. T. Stevenson.*) *Peter's vision*:—Jesus Christ is the focus of all good tendencies in history. His light, lighting every man that cometh into the world, is their origin; His triumph is the conclusion toward which they move. The story of Cornelius and Peter shows the bringing together in Christ of two great religious elements—that of devout paganism and that of faithful Judaism. Both make sacrifices, for in Judaism as well as in paganism there is somewhat that is to be left behind. Yet in both there was imperfection. Cornelius had yet to put on the gospel life, Peter had yet to renounce the imperfect Jewish life. Both needed advancement more closely toward Christ, where they could meet as one. I. CORNELIUS, THE GENTILE, is one of the noblest figures of pre-Christian life that we have. It has often been pointed out that the Roman centurions are always well spoken of in the New Testament. But Cornelius is more plainly set before us than either of the others. 1. As a man Cornelius is deserving of our admiration. We see in him a high religious longing. He was not a dabbler in speculation, such as he might have been if he had been a Greek, or a Roman of a hundred years later. He was one of the sort of men Archdeacon Farrar has called, "seekers after God": men like Socrates, Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius; men to whom the utmost heathenism could offer

in the way of religiousness was unsatisfying (as God meant it to be) to the wants of the soul. The quantity of religiousness offered by the Roman religion was not at fault; there was an abundance of theory to appeal to the mind, plenty of supernatural legend about the gods, and a ritual elaborate enough to gratify the most ardent longing for the externals of worship. But there was not that quality in it all which could appease the cravings of the heart. It was not Divine. Cornelius longed for something better. He had been led to Judaism. Here were no idols, here were no debasing legends of deity, here was real spiritual religion. The purity and spirituality of the Hebrew monotheism, and the loftiness of its code of morals, must have come like a revelation to thoughtful hearts. They came so to Cornelius. The God of the Jews was a better God to him than Jupiter. Yet Cornelius made a discriminating use of Judaism. Cornelius penetrated to the eternally true elements of the Hebrew religion, and disregarded those parts of it which were merely typical and temporary and had no power to satisfy the soul. For his characteristics, named at some length, are spiritual and not ritualistic. He was "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house" (ver. 2). The word devout, it is true, says Lechler, "may be applied even to a strictly pagan form of devoutness." It designates a worshipful bent of mind, full of reverence toward Heaven. But in Cornelius' case this reverence was rightly directed, for it rose toward the true God. It is said also of Cornelius that he "gave much alms to the people (of Israel), and prayed to God always." His religiousness was shown not only in devoutness, but in the outward life. "Because," says Calvin, "the Law is contained in two tables, Luke in the first place commends Cornelius' piety; then he descends to the second part, in the fact that he practised the duties of charity towards men." That such a man should have no influence was impossible, above all in those days when the possibilities of the pagan religions were exhausted and men were reaching out after something more satisfying, after that, indeed, which Cornelius had found. We are not surprised, therefore, to learn that "all his house" joined him in his fear of the true God (ver. 2). A man like Cornelius, reverent and thoughtful, cannot but influence others toward the same traits. And the reason for this was his strength of character. Roman soldiers were not, as a general thing, very reverent. Out of this same strength of character also, doubtless, came his patience. He had prayed earnestly to God, we know not for how long, but no unusual answer had come. 2. Such a man in himself is a delightful study in character; but he is much more valuable in this case because of his spiritual significance in relation to the gospel. He shows us plainly, by his obedience to it, the obligation of the universal law of living up to the light one has. Religious emancipation is by means of the principle of exhaustion. You use an imperfect form of religion faithfully, and you are led out of it into something better. So those who, like Paul, were zealous Jews were offering themselves to God as fit subjects for something higher still. Because all phases of belief have in them the potency of better things, men are rightly to be judged of God by their use of what they have. And no one need fear, whatever his present phase of belief Godward, that his aspirations toward something better are ever overlooked by God. The angel said to Cornelius, "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God" (ver. 4). It is a comforting thought that not a single hope for religious advancement in any human soul is ever overlooked by God. Cornelius was a good man, a religious man. Even these, however, did not merit the gift of the gospel. The best of men can never claim anything at God's hands, because even the best of men never use all their privileges and perfectly fulfil the will of God. But although Cornelius had not by his life come to deserve the gift of the gospel (which is impossible), he had by it prepared himself for the gospel, and plainly evinced to God his desire for it, although the knowledge of just what it was that he desired and craved for had not crossed his mind. To those who ask it shall be given, and by his good life Cornelius had shown himself to be one of those who ask. God gives grace in exchange for grace. Using what light we have leads on to the desire for more, until we are led to want Christ, who is the final and best gift of God. II. PETER, THE JEWISH-CHRISTIAN, gives us a study in advancing Christianity. Cornelius shows how Judaism helps to Christ; Peter shows how Judaism must be thrown off in order to reach Christ. The same thing which is set before us as a help in Cornelius is shown a hindrance in Peter. Do you wonder that a man's early training should stay by him? Was it not intended so to stay? Peter's prepossession against Gentile ways of living was fortified by the knowledge that Jewish life was founded upon Divine ordinances. The things unclean to Judaistic thought had not been made unclean by the Jews themselves, but by the

very declaration of God. And yet it was narrow. It did not rise to the idea that God might be planning to displace even His own work. Peter could not see that a thing might be instituted of God and yet be temporary. He could not advance to the full conception of the possibility of progressiveness in God's revelation. Not that there was anything defective, improper, or bad in any part of God's ancient work. But He meant it for a certain purpose which was temporary. And it was a wonder so great that it took a miracle to dispel it. So hard is it for us to get away from our own set ideas of how God must work when He works at all. And yet God can do the difficult, even what seems the impossible. He can give a form of religion to men that seems perfect, and then He can displace it by another to which the former is but as night to noonday. Peter was to learn that a Gentile soul as such is as ready for the kingdom as a Jewish soul as such, if it is truly longing for salvation. And as this came to him it brought a lesson in humility, for he learned that the judgment of God was far better than his own. He had his prepossessions, founded in the very Word of God. He was asked to give these up by the same God. Here seemed inconsistency, impossibility. But Peter must yield. The ways of man must submit to the ways of God. Our conceptions of God, religion, piety, must all yield before God's thoughts. And if He displaces His own revelations by better ones who shall say Him nay? III. THE GENERAL LESSONS of our study are apparent. 1. Cornelius and Peter, Jew and Gentile, both had visions granted by God. God is no respecter of persons. Some very ignorant, uneducated man, despised in our eyes, may find the truth as well as we. 2. Christ takes what is best out of all as the foundation of advance into new truth concerning Himself. God's Spirit makes a *preparatio evangelica* everywhere. 3. All men need progress religiously—progress not beyond Christ, but progress deeper into the mysteries of the sublime truth given to us in Him. Let no one ever say he has no more to learn about the Son of God. (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*) *Dreams*:—The subject of dreams and dreaming is a fascinating one. There have been many extraordinary dreams; but there is an element of mystery in all dreams. They are witnesses to our spiritual nature. They reveal the spirit that is in man. They give us glimpses of the inner life of the soul. Sometimes they may indicate our moral state. Some dreams are the children of an idle brain; others are shaped by the master passion of the soul. President Edwards entered all his dreams in his diary, and carefully examined them. He looked upon them as indicating the real bias of his waking thoughts. Good seeds sown in the day meant a good crop of dreams at night. Undoubtedly there is much truth in this view. Dreams are sometimes instruments of Divine teaching. The Holy Spirit speaks to men by dreams and visions. "Many of the inspired parts of Scripture came through that channel. Jacob, at Bethel, saw the ladder of mediation between heaven and earth in a dream. Peter received his commission to preach the gospel to the Gentiles in a dream. The spirit-world was unfolded to Paul in visions. He saw heaven, but not with his mortal eyes; and heard the language spoken there, but not with ears of clay. The panorama of the ages passed before John in Patmos while in a state of bodily unconsciousness. The Spirit of God can waken the resources of thought in man, and impress his mind without disturbing a single eyelash, or one beat of the heart."

> "For human weal Heaven husbands all events,
> Dull sleep instructs, nor sport man's dreams in vain."
> (*G. H. James.*)

Cornelius:—1. Cæsarea was situated on the Mediterranean, about thirty miles north of Joppa. It was built by Herod the Great, B.C. 22, and named after his imperial patron. It was a civil and military capital, the residence of the Roman procurator. It was garrisoned mostly by native soldiers, but there was one cohort composed of volunteers from Italy, and over a division of that there was the centurion Cornelius. He belonged to an illustrious clan which had given to the state some of its most distinguished men; but greater than the glory of Sulla and the Scipios, who had made the Cornelian family everywhere renowned, is that which is conferred on this centurion in ver. 2. 2. Cornelius was not a proselyte, for had he been Peter would have had no difficulty, and chap. xv. 14 is decisive against it. He belonged to that large class of thoughtful men who had become weary of the worthlessness of paganism. He had outgrown idolatry, and perhaps made himself familiar with the Septuagint, and certainly was convinced that God was the hearer of prayer. He might have become a proselyte, and possibly was contemplating

that step when he heard of Jesus, and being a genuine truth-seeker he determined to wait for light. This will enable us to understand the object of his fasting and prayer. There had come to him the inevitable question, "What wilt thou do with Jesus, that is called Christ?" and in his anxiety as to the answer he cried to God for light. And not in vain (vers. 3–6). 3. In response to the Divine direction he dispatched two of his servants and a soldier to Peter; but God had gone before them, and was even now preparing His servant for their appearance (vers. 9–16), who received a symbolic revelation of the fact that the restrictions of the Mosaic law were removed, and that the distinction between Jew and Gentile was abolished. It indicated that creation itself had been purified, and rendered clean for our use by the satisfaction of Christ. But Peter did not understand it so, but was helped by the message of the servants of Cornelius, and putting the two together he determined to go to Cæsarea. As a precaution he took six brethren with him. Convinced that some important event in the history of the Church was going to happen he desired to have Jewish witnesses: an action which shows that, in spite of his impulsiveness, he was not destitute of prudence. 4. On arriving Peter found a considerable assembly, and after a preliminary discussion and explanation delivered a sermon as remarkable as any recorded in the history. While he was speaking the Holy Ghost descended, which—(1) Certified the truth of Peter's words. (2) Proved to Peter and his companions the genuineness of the faith of these Gentile converts. (3) Indicated that those who received Him should be then and there admitted to the Church (chap. xi. 17). 5. This was the Pentecost of the Gentiles, and so Peter opened the door for their admission as the Lord had promised him. Thus the infant Church took a new departure, and entered on that world-wide mission in which it is still engaged. Learn then—I. THAT THE WAY TO GET LIGHT IS TO ACT UP TO WHAT WE HAVE, AND PRAY FOR MORE. Cornelius had not found Christ (chap. xi. 14), but he had found something, and "whereto he had attained he walked by that rule." This is a uniform method of God's procedure (Deut. iv. 29; Psa. cxii. 4; Matt. xxv. 29; John vii. 17; James i. 5, 6). F. W. Robertson stayed himself up with this principle during that dark wrestle with doubt in the Tyrol. Everything else went from him, but he could hold by this: "It is always right to do right"; and in the acting out of that he regained his hold of Christ. II. THAT IN ALL SPIRITUAL MATTERS WE SHOULD BE PROMPT. 1. Cornelius lost no time in sending for Peter; nay, after Peter came he took in all he said while he was speaking, and so received the Holy Ghost. Do, therefore, at once what is needed to secure your soul's welfare. When Pharaoh was asked by Moses when he should entreat the Lord, he said, "To-morrow!" and you marvel at his folly. You would have said, "The sooner the better"; but beware lest you condemn yourself. "To-day, if ye will hear His voice," &c. You need not send to Joppa, "The word is nigh thee" (Rom. x. 8, 9). 2. But the promptitude of Peter is quite as noteworthy (ver. 29), and we who have to deal with men about their souls should take a lesson. I once preached to an enormous audience in a circus. When I had finished I was quite prostrated, and while in that condition a man wished to speak with me about the way of life. I made an appointment for the next morning. But he never came. And I have written down that as one of the lost opportunities of my life, and its memory has been a spur to me ever since. "The King's business requires haste." Now—alike for preacher and hearer—is the accepted time. III. THAT PREACHERS AND HEARERS ARE PREPARED FOR EACH OTHER BY GOD. Cornelius is led in a peculiar manner to send, and Peter to go: when they come together the result is blessing. It is the same now. The preacher is led through a special spiritual history; he is guided to the choice of a particular subject, to treat it in a peculiar way, to preach it at some distant place. The hearer is brought through circumstances of trial perhaps; he is led on a certain day to a certain place of worship, how he knows not, but there he hears the message God sends for him. It seems as he listens that the preacher must know his past life, and so speaking to his circumstances he is blessed in his conversion. This is no uncommon history. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *The character and conversion of Cornelius*:—I. THE CHARACTER OF CORNELIUS. 1. He was a devout man, and one who feared God. His morality was not of that mean character, or dwarfish stature, or unhallowed allowance, which satisfied the scanty requirements of paganism and idolatry. He had reverence for the demands, he had zeal for the glory, he had impulse from the love of God. 2. He was a charitable man. To heal the sick, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, was his delightful employment. 3. He was a man of prayer. Here lay the great excellence of his character; here the grace which

sanctified every other, implanted by the Holy Spirit in his heart; and here the secret of that mercy of which he was made a partaker. His supplication was no transient, hasty homage of the lip or knee, but the settled habit of his mind, the unwearied uninterrupted practice of his life. 4. He was a man of family religion. II. THE COURSE OF DIVINE DEALING TOWARDS CORNELIUS. Lessons: 1. God is no respecter of persons. 2. What should be the character of ministerial labour and duty. (1) The more earnestly and faithfully a minister of religion labours, the more certainly will he find cause to know that the way of God is not as his way, nor the thoughts of God as his thoughts. (2) The more earnestly a minister is engaged in private prayer for himself, and for the success of the great cause of mercy and of man in which he is engaged, the more surely will he learn the mind of God, the more enlarged will be his views, the more certain his success in preaching the gospel. (*R. P. Buddicom, M.A.*) *Cornelius:*—We learn from the history—1. That it is possible to live a life of piety under unfavourable circumstances. 2. That goodness, wherever found, is noticed and remembered by God. 3. That God gives more light to him who is conscious of his need of it and who humbly seeks it. 4. That in order to impart this greater light the human ministry of the Word has been appointed. (*James Owen.*) *Cornelius:*—I. HE WAS A DEVOUT MAN. This takes him out of the ranks of those whose religion is not a religion of devotion. The religion of too many is a religion of fashion. They are expected to go to church, to pray and sing and hear while there, but they are glad when it is over, and that it will not have to be repeated for a week. As a devout man Cornelius was—1. Thoroughly in earnest. Earnestness alone will never take a man to heaven, but no one ever got there who was not in earnest. 2. Impressed with the majesty of God. He had realised something of the glorious character of Him with whom he had to do. Are you overshadowed by the august presence of the Most High? If not, you are not in the same category as Cornelius. II. HE FEARED GOD WITH ALL HIS HOUSE. He took an interest in the well-being of his subordinates. He did not regard himself as a mere ruler. Too many officers treat their men as mere automata, made to stand before them in a line and go through their evolutions like machines. Is it a matter of solicitude with us that our servants should feel the power of God's grace? How many ladies speak to their maids about their souls? III. HE GAVE MUCH ALMS TO THE PEOPLE. He was a man of large-hearted liberality. How many professing Christians would be startled if they asked the question faithfully, "What proportion of my income do I give to God?" Remember the generosity of the Pharisees, and our Lord's declaration, "Except your righteousness shall exceed," &c. IV. HE PRAYED TO GOD ALWAYS. How many are content with a few hurried moments of prayer, and think that a trouble. 1. He prayed for greater light. Many are perfectly satisfied with their attainments, or even with their non-attainments, and prefer darkness or twilight to light. 2. He prayed like a man who expected to receive the answer. Would anything surprise some of you more than if God were to answer your prayer? 3. When his prayer was partially answered, he took pains to secure the full blessing. V. WE HAVE SAID A GOOD DEAL IN CORNELIUS'S FAVOUR: Now what do you think of him? Some may say, That is an excellence I cannot hope to attain. Stop! Cornelius, with all his excellence, was AN UNSAVED MAN. Let me not be misunderstood. He had been faithful to the light he had, and if he had been called away he would have been judged according to that, and not by a standard that he was unacquainted with. Peter lays down this principle clearly in vers. 34, 35. But Cornelius was so far unsaved that if when the gospel reached him he had rejected it, he could not have escaped condemnation (see chap. xi. 14). You cannot save a man who is saved already. If so good a man could yet be a lost soul, what must be the case with many here? (*W. Hay Aitken, M.A.*) *Cornelius of Cæsarea:*—1. In religious biography "army Christians" have a recognised place and honour for simplicity and thoroughness. To the soldier the very conditions of his life render compromise an impossibility. In discipline, in the habit of obedience, in the self-restraint and self-effacement required of the true man in arms, are also to be found true elements in the education of the man of God. In Bible history, many of those whom we most admire were warriors—the simple Joshua, the lordly Gideon, the "Sweet Singer" David, the pious Josiah; and in what book is more praise given to worth than is given to faithful Ittai, grateful Naaman, "My servant Cyrus," the courteous Julius, and the nameless but immortal centurion of Capernaum? 2. When introduced to us, Cornelius is an officer of the Roman garrison stationed at Cæsarea, then the civil capital of Judæa. His name at once attracts attention. What the name of

Howard, or Russell, or Talbot is to English, or Douglas, or Gordon, or Stewart to Scottish history, that was the *gens Cornelia* to the City of the Seven Hills. A cadet of a noble house we may therefore conceive him to have been. The benign influence of *noblesse oblige* would be upon him and help to preserve a stainless name from stain. The regiment to which he was attached seems to have been one of special honour, and the position of an officer in it would be correspondingly eminent. Later on we encounter an officer of an "Augustan" cohort at Cæsarea, Julius, the courteous custodier of St. Paul. It is quite possible that Cornelius and Julius may have been officers of the same regiment, which would readily account for the kindly feeling which the latter manifested towards his prisoner. 3. As regards the piety of Cornelius the narrative speaks enthusiastically (ver. 2). This eulogy seems to describe a "proselyte of the gate." The more exclusive Jews made the "gate" to be as high and forbidding as possible, but the Hellenists gloried in the tribute paid by every inquirer to the spiritual supremacy of the prophets, and encouraged them to study the Scriptures and to attend the synagogues. So it came that there was, more or less loosely, connected with the synagogues in almost every great centre, a floating body of students of all shades of opinion, from those who were merely attracted by the simple and central principle of the unity of the Godhead, on to those who were on the threshold of circumcision. Among these it is strange if we cannot find room for one to whom the terms applied to proselytes are given, "devout," and "one that feared God"; who gave alms to Jews; observed the Jewish hours of prayer, and was manifestly familiar with the Jewish Scriptures. 4. The narrative at once lets us see that this man is thoroughly in earnest. He is one of those "violent" ones who take the kingdom of heaven "by force." We find him spending a whole day (ver. 30) in fasting and prayer. At the ninth hour (3 p.m.), the hour of evening prayer, the answer comes. He had heard about Jesus (ver. 37, "Ye know"); his mind, enlightened by Jewish prophecy, and unobscured by Jewish prejudice, saw neither "stumbling-block" nor "foolishness" in a suffering Saviour. The angelic visitor does not constitute himself the expounder of Divine truth; he only tells where such an expounder may be found. The miracle ceases, as it always does, at the earliest possible point. 5. There is a fitness in the Roman from Cæsarea seeking the Jew at Joppa. For Cæsarea was new-built and heathen; Joppa from time immemorial had been the port of Jerusalem, a town Jewish in all its history and relations, and associated with many of the most stirring events of Jewish history. It is still further fitting that the city of Jehovah should linger on, like the Jewish people, dejected but not destroyed, whilst that of Cæsar has ceased to be. 6. But meanwhile a preparatory work had to be accomplished in the mind of the prejudiced fisherman of Galilee. It is impossible for one who has not encountered it to gauge the mastering tyranny of religious caste. Our class distinctions exist in spite of religion, under its mollifying influence, and, when they pass beyond certain bounds, under its ban. But in caste religion adds its sanction to the distinctions, and stereotypes and stamps them as Divinely appointed, permanent and necessary. Caste had crept into the Jewish Church. The Jews, instead of regarding themselves as Heaven's instruments for the sake of others, had come to plume themselves on being Heaven's favourites for their own sake. The atmosphere of such a caste pride is like a spiritual sirocco, drying up the moisture of charity, and parching into an unbrotherly Pharisaism. In such an atmosphere St. Peter had been born and bred. Then he and the other disciples are called of Jesus Christ. For three or four years they are within the sweep of His liberalising love. Then comes Calvary, the Resurrection, and thereafter Pentecost. On that day Peter expounded the prophecy: "I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh." Surely the truth has now entered into him, and will never more leave room for caste. But no! It is in him still, living and strong, and He who "knows what is in man" has a feeling for His servant's infirmity, and provides that special symbolic teaching which he needs before he may dare to enter upon the work whereunto he is now called. 7. Thus prepared the apostle goes with the messengers of the centurion. And now the two are face to face. It is a strange meeting—the servant of Christ and the soldier of Cæsar. That Cornelius did not resent or recoil from such a teacher proves at once how truly religion had done its royal work within him. Two men more opposed as to race, birth, breeding, and habits, can scarcely be conceived; and it could not but be that there was much in the peasant calculated to rasp the Patrician, yet the soldier of Cæsar deems it no dishonour to bow the knee before the legate of Jehovah. 8. We need not trace the interview through its details. The significant fact—one of overwhelming importance in the development of the

idea of the Church—is that Cornelius and his household are received as Christians, not through the preliminary "gate" of circumcision, but directly through that of baptism. What the significance of that fact was it now concerns us to see. The infant Church was surrounded by dangers on all sides and far ahead. It had to face those which arose from the hostility of the world's governments and from the contact of Oriental theosophies. But its nearest, and deadliest danger arose from the Church from which itself sprung. Springing forth from the bosom of Judaism, the Christians were, at the outset, regarded as a Jewish sect, amenable to Jewish ecclesiastical law and discipline. They worshipped in the synagogues and in the temple. In this aspect the danger was that the hierarchy might crush them. This was a danger that could be measured. But the Church's friends were more to be feared than her foes. Those without might cruelly seek to destroy, but those within conscientiously sought to corrupt. Every Jew was brought up to believe that the Law was eternal in its minutest details, ceremonial and judicial. Other than Jews might enter the kingdom of God, but only by the entrance of circumcision. The majority of the Jewish Christians carefully dovetailed their conceptions of the Messiah into conformity with this fundamental requirement. The popular thought placed the law first; and the Messiah was to be gloried in as the magnifier of its scope and the extender of its authority. If we rightly understand this prejudice, so deeply bedded in the Jewish mind as to be with difficulty dragged out of the hearts of even apostles, we shall be in a position to understand the danger to the Church from the influx of Jewish converts. They came into the Church devoutly believing Jesus to be the Messiah; but they continued to believe that, first of all, He was a Jewish Messiah, and all the citizens of His kingdom must first become Jews. This was the position assumed by an active and aggressive party—"they of the circumcision," *i.e.*, "Judaizing Christians." The position taken up by the Church and by all the apostles, but most strongly by St. Paul, was antagonistic to this. The law was but a pedagogue to lead up to Christ; in all its ceremonial it was local and temporary, designed for a special purpose of preparation, which purpose was accomplished when the Saviour came; it was therefore no longer required. Here was the momentous issue, whether Christianity will shrink into a mere Jewish sect, or swell into the Catholic Church. When we consider the character of the danger, we cease to be surprised that Paul became a "chosen vessel" to bear the gospel to the Gentiles, free from all the demands of a ceremonial Judaism. Neither the training nor the temperament of St. Peter fitted him for the task; the cause was therefore taken out of his hands. In those of St. Paul it was safe. But let us not forget that the older and less qualified man was the instrument selected of God for the introduction of the first heathen into the Church. As was to be expected from the presence of such a party as I have described, his action was promptly challenged at Jerusalem. The defence was a simple narrative of facts. "What was I that I should withstand God?" The reply was satisfactory to the Church, and ought to have been final to all. But caste dies hard. 9. And so we have the noble Roman recognised as a member of the Visible Church. The baptism did not make him a Christian; it proclaimed a fact that already existed. God owned him first; man afterwards. (*G. M. Grant, B.D.*) *Cornelius; or, new departures in religion:*—Cornelius marks the beginning of a new epoch. Like the first flower of spring he is the sign and herald of the new forces at work changing the face of the whole earth. His history carries us to the final fighting-ground of the "decisive battle" between the narrow and fettering forces of Judaism and the catholic energies of Christianity. He stands at the head of Gentile Christianity, and is to Saul of Tarsus what John the Baptist was to Jesus Christ. Coming up out of the darkness of heathenism, he bursts upon the vision of the Church like a flash of unexpected light. No prophet announces his advent; no visible teacher prepares him for his work. He is outside the "churches," but in the kingdom. The building of the City of God offers room for the lowliest worker as well as demands the man of transcendent gifts. It welcomes the inconspicuous Ananias of Damascus not less than the famous pupil of Gamaliel, and advances to its perfection by the experience and toil of Cornelius, the Roman soldier, as well as by the practical wisdom of James, the chief pastor of the Christian flock in the holy city. Let each man, therefore, heed the light he now sees, do the duty that is next him, fill with unfaltering faithfulness his own sphere in the Divine will, and it is enough. God orders our way. If we know and do our own work all is well—its value, its near or far-off results, we cannot estimate. In some callings men easily assess their gains, and take their true place in a graded scale of

workers. We cannot. They know what they earn. We never do. Gold is easily counted; but where is the ledger account of new ideas disseminated, of spiritual renewals accomplished, of human justice and right established, of souls made true, and peaceful, and strong? Saul, unlikeliest of all the Jews to human seeming, will take up and advance the labours of the martyred Stephen; and Cornelius, unlikelier still, for he is not a Jew, will make the crooked straight and the rough places plain for the advent and ministry of the Apostle of the Gentiles. I. Approaching in this spirit of trust and hope and ardour, the study of Cornelius, as he appears in Luke's history, revealing the methods and movements of God in securing new departures in religion, we note first THAT CORNELIUS GATHERS INTO HIMSELF IN CO-OPERATING FULNESS THE CHIEF PROVIDENTIAL FORCES OF THE AGE, and so becomes the fitting instrument for incarnating and manifesting the remedial energy and wide range of the religion of the Saviour. The historian compels us to see that Cornelius is a Roman. The whole atmosphere is Roman! How, then, could he whose chief business it was to trace in his two Gospels the gradual growth of Christian work from Nazareth to Rome, pass by this first Christian Roman of them all, as he is led into the clear radiance of "the light of the world." Cornelius was not a proselyte. He is still within the circle of alienated heathendom, and yet by one step he passes into the school of Christ, and enters into living relations with Him, without being detained for a moment or a lesson in the training school of Moses. It is this which marks the crisis. Herein is the revolution. The germ of the Christian religion is planted in this uncircumcised, uninitiated Gentile, finds in his devout yearnings for God, loyalty to Christ, generous love of the needy, and beautiful largeness of soul, the appropriate conditions for rapid and sure development, and forthwith gives incontrovertible signs that though the planting may be Peter's, yet the increase belongs first to the germ itself, and has been secured, in the Divinely-prepared soil, by the operation of the Spirit of God. Religious particularism is in Him exposed, condemned, and cast out for evermore. God's great "universalities of love, provision, and ministry to souls" are manifest; Christianity has a new starting-point, and henceforth pursues a new line of progress. As a river it had entered into human history in Nazareth and Jerusalem, and had made its channels deep and wide; here in Cæsarea, at the borders of the non-elect world, it starts along a new course, cuts for itself wider and deeper channels, and makes everything to live whithersoever it comes. So the Judaism in which Christianity was born is left behind, and that transference of the religion of Jesus to the Latin world, by which it was to work as a regenerating leaven in the European races, is commenced. In Cornelius the centurion, the glorious gospel of the blessed God makes its auspicious start for the Great West. Now this, it must be remembered, is the first proof of the realisation of the world-purpose of God in the gift of revelation. "The universe," as Renan has said, "is incessantly in the pain of transformation," and goes towards its end with what he calls "a sure instinct," but with what we believe to be a Divinely-redeeming impulse; that end being the salvation of all men through a universal religion. The first fathers of the Hebrew faith caught a glimpse of that world-embracing aim, and the exile of Israel in Babylon lifted it on high, brought it into the life of the people, so cleansing their conceptions of God and man, and preparing them for their world-wide mission. Then the victories of Alexander the Great brought in their train the diffusion of the Greek language, Greek thought, and Greek culture, throughout the world. To these beneficent ministries were added the discovery of new routes to the East, the development of traffic, and the commingling of the different races of men; all to be perfected and crowned by the ascent to the summit of power of Roman Imperialism, and the shaping of the nations into that one political federation which became the basis for that universal civilisation which was the material condition for the reception and dissemination of a really universal religion. But for us, living in the midst of dreaded religious changes, the biography of Cornelius is not only an argument, but also a message of peace and hope. It bids us trust in the living God—the God who is a consuming fire, but whose fires only burn up the waste materials of old religions to make room for the building of the new and better edifice. The kingdom of truth and of redemption is His. He rules it, and all new departures in religion are under His sway. He prepares for its advances by processes out of sight, continues the succession of heroic souls, who free us from the tyranny of dead dogmas; who gather up the results of His manifold working in all the departments of life, scientific and social, political and religious, and who then, vitalising and unifying them all by the Spirit of Christ Jesus, lead the life of the world to

higher and heavenlier places. Lessing says: "The palace of Theology may seem to be in danger through the fire in its windows, but when we arrive and study the phenomenon we find it is but the after-glow from the west which is shining on the panes, really endangering nothing, but yet for a moment or two attracting all." Let us not fear. The God of Cornelius is the Father of Jesus Christ, and the Saviour of all men. II. Advancing to a further point in the record, it appears that GOD PERFECTS THE SPIRITUAL EDUCATION OF PETER BY CORNELIUS; in short, He finishes the work that was commenced on and in the chief apostle by John the Baptist and Jesus Christ, by the agency of a saint of paganism. Peter was a dull scholar, and required to be converted a good many times. It was a hard task to surrender his Jewish exclusiveness. All his traditions and preferences were against the sacrifice. He could not see the bearing, and did not admit the far-reaching applications of the truths he proclaimed. Thus the soldier comes to the aid of the seer. So the saint of heathendom goads into bold and aggressive action the disciple of Jesus Christ. Christianity advances through vision and service; through prophets on the heights of meditation and warriors confronted with crowds of foes in the valleys of evil. Some men require arousal. They see, but they stand still; they know, but they will not do. They linger shivering on the brink, waiting for the leadership of a more venturesome spirit. We need one another. The men of intelligence require the men of action; the press cannot dispense with the pulpit, nor the pulpit with the press: even apostles may learn from the humblest inquirers. The Reformation, prepared by Erasmus and the Humanists, waits for the moral fervour and splendid courage of Martin Luther. Peter, leader and apostle though he was, owes an unspeakable debt to the God-trained soldier of Cæsarea. III. TRUTH, LIKE A TORCH, THE MORE IT IS SHOOK IT SHINES. The new light in the house of Cornelius sends out its radiance to Jerusalem, arresting the attention and arousing the opposition of the fathers and brethren of the new Christian society. Peter appeared before the Church and told his simple tale. The appeal was victorious. God was understood and glorified, and the verdict was given by the Church with heartiness and praise, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life." Is not that the way God is working amongst us to-day? Is He not preparing a glorious future for the Churches by the work and experience of individuals here and there, in and out, of the Churches? Cornelius is a religious reformer. God puts into his experience the truths of His Gospels in their widest range, and thereby they are built into, and operate as part of, the working energies of the Christian system. The centurion himself, in the fulness of his spiritual gifts and achievements, demonstrates that God is not a respecter of persons and races, but of aims and faiths, of yearnings and character. The unit of the Christian theology is a Christian man; a man who has come to Jesus Christ as he was, with all God has done in him and for him, with all he has acquired, in intellect and character, at home and in contact with men; and has come through Jesus Christ to the possession of the ideas, motives, and powers of the Holy Spirit; and is by that Spirit made a new man. I adopt the language of Milton: "Now once again by all concurrence of signs, and by the general instinct of holy and devout men, God is decreeing some new and great period in this Church, even to the reforming of the Reformation itself." Let us be hopeful and patient. No knowledge can be a menace to the truth of Christ Jesus. It must glorify Him. The wise men will bring their gifts and lay them at the feet of Christ. A new Cornelius—now outside the Churches not unlikely—will God give to His children who, himself freighted with the rich results of the intellectual, social, and spiritual activity of the century, will force us into the presence of God, to hear what He Himself has commanded His Peters to say to us; and He will follow the preaching with such signs of salvation and power, that the Churches will gratefully say: "Then hath God granted unto the learned and scientific, and to the social outcast also repentance unto life." IV. Finally, the portrait of Cornelius, together with the glimpses we obtain of Peter, reveals THE MEN IN WHOM GOD PREFERABLY WORKS FOR THE TRUEST SPIRITUAL PROGRESS OF MEN. 1. Cornelius is a "devout man." He cultivates communion with God. Strong impulses urge him towards the higher significance of life, prepare his spirit for visions of the unseen world, and open his soul for the larger faith he avers, and the sublime inspirations he receives. 2. With this intense spiritual yearning he blends a wise management of his house, as if himself consciously under God's authority, and responsible for the well-being of those under him, so that some of his soldiers catch the infection of his devoutness, and his domestics share his solitude to hear God's messenger. 3. In

him also is seen the Roman love of rectitude and fair dealing. He is a "just man." 4. He has not taken advantage of his place to plunder, as too many others did. But he gave much alms to the people. His social sympathies were as strong as his religious. You cannot hope to take any helpful part in hastening the arrival of an era of purified and enlarged thought of God, of intenser love of God and men, of spiritual quickening and social regeneration, unless, conscious of your weakness and sin, you make it your business, whilst believing in Him "who is the propitiation for our sins," to walk in the light as He is in the light, and so to have fellowship with men and experience that continuous "cleansing from all sin" which is the pledge and guarantee of Divine adequacy for faithful and fruitful work. (*J. Clifford, D.D.*) *Cornelius, an example of piety*:—Here is one man who is a truth-seeker, and there is another who is a truth-teacher. One has what the other needs; but they are unknown to each other, and separated by a great chasm. How can they be brought together? God commissions an angel to appear to Cornelius, and to tell him to send Peter. God appears to Peter, and shows him that "nothing that He has made is common or unclean." The scholar and the teacher are soon face to face; and then, "while Peter spake, the Holy Ghost fell on those who heard the word." This incident shows that every step in the work of conversion is known and arranged by God. The text affords a beautiful illustration of—I. PERSONAL PIETY. "Cornelius was a devout man, and one that feared God." A devout man now is one that is devoted to the service and worship of God. This word seems originally, however, to have had the meaning of thoughtful, serious, and reverently inclined. Cornelius had not found "the pearl of great price," the "one thing needful," but he was an earnest seeker, prayerful, and, according to his light, sincerely pious. The Word of God—1. Points out the necessity of personal piety. It affirms first that "we have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God"; and then, "that without holiness, no man can see the Lord." Jesus said, "Except ye be converted," &c. 2. Explains the nature of personal piety—a change of heart that leads to a change of life. Godliness is Godlikeness—in thought, and spirit, and life: "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature," &c. It is possible to observe the outward forms of religion without experiencing its saving power, and to have a name to live, but to be dead. Knowledge, liberality, morality, prayer, cannot save us. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." II. DOMESTIC PIETY. "With all his house." We are not told how many members it contained, nor whether they were old or young; but we are told that they feared God. Cornelius not only renounced idolatry himself, but he taught his children to renounce it. If we want our children to give themselves to Christ, we must lead the way. Example is better than precept. Domestic piety adds very much—1. To the general comfort of the family circle. In the most orderly households there may be much to disturb the peace and try the temper, but where the home atmosphere is pervaded by a devout spirit, there will be a kindliness of speech and a tenderness of spirit that will lighten the burdens of life. 2. To the spiritual welfare of the family circle. The "curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked"; but "the Lord blesseth the habitation of the just." The poor man may not enjoy the dainties that are found on the rich man's table, or the pictures that adorn his walls; but "the blessing of the Lord it maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow thereto." Are we not more anxious about the mental culture and the social status of our children than about their spiritual growth? Do not our prayers pull one way and our lives another? III. PRACTICAL PIETY. "Who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway." It is not every servant that has a good word for his master. If there be any defect in a man's character, no one can detect it sooner than his servant. But Cornelius's servant says, "His master is a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nations of the Jews." 1. True piety manifests itself—(1) In generous deeds. This was not a speaking, but a shining religion. He sounded no trumpet, but his light streamed forth, like the light from a lighthouse, far over the troubled sea of life. True piety must report itself. Benevolence is one of the natural fruits of piety. "Pure religion and undefiled before God," &c. (2) In a prayerful spirit. This combination is very beautiful. Work and worship; profession and practice; grace and generosity. (*J. T. Woodhouse.*) *The character of Cornelius, the first Gentile convert to the faith of Christ*:—Although it seemed good to Almighty God, under the old dispensation, to separate for Himself a peculiar people, and to make Himself known to them in a wonderful manner, He gave frequent intimations that this knowledge should, in the fulness of time, be extended to the Gentiles also. In this

incident, in the conversion of Cornelius, we behold the rise of that mighty stream which has poured its healing waters over so large a portion of the civilised world, fulfilling in its course the prediction of the evangelical prophet: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined" (Isa. ix. 2). I. THE CHARACTER OF CORNELIUS. He is introduced in the text as a Roman soldier, a centurion, an officer of considerable rank and distinction, in the cohort or regiment called the Italian band, quartered at Cæsarea. He had been a heathen, but by the grace of God had been delivered from the vain and idolatrous worship of the gods of his own country to serve the true and living God. How, or in what way, this change had been effected, we know not with any certainty. It is not improbable that, in consequence of his residence in Judæa, the scriptures of the Old Testament had fallen in his way, and he had been led to study them in an unprejudiced and teachable spirit, and had become convinced that the gods of the heathen were no gods, and that the God of Israel He was the true and only God. He is introduced to us as "one that feared God with all his house." And such must ever be the result of an honest fear or reverence of God, drawn from the Word of God, and wrought by the Spirit of God. It is the "beginning of wisdom": it works in the mind of the individual to produce conviction. But conviction once produced, it stops not with the individual; it moves him to exert his influence for the benefit of others, and especially of those of his own household; and, if we are right in our conjecture that it was from the Holy Scriptures that the centurion had become acquainted with Israel's God, there can be little doubt that these same Scriptures would be employed by him as the means of instructing those about him. If you, like Cornelius, fear God, are you not afraid to neglect His Word? Let me urge it upon you to assemble your children and the members of your house once at least on every day, and read aloud some portion of that blessed Book, and then conclude with a few words of supplication. But it is stated of Cornelius, whose conduct suggests to us these remarks, that he "prayed to God alway." It may be, that whilst I have been urging on you once at least each day to gather your families together for a few minutes to read the Word of Life, you have been finding out excuses in your manifold engagements, and saying within yourselves, "It is impossible, it is utterly impossible: at such an hour I have to be at such a place, and at such and such a time to do such and such things: it is quite impossible." Listen to me, if it be really and truly impossible, God may possibly accept the excuses you have been framing. But here the question naturally arises, Had Cornelius, concerning whom it is recorded that "he prayed to God alway," no engagements? Had he, a Roman soldier, appointed to command at least a hundred men, and to communicate continually with the authorities at Rome concerning the conduct of the refractory Jews, at this time subjects to the emperor his master, had he nothing to do? Might he not easily have found excuses? But how, it may be inquired, could he, if thus fully occupied, how could he possibly pray to God alway? Listen to me whilst I endeavour to supply the answer. He feared God, felt reverently and gratefully His mercy in making Himself known to him; and he was afraid lest, if left an instant to himself, he might, at some time or other, relapse into his former state of idolatry and heathenism; and it was his aim, therefore, to live in a constant spirit of prayer, so that the fire might ever be burning on the altar of his heart: his very duties were so performed, and his mind so carefully regulated by continual meditation upon and intercourse with his heavenly Friend, that it was no exaggeration to say of him, "He prayed to God always." Cornelius was a soldier—a profession, generally but too hastily, supposed unfavourable to the growth of grace in the heart. Undoubtedly some callings seem, from their very nature, to afford larger opportunities of the means of grace and association with God's dear children than do others: but I should say, in general, that the state of all others the most unfavourable to vital godliness is a state of idleness and inactivity. God appoints us duties; and it is, I am thankful to be enabled to state from extensive personal experience and observation, quite possible diligently to attend to them, and yet sedulously to cultivate the paramount interests of the immortal soul; nay, more, so to perform things temporal that they may minister to the attainment of things eternal. In this view of the subject, let us stay a moment to see what the profession of Cornelius would teach him. First, then, his profession would teach one who prayed to God alway, faithfulness to his earthly sovereign, who had committed to him the overseership of that portion of the Roman empire; and thus such a one would be reminded of the fidelity and integrity which he owed to his heavenly

Master, to his own soul, and to the interests of those who formed his household. Next, his profession, the very life of which is vigilance, would suggest the need there is of continual watchfulness, lest "the adversary, who goeth about seeking whom he may devour," "should obtain an advantage over him." I will mention only one other lesson which he would learn, referred to in pointed terms by the apostle in 2 Tim. ii. 4: "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath called him to be a soldier." To sit loosely by all earthly matters. I might pursue the thought: and if you were each to tell me what are the occupations to which God has called you—whether you be one to whom God has committed the responsibility of wealth and influence; whether you be lawyer, physician, student, man of business, mechanic, handmaid, or domestic servant—it would not be difficult to make out before you how each particular department of your earthly calling might be made subservient to the growth of some spiritual grace, and to suggest the exercise of that blessed state of mind which possessed Cornelius, who "prayed to God alway." But the Roman soldier did not restrict himself to his privilege of prayer; neither was he watchful only, as became him. We are therefore in no respect surprised to find it written of him that he "gave much alms." He discovered a liberal disposition in relieving the distresses of the poor, as well as a peculiar fervour of mind towards God by the constancy and devoutness of his prayers. His benevolence and his piety were intimately connected, and they reflected a lustre upon each other. They who are always asking, and as constantly receiving, will not fail to be continually communicating. Other particulars are recorded of this most exemplary soldier which I can only cursorily glance at. In the thirtieth verse we read that it was "while fasting" that the "man in bright clothing stood before him"; in the twenty-second verse that he was a just man, and "of good report among all the nation of the Jews"; and this notwithstanding the hatred which they entertained towards the Romans, whose servant Cornelius was; so justly had he conducted himself, so "unspotted had he kept himself from the world," that God had given him favour in their sight, and he was well reported of "amongst all the nation of the Jews." How lovely and consistent is his character in the view of man! There is not a shade upon it to dim its lustre. II. THE REASONS WHEREFORE HE WAS SELECTED FROM THE HEATHEN WORLD AS THE FIRST CONVERT TO THE FAITH OF A CRUCIFIED REDEEMER. Some have thought it "vain for us to seek the reason wherefore he obtained this honourable preference," and have contented themselves with the reflection that "God distributes His favours as He pleases." This is indeed true: "He giveth not account of any of His matters" (Job xxxiii. 13); but I think a reason may be gathered from the history itself, viz., that "such was his amiable character before his extraordinary call, that he seemed less likely than many others to offend the prejudices of the Jews." I do not think this enough. I think the facts of the case supply a more probable and instructive reason. Something more was needed in the counsels of Jehovah than this bright and lengthened catalogue of gifts and graces. What! shall the man who is exemplifying in his daily walk and conversation an amount of excellence so near perfection that there is, perhaps, no merely human character in the New Testament which surpasses it—does he need to be "told words whereby he and all his house may be saved"? and shall there be no salvation for them without? It is even so. The Word which states the need informs us what it was which Cornelius needed, and which all have need to know as well as he. You will find it in the discourse addressed by Peter to Cornelius, and "his near kinsmen and near friends," whom his piety had called together upon the occasion. Speaking to them of "Jesus of Nazareth"—of Him "whom God anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power"—the apostle says, at the forty-third verse of the chapter whence our text is taken, "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." These were the words whereby he and all his house were to be saved: these were the "things" which "God" had "commanded" to be "heard." These were the fundamentals of the Christian dispensation. III. We must at this point seek to gather up from the entire subject SOME PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION, which may, by the gracious influence of the Holy Ghost that fell on all who heard the apostle's word, be blessed to us. And first, let those who, like Cornelius, are just, devout, prayerful, liberal, self-denying, and of good report among the people, let them know assuredly that they are sinners as Cornelius was, and have need to learn, if they have not yet learned, "words whereby they must be saved." All their virtues are inadequate to the blotting out one single sin. It must be confessed that the case

of the Roman soldier, whose character we have been considering, is a very strong one; but if the view which I have taken of it be correct, it would seem to have been selected in order to lay the axe to the root of all self-righteousness, of all regard to and dependence upon works as the ground of men's acceptance before God. But are there none, on the other hand, who profess to have laid hold upon Christ, to believe on Him, to depend on Him alone, who reject the merit of good works; are there none of these who are yet negligent to "adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things," in their tempers, in their moderation, in their freedom from selfishness? who possess but little of the energy and benevolence, the charitable, prayerful, estimable spirit of Cornelius? If such there are among ourselves, let them, let all of us, be stirred up by the example of the Roman convert to greater faithfulness and watchfulness and diligence and love. (*G. Spence, D.C.L.*) *Cornelius, a monument of the omnipotence of grace*:—A Gentile, a Roman, a soldier, a centurion: all barriers, one would think, to Divine grace; but it goes through them all. (*K. Gerok.*) *Cornelius the truth-seeker*:—I. THE SCRIPTURAL PORTRAITURE OF HIS CHARACTER. 1. He was devout; he reverenced the Supreme Being. This he might do as a sincere pagan; and in this the pious heathen of all lands may put to the blush the irreligious man in Christian lands. 2. He was God-fearing. His character was not built upon any mere materialistic philosophy that makes all virtue spring from self-interest. 3. His influence was felt throughout his household. A man's religion that does not affect his family is a very weak, sentimental thing, not worth the having. The religion of Cornelius made his very soldiers devout. 4. In him there was a happy blending of subjective piety and of objective goodness. (1) He "prayed"—not merely the instinctive prayer of nature, nor the sentimental prayer of the naturalist. His was the intelligent cry of a personal soul to a personal God. And that not in some moment of distress, as does the terrified atheist whose fear overmasters his creed; but "always"—habitually. Herein does Cornelius rebuke the prayerless man. (2) He "gave much alms"—not to his own kindred and friends alone, the limit of many a man's benevolence, but to the despised Jews. There are many whose religion is all breath and no bread. The prayer of faith and the gift of love, like the two wings of a bird, bear the heart's burden up to the bosom of the Infinite, and come back again like a white dove of peace, with a new blessing and a Divine strength. The alms of Cornelius had no merit in themselves; but, as an index of the heart's longing and aim, they were acceptable to God. 5. He was sincere—a word signifying without wax, and originally applied to pure honey. Applied to man it indicates the pure honey of honest desire and purpose without the wax of self-deception, prejudice, or pride. God loves a true, sincere man, though his head be enveloped in clouds of error and of doubt. 6. He was an honest seeker after truth. Paganism had not satisfied him; he wandered through the halls of philosophers, but the vision of truth came not to his weary eyes. With yearning of heart he had fled to Judaism, and in its clearer vision of God he had rejoiced; but even there he had not rested, for he felt that the revelation was not full. So he waited and longed for the completed vision as travellers on the mountains watch and wait for the rising of the sun. 7. He was susceptible and receptive. There is many a man, dissatisfied with old formulas and dogmas, calling himself truth-seeker and progressionist, who yet has in his heart no open door for truth. There are many, like Pilate, whose intellects cry, "What is truth?" but whose souls have no eye to perceive it, and no welcome for it. Cornelius cried for it, hailed it, and was therefore led on by the angel into the fair kingdom of truth, down to its deepest mysteries, up to its gleaming heights. II. GOD'S DEALINGS WITH HIM. 1. Cornelius was praying when he saw an angel, who said, "Cornelius, thy prayers and thine alms," &c. This was God's response to the prayer of that devout, sincere thinker, and everywhere God seeks the soul that seeks Him. 2. But the angel does not preach the gospel to Cornelius. No angel ever preached Christ since that first announcement of His advent. Man preaches to his brother man—the sinner saved, to the sinner lost. To Peter shall be given the distinguished honour of gathering in this first Gentile fruit to the Christian Church. But even he is not prepared for so great a mission, and it required a miracle to induce him to open the door for Gentiles to come in. Prejudice is an evil spirit not easily cast out of the human mind. Hardly yet is the entire Church free from its pernicious influence. Are there not high walls surrounding sections of the Church to-day, outside of which there is believed to be no salvation? Each in his own way the radical, the sceptic, the free-religionist, and the agnostic is alike the bigoted slave of prejudice. Let us heed this Divine rebuke of all unscriptural distinctions in Christ's kingdom. What is their basis? Wealth,

social position, colour, and nameless other foolish dividing lines. 3. While Peter hesitated, the messengers from Cornelius arrived, and Peter returned with them, yielded to the heavenly teaching, declaring, "Of a truth," &c. And preached Jesus; the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard, who were immediately received into the Church. III. THE GREAT LESSON concerning the sufficiency of moral excellence for the individual character, or of natural religion for the race. Let us be candid. 1. God does set a value upon moral excellence. Good works springing from right motives are good in His sight, and nothing is gained, but much is lost, when Christian teachers speak too disparagingly of moral virtues. Whether there be or be not a hereafter, it is far better to be moral than immoral. 2. True moral excellence is an important and hopeful foundation upon which to build. It is not a matter of surprise that men are alienated if they find themselves classed with criminals without a word of qualification. Let us, then, put a right estimate on moral character and good works. The misguided religionist says, "Good for nothing"; the moralist says, "Good for everything"; God says, "Good according to the spirit that prompts them." 3. It is important that this whole matter should be better understood. The imputation of teaching a religion that does not fully recognise the value of morality is a libel upon Christianity. The Christian religion alone contains an absolutely perfect system of morals, inseparably connected with its facts and doctrines. And wherever Christianity has been faithfully presented the highest type of character has been its unfailing fruit. And yet it is quite possible that the moral element is sometimes less emphasised than the spiritual. But the religion of Christ is not chargeable with such confusion of ideas, or failure in application of Christian ethics. It is not only a gospel of grace, but a gospel of character. It does recognise all that is good in man; but in seeking his highest development it bids him beware of trusting his own deceitful heart, and of seeking to build his character on the sandy foundation of self-righteousness. 4. But there is nothing in this narrative to prove that simple morality is all that a man needs to fit him for heaven, and that the religion of nature is all-sufficient. (1) Cornelius was no mere moralist; he placed no dependence on good works. He received the gospel under the influence of the first gospel sermon that he ever heard. (2) The history teaches us that even this man's character was not in its natural state sufficient, and could only find completeness in Christ. Were his condition and character all that could be desired, why did not God leave him as he was? This, then, is the prime thought that underlies this entire subject. There is no completeness of character, of happiness, or of life, apart from Christ. Grant that you are thoroughly moral, is it not better to be Christly too? What if in winter you say, "The air is crisp and bracing, the hearth-fire is cheerful; I want no better climate than this"? Will you shut yourself in when spring comes? (*C. H. Payne, D.D.*) *Family devotion*:—Sir Thomas Abney had been accustomed to have family prayer at a certain time. He was made Lord Mayor of London. His hour of family prayer being some time about the time of the banquet, he begged to be excused for a little, for he had an urgent engagement with a special friend. He then went and called his family together to meet with God in prayer. Do the same; if even a banquet should come down upon you, quit the table for the altar, and your guests for your God. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Cornelius, the truth-seeker*:—I. HIS CHARACTER. He was no mere moralist. 1. He acted up to the light he had, which the moralist does not. 2. His morality was only the outward proof of his devoutness. 3. He did not depend upon his good works, but sought something better. 4. He embraced Christ when revealed to him. 5. He impressed others with his devoutness. II. THE HEAVENLY INTEREST IN HIM. This shown by angels, who take active part in the work of human recovery. This interest is seen—1. In their minute acquaintance with our circumstances. Cornelius mentioned by name, and Peter, and the town, house, situation, host all indicated. 2. In their joy over repenting sinners. 3. In their ministry during the whole career of the heirs of salvation. Thus angels are our examples. III. HIS HUMAN GUIDE. Peter rather than the angel. 1. This is God's plan. Man and man only employed to prophesy, give Divine news, to be a vehicle of Christ's manifestation. 2. Salvation is a practical work. We need the living illustration of a human life. We need not only a teacher but a witness; one who can verify from experience. 3. It redounds more to the glory of God and Christianity. The greatness of the result is heightened by the feebleness of the instrument. 4. It confers honour upon and promotes unity among men. The most important work reserved for men. IV. THE OBSTACLES REMOVED OUT OF HIS WAY. There were great barriers of race, rank, culture, &c., but all were broken down

(*J. G. Hughes.*) *Cornelius, or grace operating beyond the pale of the visible Church:* —I. THE WORKINGS OF REDEMPTIVE PROVIDENCE ARE MANIFOLD AND COMPLEX. Paul is converted, and is being trained for his future work. Peter receives a vision intended to break down exclusiveness. Cornelius receives Divine instructions to send for the apostle. Each is done separately and miles apart. Yet Divine power and wisdom unite them, and bring out of them the subjection of the Roman empire to Christ and the creation of modern Europe. How much depended on these three men, strangers to each other! II. DIVINE GRACE OPERATES BEYOND THE PALE OF THE VISIBLE CHURCH. Cornelius a good man according to his light. Reverent and charitable, two indubitable marks of religion. Not a proselyte, but not counted common or unclean. Entered the kingdom of Christ without passing through the Jewish gate. Many like Cornelius at Rome and in Greece, and now in India, China, &c. III. THE LIMITS AND INSUFFICIENCY OF NATURAL RELIGION. The prayer and alms of Cornelius went up as a memorial to God; but these were not enough, or he would not have been bidden to send for Peter. But faithfulness to the light of nature led up to the Christian revelation. 1. A caution against latitudinarian indifference. There is no foundation for a belief in the sufficiency of natural light. 2. The breaking down of natural impediments to the progress of the gospel. "In every nation." 3. Here is the ground of hope for humanity. 4. Here is the essential character of the provisions of the gospel. "There is none other name," &c. (*Preacher's Monthly.*) *Cornelius: a model for volunteers*:—1. How often Roman officers are honourably mentioned in Scripture. "I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof," &c., was the humble language of one of them. "Truly this man was the Son of God!" cried another, as he witnessed the Crucifixion. How humane and prudent the chief captain who saved St. Paul from scourging and treachery; or the centurion who saved all the prisoners from execution at Melita, in order to secure the life of St. Paul! It says much for the discipline of the Roman army that men of such humanity and intelligence were promoted to places of authority, and partly accounts for the marvellous successes of that wonderful nation; while, again, it testifies to the power of Christianity, that men so much opposed to it should be induced to admire those in whom it was seen most conspicuously. Look now, however, at this centurion mentioned in the text. You, who have volunteered to buckle on the sword in defence of your country, may well contemplate the picture of this good soldier of Cæsar and of Christ. 2. Note his bravery. Some say that Christianity and bravery cannot co-exist. Nonsense! The Christian is the only brave man in existence. Ungodly men are the cowards! Why is it that so many never enter the house of God, or make a profession of religion? Because they are ashamed to be taunted with the title of saint or Christian. Not so, Cornelius. He was valiant as a soldier serving beneath the Roman eagles. He was brave, too, as he showed his anxiety to enlist under the banner of the Cross! 3. He was also religiously brave, for he is described as "a devout man, and one that feared God." He was at this period in a most interesting state of mind. He had come over from Rome a worshipper of false gods. While in Judæa, he appears to have become convinced that heathenism was wrong; and, in searching after truth, he was probably influenced by the proceedings of the devout among the Jews in Cæsarea. He also became "devout." How he reproves the careless talkers in Christian England, whose lips are often glib for the oath, and ready for the immoral jest! 4. The acorn contains the oak, and the hero may be often discovered in the recruit. It is beautiful to notice in the centurion the early germ which needed only the fuller light of the gospel to bring it into maturity. This "devout man" already "feared God." It would require more moral courage than many who have been enlisted under Christ's banner possess, to enable them to say, "I fear God." It is a noble testimony when a man can "put down" the scene of godless hilarity and the foolish jesting of the scoffer by any such noble confession. 5. And now observe a yet more eloquent proof of the reality of the work which was proceeding in that man's soul! Cornelius, if he had been a hypocrite, might have disguised the fact from his soldiers and from his neighbours; but he would hardly succeed with his household. What a testimony it is to this noble centurion, that he stood not alone in his family, while he avowed his creed in Jehovah as the Lord God of heaven and earth! "He feared God with all his house." It may be one great cause why we have so few specimens of thorough family religion that the consistency which adorned this centurion is not found in modern professors. 6. And there is yet another testimony to his sincerity. It is usual for officers to select their attendants and servants from amongst the soldiers of their regiment. Corne-

lius did so, and when he was bidden to send for Peter, to whom could he look for ambassador on so important an enterprise? Does it not tell a tale that he found no sort of difficulty? He could look at home and find persons whose character fitted them to go, ay, and in the ranks of his own men as well (ver. 7). 7. Notice further how excellently this truth-seeking man endeavoured to live according to his profession. He "gave much alms to the people." True religion is an active, living energy, which influences you in every one of your proceedings. It enforces acts of self-denial; and in this list of self-denying deeds is the act of almsgiving. 8. "Thy prayers" too! I can remember when it was considered a soldier-like act to swear lustily. Happily that day is over; but the day has not yet arrived when a prayerful soldier, or indeed a prayerful civilian, is not exposed occasionally to scorn and derision for his piety. Conclusion: You who have come forward so nobly, when your queen and country were imperilled, aim to rival the Roman in bravery, and see that you are not outdone by him in the heartiness of your piety, and in your confession of Christ. (*G. Venables, M.A.*) *A good man's conversion* (chap. x. 24):—I. GOD'S WORD TREATS ALL MEN AS NEEDING TO BE "SAVED." It is interesting to notice how the language changes as the story runs on. In his vision Cornelius is informed that Peter "shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do" (chap. x. 6). When the man comes to relate it to others, he quotes it thus, "Who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee" (chap. x. 32). But Simon declares that what he had been sent to do was to tell Cornelius words whereby he and all his house might be "saved" (chap. xi. 14). It becomes evident, therefore, that this centurion was as yet an unsaved man. And this is worth noticing, when we look at his character. 1. He was a thoroughly religious man (ver. 2). 2. He was prayerful. That is a great felicity which in the New Revision changes our tame expression into, "I was keeping the ninth hour of prayer in my house" (ver. 30). It is likely that Cornelius had family prayers regularly. 3. Twice, also, it is stated that he was liberal in benefactions. 4. He was a useful man. There comes out a fact which is in many respects more impressive because of its artless form. His servants and orderly were religious. It might be conjectured that Cornelius had had something to do with the training of these people. 5. He was of good reputation among his neighbours (ver. 22). What could any one need more? Yet God's inspired Word declares here that Cornelius was not "saved." II. GOD'S WORD GIVES US TO UNDERSTAND THAT ALL MEN CAN BE "SAVED." Simon Peter is dispatched on the errand of saving Cornelius. Just think, for a moment, of the disabilities of this man. If we should doubt anybody's chance, we should doubt his. 1. He was a heathen from Italy at the start. 2. He was a soldier. His daily life led him constantly to be in the barracks, and among the followers of a legion of loose homeless creatures whose lives were apt to be immoral. Still, we must be fair: there are four centurions mentioned in the New Testament, and each of them has left behind him a most creditable record. One of them Jesus commended for his remarkable faith (Matt. viii. 10). One of them bore witness to the divinity of the Lord Jesus on the Cross (Mark xv. 39). One of them was of much help and comfort to the Apostle Paul at what was very nearly the lowest point in his fortunes (Acts xxvii. 3). And this is the fourth one, and he certainly shows well. But war is a hard trade; piety in military life is pitifully like an alpine flower pushing up through the snow, and trying to blossom on a rock beside a glacier. And so it is the more beautiful when it succeeds in its pure purpose. 3. Cornelius was a government officer. That army of possession was in a sense political. It is natural always for the spirit of authority to generate arrogance; and true piety invariably demands humility and charity. As a matter of fact it is known now that Palestine in those days was a hot-bed of corruption; the Roman officers oppressed and fleeced the conquered inhabitants unmercifully. All this was against Cornelius: he was once a heathen, military, politician. But it is edifying to learn that even he could be "saved" (vers. 34, 35). III. GOD'S WORD PRESCRIBES THE CONDITIONS OF EVERY MAN'S BEING "SAVED." 1. The two conditions which Simon Peter lays down plainly are faith (chap. x. 43) and repentance (chap. xi. 18). There is a voluminousness in his argument that renders this quite clear. 2. It is of inestimable advantage for any teacher of the gospel that he should surrender all other dependences, and rely only on the pure gospel for the conversion of souls. It is manifestly of the highest moment that Simon Peter should have been intelligently informed, and now humbly possessed, of the doctrines of grace. We do not see how he could have made his speech and fulfilled his duty that day, if he had not felt precisely what the prophet Isaiah once said (Isa. l. 4). IV. GOD'S WORD SETTLES THE CONCLUSION THAT EVEN

A GOOD MAN, IF WITHOUT CHRIST, CANNOT BE "SAVED." 1. One may be aroused in conscience, and yet remain unsaved. Suppose Cornelius had been mortified, and wounded, and grown petulant, and so refused to obey the angel's command! 2. One may be diligent in religious routine, and yet remain unsaved. How exemplary this man appears to us now! 3. One may be virtuous in his life, and remain unsaved. Cornelius was "just" and "devout"; but he was yet "lacking." 4. One may be counted excellent, and yet remain unsaved. 5. One may even be instrumental in saving others, and yet remain unsaved. Cornelius needed the whole gospel still. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The conversion of the Gentiles*:—I. THERE ARE THREE DRAMATIC CHAPTERS IN THE BIBLE THAT STAND OUT WITH SPECIAL PROMINENCE AND SIGNIFICANCE. Take—1. Gen. i. How worlds are made, and light is parted, and arrangements are completed as if some stupendous event were about to transpire! Something is going to happen! The secret is revealed in these words, and God said, "Let us make man." 2. Matt. i. The first of Genesis turned into human history. There again you have that movement, urgency, and great rapidity. The reading of the genealogical record means something. The secret is revealed in the statement that Jesus was born to save His people from their sins. 3. Acts x. What movement, what dreaming and visioning and singular combination of events! Having read the first of Genesis and the first of Matthew, I feel that all these visions and trances must lead to something. What is it? The secret is revealed in these words, "God is no respecter of persons," &c. In all the three chapters, therefore, I find a result which explains the process and satisfies the imagination. II. WHAT UNCONSCIOUS PREPARATIONS ARE PROCEEDING IN LIFE! 1. We cannot tell what we do. No occasion ends in itself. We know not what a day may bring forth, but to-morrow will certainly bring forth the seed of to-day. Always know that you are being prepared for some Divine issue. Your coming to church to-day may be the making of you! The introduction to a friend this morning may change every aspect of your coming history! The grave you dug but yesterday may be the altar at which your first heart-prayer was uttered! 2. How wondrously Peter was prepared for this marvellous outcoming of Divine purpose. We read in the preceding chapter, last verse, that he "tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner." He has got so far on the road to the Gentiles. A Jew of Peter's temper who could lodge with a tanner may to-morrow go to convert a Gentile. God fixes lodgings. An ancient Rabbi said, "It is impossible that the world can do without tanners, but woe unto that man who is a tanner." The address is given—"whose house is by the seaside." The reason being that the Jews would not have tanneries in the towns. If a man married without telling his bride that he was a tanner, she could instantly demand release. The law which provided that the childless widow was to marry the brother of a deceased husband was set aside in the event of that brother being a tanner. You see, then, how stubborn were the prejudices against tanning, and yet we read as if it involved no extraordinary principle that Peter "tarried many days with one Simon a tanner." It means everything, there is a revolution in these words. This makes a breach in the wall, buttressed with the traditions of generations—a breach that will widen until the whole falls, and man everywhere hail man as brother! 3. The point to be observed is, how unconsciously men are being prepared for higher communications and wider services. God leads us on step by step. We do not jump to conclusions in Divine Providence. We go forward a step at a time, and we never know how far we have advanced until we come to the last step, and find that it is but a step. This is God's way. This is how He trains you, dear children, for the last step which we now call death. Now in this early morning of your life you do not want to die. But little by little, day by day, suffering by suffering, trial by trial, loss by loss, a time will come when even you will say, "I have a desire to depart." God deals thus gradually and gently with us. Sometimes His providences seem to be abrupt and even violent, but in reality they move along a gradation settled and adjusted by the tenderest love. Things that are impossible to you to-day will be the commonplaces of to-morrow. You do not speak to the farthest-off man at once; but you speak to the man who is next to you, and then to the one following, and so, a man at a time, you move on until the distance is traversed and he who was once far off has been brought nigh! Upon this daily and inevitable process rests your confidence that prejudice of the most stubborn kind shall be broken down, and one day we shall know that every land is home and every man is brother! III. WHAT MYSTERIOUS COMBINATIONS OF EXPERIENCES AND EVENTS ARE CONTINUALLY TAKING PLACE. 1. Cornelius saw in a vision an angel. Peter fell into a trance and heard a voice.

That is our daily life. We cannot be shut up within the four corners of a vulgar materialism. God has still over us the mysterious reign of dreams. Why wonder if dreams will come true, when dreams are true? You should have spoken to the angel, and said, "What is it, Lord?" You should even have contradicted the angel, and said, "Not so, Lord," and then further conversation would have ensued. Instead of that you continue to sleep, and in the morning ask if dreams come true! You had your chance and missed it. The night is full of crowds. In the infinite galleries of the night the angels walk, visiting the beloved of God. Dreams of your own causing are not the dreams we are now speaking about. Physical nightmare is one thing, spiritual vision is another. 2. But even apart from the ministry of the night we have in our day-dreams events sufficiently spiritually mysterious to inspire the religious imagination. "How strange," say we, "that it should have been so." "How remarkable that our letters should have crossed." "Why, at the very time I was doing this you must have been coming to me! How singular!" This is an irreligious way of talking about human history and Divine issues. I want to cleanse my life of all mere accidents, and to feel that my down-sitting and my up-rising, and my out-going, my in-coming are matters of importance in heaven—that the very hairs of my head are all numbered! Why do we be-little our experience and deplete it of everything that could give nobility, and enlargement, and apocalypse to our highest nature? Rather be it mine to say the vision was from heaven, and an angel spake to me, than to vulgarise the universe and to find in it nothing that I cannot mark with plain figures. IV. HERE WE HAVE A HIGHER LAW SWALLOWING UP A LOWER ONE—"God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean." It requires God to show that to some men. This is nothing short of a Divine revelation—to see the man within the creature. I see the poor clothing, the unkempt body—there is something behind! I see the roughness, rudeness—there is something behind. A man! Said the murmuring multitude respecting Zacchæus, "Christ hath gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." But Jesus called the sinner "a son of Abraham." Lord, open our eyes that we may see one another! Christianity has come to eat up and absorb all our little laws and to set us under a nobler legislation. Said Christ, "Who is My mother, and who are My brethren?" And turning to His disciples, He said, "Whosoever doeth the will of My Father that is in heaven, the same is My mother, and sister, and brother." We are under the foolish notion that a man is a brother because we were born of the same mother. Nothing of the kind. There may be no greater stranger in the universe than the one born of the same mother. They are brothers who are one in soul, one in conviction, one in hope! (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The providential guidance of the Church*:—The conversion of the Gentiles was no new idea to Jews or Christians, but it had been universally regarded as to take place by their reception into Judaism. A gospel of the uncircumcision however soon began to be recognised by some. Stephen, carrying out the principles of his own apology, could hardly fail to recognise it, and the Cyprian and Cyrenean missionaries of chap. xi. 20 preached the Word to pure heathen certainly before the conversion of Cornelius. This state of things might have given rise to a permanent schism in the Church. The Hellenists, and perhaps Saul, with his definite mission to the Gentiles, might have formed one party, and the Hebrews, with Peter at their head, the other. But as Neander observes: The pernicious influence with which from the first the self-seeking and one-sided prejudices of human nature threatened the Divine work was counteracted by the superior influence of the Holy Spirit, which did not allow the differences of men to reach such a point of antagonism, but enabled them to retain unity in variety. We recognise the preventing wisdom of God—which, while giving scope to the free agency of man, knows how to interpose His immediate revelation just at the moment when it is requisite for the success of the Divine work—by noticing that when the apostles needed this wider development of their Christian knowledge for the exercise of their vocation, and when the lack of it would have been exceedingly detrimental, at that very moment, by a remarkable coincidence of inward revelation with a chain of outward circumstances, the illumination hitherto wanting was imparted. (*Dean Alford.*) *The supernatural preparation*:—This consisted in a miraculous communication—I. To CORNELIUS. It required a special Divine interposition to prepare in the Gentile world an audience for a gospel sermon, and one occurred in the case of this heathen soldier. An angel—1. Visited him. (1) The form was human. Painters and poets give angels wings, the Bible does not. (2) The appearance was appalling. The sentimental may talk about the beauty of

angels, but to the sinner their manifestation is always connected with terror. 2. Encouraged him (ver. 4). (1) Genuine goodness includes piety and philanthropy. (2) The virtues of good men are recognised in heaven. What more encouraging than this? 3. Directed him (ver. 5). Why not tell him what to do thyself, angelic spirit? Because the gospel is to be preached by men, not angels. The supernatural communication answers the end. Cornelius is prompt to obey. What Abraham is to Jewish saints, Cornelius is to the Gentile Christians—the first called out miraculously by God, the moral father of the great family. The preparation of the heart for the reception of the gospel is a work of the Lord. When the Great Husbandman prepares the soil the seed will germinate. II. To PETER. Observe —1. His circumstances. (1) His spiritual exercise. He had just been employed in prayer. He who would see heaven opened must pray. (2) His physical state —hungry. Both soul and body therefore were craving, the one for communications from God, the other for food. (3) His mental state—in a trance, a state of utter abstraction from all external objects. Then the vision came. There was a natural connection between his hunger and the creatures he saw. In God's revelations the human often plays a conspicuous part. The vision was symbolic. The vessel may denote the human creation containing Jews and Gentiles: its descent from heaven the equal Divine origin of both; the command to kill and eat the advent of a dispensation to annul all that was ceremonial and narrow in Judaism. The vision teaches—(*a*) The Divine origin of the race. "All let down" from heaven. Every birth is a Divine emanation. There is nothing new but souls. (*b*) The great diversities of the race. "All manner," &c. Great are the distinctions among men—physical, mental, and moral; yet all from heaven. (*c*) The ceremonialisms which divide the race. They are to be killed by the apostles of Christianity. 2. His strong antagonism to the purpose of this wonderful vision (ver. 14). The fact that the vision occurred thrice plainly indicated how potent his religious antipathies were. 3. The providential agency by which this antagonism was removed. While Peter was in doubt, just at that point the centurion's emissaries came. If our doubt is honest, as was Peter's, Providence will send an interpreter. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. **Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.**—*Prayers and alms*:—I. THE CONJUNCTION OF ALMS-DEEDS WITH PRAYER. Cornelius joined them, and he is therefore commended for "a devout man and one that feared God," and God graciously accepted them. Therefore our Saviour (Matt. vi. 1–5) joins the precepts of alms and prayer together. It was also the ordinance of the Church in the apostles' times, that the first day of the week, which was the time of public prayer, should be the time also of alms (1 Cor. xvi. 1). Which institution seems to be derived from the commandment of God in the law twice repeated (Exod. xxiii. 15; Deut. xvi. 16). The Primitive Church after the apostles followed the same precedent, and our own Reformed Church asks God "to accept our alms, and receive our prayers." II. THE POWER AND EFFICACY WHICH PRAYER AND ALMS HAVE WITH GOD. God is said to remember our prayers when He grants them, our alms and good deeds when He rewards them, or, in a word, when He answers either of them with a blessing; as on the contrary He is said to remember iniquity when He sends some judgment for it (1 Sam. i. 19; Neh. v. 19). 1. Prayer. What is it that prayer hath not obtained? It hath shut and opened heaven and made the sun and moon to stand still. It is the key that openeth all God's treasures. For spiritual blessings, Cornelius we see obtained thereby illumination and instruction in God's saving truth (see James i. 5; Jer. xxxi. 18–20; Psa. xxxii. 5, 6). Prayer also obtaineth corporal blessings. When heaven was shut and it rained not, Elijah prayed for rain, and it rained. Hannah prayed for a son, and she conceived. If we be sick, "the prayer of faith shall heal the sick." Nehemiah prayed that he might find favour in the sight of King Artaxerxes (Neh. i. 11), and found it (ii. 4). But some man will say, If prayer have such power and efficacy, how comes it to pass that many even godly men oft pray and yet speed not? I answer—(1) We pray not as we ought, either—(*a*) We pray not heartily or constantly (Luke xviii. 1). (*b*) We rely not upon God (James i. 6). (*c*) We make not God's glory the end of what we ask (James iv. 3). (*d*) We may ask something that crosseth the rule of Divine providence and justice. (2) We are indisposed for God to grant our request. (*a*) When some sin unrepented of lies at the door and keeps God's blessing out (Psa. l. 16; Prov. xxviii. 9; Jos. vii. 10–12). Or—(*b*) We appear before the Lord empty; we do not as Cornelius did, send up prayers and alms together; we should

have two strings to our bow when we have but one. For how can we look that God should hear us in our need, when we turn away our face from our brother in his need? (3) Add to all these reasons of displeasure a reason of favour, because we ask that which He knows would be hurtful for us. As, therefore, a wife and loving father will not give his child a knife or some other hurtful thing, though it cries never so much unto him for it: so does God deal with His children. (4) Moreover, we must know and believe that God often hears our prayers when we think he doth not. (*a*) When He changes the means, but brings the end we desire another way to pass (2 Cor. xii. 7–9). (*b*) When He defers it till some other time when He thinks best (Dan. ix. 1; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 22; Rev. vi. 10, 11). (*c*) When He gives us instead thereof something which is as good or better. 2. Alms. Not thy prayer only, saith the angel, but thine alms also are come up for a remembrance. For alms is a kind of prayer, namely, a visible one, and such an one as prevails as strongly with God for a blessing as any other (Psa. xli. 1–3; Prov. xix. 17, xxviii. 27, xi. 25; Eccles. xi. 1). These are for corporal blessings, and of this life. But hear also for spiritual blessings, and those of the life to come (Psa. cxii. 9; Luke xvi. 9; 1 Tim. vi. 17; Matt. xxv. 34, 35). III. THE REASONS WHY GOD REQUIRES THEM, AND WHY THEY ARE SO PLEASING UNTO HIM: which reasons when they are known, will be also strong motives. 1. Prayer. The reasons why God requires this are these—(1) That we might acknowledge the property He hath in the gifts He bestows upon us: otherwise we would forget in what tenure we hold them. (2) That we might be acquainted with God (Job xxii. 21). Now acquaintance we know grows amongst men by conversing together. So by accustoming to speak to God in prayer we grow acquainted with Him. (3) That our hearts may be kept in order. For to come often into the presence of God breeds an holy awe, and makes us to call our sins to remembrance with sorrow. Men are afraid to offend those into whose presence they must often come to ask and sue for favours; and if they have offended, the first thing they do will be to sue for pardon. 2. Alms. We are to offer alms—(1) To testify our acknowledgment of whom we received and of whom we hold what we have. For as by prayer we ask God's creatures before we can enjoy them; so when we have them there is another homage due for them, namely, of thanksgiving, without which the use of the creature which God gives us is unclean and unlawful to us (1 Tim. iv. 4). Now our thanksgiving to God must express itself in work and deed; that is, we must yield Him a rent and tribute of what we enjoy by His favour and blessing; which if we do not, we lose our tenure. This rent is twofold: either that which is offered unto God for the maintenance of His worship and ministers; or that which is given for the relief of the poor, the orphan, and the widow, which is called alms. (2) That we might not forget God (Matt. vi. 19, 20; Luke xii. 33). The proper evil of abundance is to forget God and our dependence upon Him, the remedy whereof most genuine and natural is to pay Him a rent of what we have. (*J. Mede.*) *Prayer and almsgiving:*—I. PRAYER. 1. Its nature—the ascent of the mind to God. When the soul lays aside the thoughts of all things else and converses only with God, then it prays. (1) When we speak to so glorious a Majesty we ought to begin by confessing our unworthiness (Ezra ix. 6–9; Psa. li. 1–5; Dan. ix. 3–5). (2) And as we are to confess our sins so we are to beg for mercy. (3) And as we must desire of God what we want, so must we praise Him for what we have (Psa. cvii. 8). 2. The reasons why it is acceptable to God. (1) In praying we come as near as we can to the principal end of our creation, which was to enjoy communion with God. (2) Hereby we acknowledge His supremacy over and propriety in the world, by paying daily homage and tribute of thanks. (3) Especially we give Him the glory due to His Name which is the ultimate end of His, and ought to be of all our actions (Psa. l. 23, xxiv. 1). 3. How to perform it acceptably. (1) You must know that it is a duty of that weight and moment that it is not to be undertaken without due preparation beforehand. (*a*) Lay aside all earthly thoughts. (*b*) Bethink yourselves of the mercies for which you should pray and those for which you should give thanks. (*c*) Get your hearts possessed with a sense of God's transcendent excellency. (2) Having thus prepared yourselves set upon the work itself: and while praying—(*a*) Remember what you are doing and carry yourselves with that reverence which becomes sinful creatures (Heb. xii. 28, 29). (*b*) Be sure to observe the wise man's counsel (Eccles. v. 2; Isa. lxvi. 1; Gen. xviii. 27–32). (*c*) Have a great care to keep your thoughts and affections together (1 Cor. xiv. 15). (*d*) Pray in faith, desiring nothing but in the name of Christ (John xvi. 23). (3) After prayer—that it may be accepted and answered—

(*a*) Recollect yourselves and consider the sins you have confessed that you may avoid them, and what mercies you have begged that you may expect them (Mark xi. 24; James i. 5, 6). (*b*) Trust in Christ for the acceptance and answer of your prayers (Mark xi. 24). 4. Its advantages. (1) Such solemn addresses to the Most High will refine and enlarge your conceptions of Him, and so you will be more and more acquainted with Him, and in and through Christ ingratiate yourselves with Him (Job xxii. 21). (2) This will also be an excellent means to keep our hearts in a continual awe of Him. (3) This is the most powerful way to prevent all evil and secure all good. If we lack wisdom, by prayer we may get it (James i. 5). If we be sick, by prayer we may be recovered (James v. 15). If our sins be many and great, by prayer they may be pardoned (Psa. xxxii. 5, 6). If our graces be weak, by prayer they may be strengthened (2 Cor. xii. 8, 9). II. ALMSGIVING. 1. The nature of this duty—the supplying of others' necessities to the utmost of our power whatever they may be—feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, relieving the afflicted, being kind and liberal to all. 2. Its reasonableness. (1) God, as He is the Maker, so is He the Owner of all things, and therefore we can have nothing but what we receive from Him. He is the Landlord, you His tenant, and He requires you to pay Him rent to be employed in His immediate service, or else for the relief of His poorer servants (Matt. xxvi. 11). (2) He has imposed this duty to make you always mindful of your obligations to Him. A confluence of earthly enjoyments is apt to make us forget Him (Hos. xiii. 6; Deut. xxxii. 15–18). Hence Agur feared riches (Prov. xxx. 8, 9). (3) God requires this duty because this is the means whereby He has provided for persons who are destitute of other maintenance (Mal. iii. 8; Prov. iii. 27). Seeing, therefore, God has strictly required this duty, and there being such reasons for it, it cannot but be acceptable to Him, and its neglect displeasing. What we do to the poor He regards as done to Himself (Matt. xxv. 40–45; Prov. xiv. 31). 3. The manner in which it is to be performed. (1) Purely out of obedience to God, for His sake who first gave. (2) Universally—to every one in need, *i.e.*, not to our own friends only, nor only when we are in a good humour, or applied to, or likely to get credit. (3) Not reluctantly (Deut. xv. 10; 2 Cor. ix. 7; Rom. xii. 8; Acts xx. 35). (4) Proportionably to what God has given us (1 Cor. xvi. 2). (5) Sincerely, and not to gain applause. III. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE TWO. Both went up to heaven together. There can be no true piety towards God that is not accompanied with charity towards our neighbour. This applies to all acts of piety. No man can fear, honour, obey, or trust in God who is not kind to his brother. As for its principal act—prayer—the teaching of Scripture is plain that it will not be accepted if severed from alms. Hence Christ joins the two (Matt. vi. 1–6), and Paul (1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2), and Moses (Exod. xxiii. 15; Deut. xvi. 16, 17). (*Bp. Beveridge.*) *Praying and almsgiving*:—1. Alms are the correlative of prayers, branches from a common stem—the moral law, which enjoins love to God and love to man. The man who really prays fulfils the first branch; the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man, such as was Cornelius, is the expression of man's duty to God. It is called "incense" partly from its reaching the Throne of Grace, as incense soars to the sky; partly from its spiritual fragrance and acceptability. And the man who acts in the true spirit of almsgiving equally fulfils the second branch. The act passes further than our neighbour; it comes before God as a memorial and finds also in the fragrant, soaring incense its Scriptural emblem (Phil. iv. 18). 2. Thus prayer and almsgiving are co-ordinate, which alone lends a value to the latter. We have been suspicious of it as though we heard a legal ring instead of genuine gospel coin, a means of justification by the law, instead of faith in Christ. But almsgiving need be no more a work of human merit than prayer. Neither can justify the sinner; that is the prerogative of Christ's atonement. But both "come up for a memorial before God" when offered in faith, even in such imperfect faith as that of Cornelius. 3. But as it is not every so-called prayer, so it is not every alms of which this can be predicated. In both the act has become detached from the spirit which alone can render it acceptable. Prayer is *performed* merely because conscience or the usages of society exact it. And alms are extorted reluctantly with the feeling that any petition for them is an importunity of which we would willingly be rid. In such cases neither are acceptable. 4. If either is to come up as a memorial before God it must be offered not on a casual impulse, the mere inspiration of a happy moment, but on principle. As regards prayer this is acknowledged. No one thinks he has acquitted himself of his duty unless he has prayed systematically. No one could

satisfy his conscience by lifting up his heart to God only when he found himself in a happy frame. For—(1) The duty which is left to a convenient season is sure to find no season convenient: he who is apt to defer sailing till wind, weather, and tide are all in his favour is apt to end in not sailing at all. (2) Prayer is not simply the duty of the individual soul, but an act of homage to God: thus they must be offered systematically. All this is conceded as regards prayer, but as regards almsgiving how different the view generally taken. Instead of recognising a certain proportion of his income as being due to God, the modern Christian abandons himself for the most part to appeals, and helps those objects only when his sympathies are stirred. A charity sermon awakens a kindly interest, or there are cases of distress personally known, and he responds without the slightest idea of the proportion his alms bear to his resources. 5. Modern almsgiving being thus for the most part the result of impulse rather than principle, has adjusted itself to the sentiments of the majority. Money must be had for benevolence; and as it is not to be had upon principle, it must be had by an appeal to sensibilities, or even by more questionable methods. Inducements to give are held out by the showy oratory of the public meeting, the little dissipation of the bazaar, or the luxury of the public dinner. The least objectionable form is the charity sermon. But even this is not the true way. If the standard of Christian sentiment and practice at all resemble that of early days this would be unnecessary (1 Cor. xvi. 1). The Primitive Church acted on this precept, and a trace of their practice is found in that office of the Holy Communion called the offertory. In the course of the liturgy, or service of communion, offerings of money, food, or clothing, were made by the congregation, which went to the poor, the bishop, the fabric of the church, and the subordinate clergy respectively. Chrysostom tell us that the Christians never entered church without giving alms; so deeply were the minds of our fathers imbued with the connection between alms and prayer. Now without enforcing the same form we may surely say that the methodical principle is as binding as ever. 6. All that is necessary in order to this is a little time, trouble, and moral courage. Let us settle what proportion of our income is due to works of piety or charity. The proportion will vary as it is subtracted from a very narrow income or a very large one; but that being settled, all that follows may be done with a small expenditure of time. A private account is opened showing on the one side all our receipts and on the other our charitable expenditure. This is examined periodically, and should it appear that the expenditure comes up to the proportion we have determined upon, well and good; should it exceed (a rare occurrence) the excess may be balanced by retrenchment; should it fall short it should be made a point of conscience to make it up at once. If every one would act thus the resources of deserving charities would never fail. 7. But benefits of a much higher kind would accrue to the giver. It would greatly contribute to that peace of mind which is so essential an element of spiritual progress. And again the very satisfactoriness of the process would lead to a further advance in the same direction. He who has conscientiously given one-twentieth this year may be urged to give one-tenth next. The appetite for Christian liberality will grow when it is healthily indulged instead of being morbidly stimulated. And that wretched feeling that every fresh appeal is an exaction would cease. 8. The offerings made to God out of this treasury, if made with faith in His name are represented as memorials of us in heaven. The beautiful act of the woman in Simon's house was rewarded in a similar manner. Do you desire that your name should be known in heaven? Aspire with devout prayers and seek Christ with devout sympathies in His representatives. Multiply acts of faith and love, and these will keep alive remembrance of you in the heavenly court, where no remembrance is without a requital. Cornelius was recompensed by the visit of an angel and an apostle, the glad tidings, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. (*Dean Goulburn*). *Giving as an act of worship*:—I. WHAT IS WORSHIP? 1. It will be a sufficient answer to say that love, faith, and obedience are the graces chiefly exercised. We cannot worship whom we do not love, in whom we do not believe, or whom we refuse to obey. All these graces are implied in praise, thanksgiving, confession, supplication, and intercession, and where they exist we have all the essential conditions of acceptable worship. 2. But external acts are required as well as internal conditions. Under the Old Testament the offering of sacrifices, &c.; under the New, the sacraments together with such other forms as may be expressive of this required inward state. 3. That we may not hide our light under a bushel—that we may give tangible form to our love, faith, and obedience; that

God may be publicly glorified, and that those about us may be benefited, we are required to worship Him in the use of external and visible forms. II. ARE THESE ESSENTIAL CONDITIONS OF WORSHIP EVER FOUND IN ALMSGIVING? Giving is a most natural expression of these graces. They are implied in the word "memorial"—that which brings to remembrance (Lev. ii. 2–16). The same Greek word in the Septuagint. Observe: All giving is not worship. If it is not unto God, if done grudgingly, if done with low conceptions of the duty, it may be offensive. III. ADVANTAGES OF GIVING AS AN ACT OF WORSHIP. 1. It lifts the whole department of Christian duty to a higher plane. It removes it from the region of beggary. It no longer treats God as if He was some Lazarus seeking the crumbs that otherwise we would give to the dogs. 2. It makes giving a joyous service. 3. It makes giving a means of grace. (*W. F. Beatty, D.D.*) *Giving and praying*:—The venerable Father Sewall, of Maine, once entered a meeting in behalf of foreign missions, just as the collectors of the contributions were resuming their seats. The chairman of the meeting requested him to lead in prayer. The old gentleman stood, hesitatingly, as if he had not heard the request. It was repeated in a louder voice; but there was no response. It was observed, however, that Mr. Sewall was fumbling in his pockets, and presently he produced a piece of money, which he deposited in the contribution-box. The chairman, thinking he had not been understood, said loudly, "I didn't ask you to give, Father Sewall; I asked you to pray." "Oh, yes," he replied, "I heard you, but I can't pray till I have given something." (*N. T. Anecdotes.*) *Devotion and beneficence*:—A coloured Presbyterian deacon was in the habit of shutting his eyes, while he sang with great unction, "Fly abroad, thou mighty gospel!" and not seeing the contribution-plate. "Oh, yes!" said the plate-bearer; "but you just give something to make it fly." *Prayer and gifts*:—A poor man who had a large family gave them a very comfortable support while he was in health. He broke his leg, and was laid up for some weeks. As he would be for some time destitute of the means of grace, it was proposed to hold a prayer-meeting at his house. The meeting was led by Deacon Brown. A loud knock at the door interrupted the service. A tall, lank, blue-frocked youngster stood at the door with an ox-goad in his hand, and asked to see Deacon Brown. "Father could not attend this meeting," he said; "but he sent his prayers, and they are out in the cart." They were brought in, in the shape of potatoes, beef, pork, and corn. The meeting broke up without the benediction. Nor did the poor fellow suffer during his whole confinement. The substantial prayers of the donors became means of grace." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The best almsgiving*:—S. Carlo Borromeo, the great patron of idle almsgiving, came hither (the palace and church buildings of Caprarolo) to see it when it was completed, and complained that so much money had not been given to the poor instead. "I have let them have it all little by little," said Alessandro Farnese, "but I have made them earn it by the sweat of their brows." (*A. J. C. Hare.*) *Beneficence, Godlike*:—Men resemble the gods in nothing so much as in doing good. (*Cicero.*) *Beneficence known to God*:—A poor Irishwoman went to a venerable priest in Boston, and asked him to forward to Ireland her help for the famine sufferers. "How much can you spare?" asked the priest. "I have a hundred dollars saved," she said, "and I can spare that." The priest reasoned with her, saying that her gift was too great for her means, but she was firm in her purpose. It would do her good to know that she had helped; she could rest happier thinking of the poor families she had saved from hunger and death. The priest received her money with moistened eyes. "Now, what is your name?" he asked, "that I may have it published." "My name?" said the brave soul, counting over her money; "don't mind that, sir. Just send them the help—and God will know my name." *Beneficence recompensed by God*:—A poor man came one day to Michael Feneberg, the pastor of Seeg, in Bavaria, and begged three crowns, that he might finish his journey. It was all that Feneberg had; but as he besought him earnestly in the name of Jesus, in the name of Jesus he gave it. Immediately afterwards he found himself in great outward need, and seeing no way of relief, he prayed, "Lord, I lent Thee three crowns; Thou hast not yet returned them, and Thou knowest how I need them. Lord, I pray Thee give them back." The same day brought a messenger with a money-letter, which Gossner, his assistant, reached over to him, saying, "Here, father, is what you expended." It contained two hundred thalers, or about one hundred and fifty dollars, which the poor traveller had begged from a rich man for the vicar; and the childlike old man, in joyful amazement, cried out, "Ah, Lord, one dare ask nothing of Thee, for straightway

Thou makest one feel so much ashamed." (*H. T. Williams.*) *Beneficence, a Christian obligation:*—As the moon doth show her light to the world which she receiveth from the sun; so we ought to bestow the benefits received of God to the profit of our neighbour. (*Cawdray.*)

Vers. 9–16. **On the morrow . . . Peter went up upon the housetop to pray.**—*Retirement necessary for prayer:*—Have you noticed that if all day long there is not a knock at the door, there will be one if you retire to pray? It is wise to do as the Saviour says, "Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut to the door, pray to thy Father that seeth in secret." That shutting of the door means that we are to seek secrecy, and to prevent interruption. A little boy, who was accustomed to spend a time every day in prayer, went up into a hayloft, and when he climbed into the hayloft he always pulled the ladder up after him. Some one asked him why he did so. He answered, "As there is no door, I pull up the ladder." Oh, that we could always in some way cut the connection between our soul and the intruding things which lurk below! There is a story told of me and of some person, I never knew who it was, who desired to see me on a Saturday night, when I had shut myself up to make ready for the Sabbath. He was very great and important, so the maid came to say that some one desired to see me. I bade her say that it was my rule to see no one at that time. Then he was more important and impressive still, and said, "Tell Mr. Spurgeon that a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ desires to see him immediately." The frightened servant brought the message; but the sender gained little by it, for my answer was, "Tell him I am busy with his Master, and cannot see servants now." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Peter's vision:*—1. When Cornelius, the Gentile, prayed in his house, it was at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer among the Jews; when Peter, the Jew, prayed, it was at the sixth hour, or noon, which was not one of the stated times. This is worthy of being noticed as occurring at a time when in far greater matters the Jews were about to become as the Gentiles, the Gentiles as the Jews. This is the second instance of the great honour put upon prayer. A praying Gentile is the first uncircumcised person admitted into the Christian Church. A praying apostle the instrument employed to bring about this happy consummation. And to each was his own blessing given at the very time when he was in the exercise of prayer. It is well for Christians to have fixed hours of prayer; and though they should not be in bondage to such hours, yet without good reason they should not depart from them. There is in our hearts such a backwardness to so spiritual a duty, that if we do not charge it upon our conscience to observe the hour, the world will find us other employment. Peter observed the time, and was careful also in selecting the place for prayer: in the temple at the stated hours, at other times in the best adapted part of the house. He affords in this an edifying example. The house of God is open to all: at the stated times the rich and the poor may repair thither; and, surely, on the Lord's day, all, unless distance or sickness hinders, should offer both their morning and their evening sacrifice. As to private prayer, many have not the advantage of a private apartment. But men can accommodate themselves to circumstances. Noise is a disturber of sleep; but men who live in the midst of noise can sleep in the midst of it as if in the stillest solitude. And thus a poor Christian may pray with much collectedness in the midst of interruptions which would altogether discompose others, and what a man's house does not afford the open field does. 2. But wherever a man is praying, the great point is to let prayer be his one business, to be absorbed in it. Peter, while he prayed, was in a trance; the world was altogether shut out from him. A man in prayer should have his senses, memory, imagination, closed against all other objects, and should converse with God alone. This would be the way to behold heaven indeed opened, and blessings of every kind descending upon him; for prayer is the key which opens heaven, unlocks its sacred treasures, and brings down the richest gifts both of providence and grace on the head of the supplicant. 3. Yes, every good and every perfect gift is from above, &c. And the vision of Peter affords a lively illustration of this truth. If, instead of buying what we know has been killed in the slaughter-house, we saw a vessel descend from heaven, and if, after we had taken out of it what was sufficient for our repast, we saw it again taken up into heaven, we should feel that the food thus given was indeed sent down from God. But in that case the truth would not be more certain than it is now. For, whence came these creatures into being? Who gave them the properties which render them fit for meat? And who keeps up the successive generations of them from age to age?

For a season, and to answer a particular purpose, a great restriction was put upon these creatures. But from the beginning it was not so. The grant to Noah is unlimited—"Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you, even as the green herb have I given you all things." And now that the law with its ceremonies and carnal ordinances is abolished, to us this original grant is restored in all its fulness. We know that "every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused if it be received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." Oh, why do we not thus sanctify our meals? To do so would give a sweetness to the humblest fare, and exalt our ordinary repasts into means of grace. And surely, when all things are become lawful to us, and no other restraints laid on us than those of charity and temperance, our larger liberty demands from us more abundant thanksgiving. But the doing away of all distinction between clean and unclean in meats is a light matter in comparison of the doing away of all distinction between clean and unclean in persons. The Jews considered all but themselves unclean. To remove this prejudice, the vision significantly taught that God had cleansed them, in order to comprehend which we must understand two things. First, that He looked upon them as clean, as fit to be received into the covenant. Every person who is born into the world is really unclean—Jew and Gentile alike, for there is no difference. But hitherto God regarded the Jews as clean, and admitted their children by circumcision into His covenant, giving them the seal of righteousness by faith, while the Gentiles He accounted unclean, and such were not admitted without circumcision. But now men of every nation were accounted clean, and could be received into the Church by baptism on professing their faith in Christ; and the children of such parents were holy, and would be admitted into the Christian Church by baptism. But the gospel covenant not only cleanses from legal uncleanness; it provides also for inward cleansing and meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. (*J. Fawcett, M.A.*) *Peter's vision:*—The world has had seven birthdays. 1. The creation. 2. The day of the unfolding of redemptive purpose. 3. The call of Abraham. 4. Christmas Day. 5. Ascension Day. 6. The Day of Pentecost. 7. The day which banned the distinctions of race and creed and opened the kingdom to all. I. THE NEW REVELATION IN ITS MANNER AND METHOD. 1. Peter had sought retirement for prayer. Prayer has a subjective influence. Perceptive faculties are refined and stimulated. Christ's physical form was transfigured. 2. After prayer there was ecstasy. Intuition quickened by the Holy Spirit. Equivalent to the "opening" of eyes and ears. Not delirium or rhapsody. Men should cultivate "the faculty divine," and expect the Spirit to "take the things of Christ and show them" (1 Cor. ii. 12, 13). II. THE MEANING OF THE VISION. 1. The abrogation of the ceremonial law as of binding obligation (Rom. xiv. 14, 17). 2. The separations of men no longer lawful. The narrowness of old Judaism contrary to the all-embracing spirit of gospel grace. No class is to be favoured at the expense of another. Two great ideas are thus suggested. (1) That of the Divine Fatherhood. (2) That of the brotherhood of man. (*Preacher's Monthly.*) *The Petrine vision at Joppa:*—There is something very restful in the picture drawn for us of St. Peter at this crisis. There is none of that feverish hurry and restlessness which make some good men and their methods very trying to others. St. Peter, indeed, did not live in an age of telegrams and postcards and express trains, which all contribute more or less to that feverish activity and restlessness so characteristic of this age. But even if he had lived in such a time, I am sure his faith in God would have saved him from that fussiness, that life of perpetual hurry, yet never bringing forth any abiding fruit, which we behold in so many moderns. It is no wonder such men's fussiness should be fruitless, because their natures are poor, shallow, uncultivated, where their seed springs up rapidly but brings forth no fruit to perfection, because it has no deepness of earth. It is no wonder that St. Peter should have spoken with power at Cæsarea and been successful in opening the door of faith to the Gentiles, because he prepared himself for doing the Divine work by the discipline of meditation, and thought, and spiritual converse with his risen Lord. I. THE PLACE. 1. Joppa has been from ancient times the port of Jerusalem, and is even now rising into somewhat of its former commercial greatness, specially owing to the late development of the orange trade, for the production of which fruit Jaffa or Joppa has become famous. Three thousand years ago Joppa was a favourite resort of the Phœnician fleets (2 Chron. ii. 16). At a later period, when God would send Jonah on a mission to Gentile Nineveh, and when Jonah desired to thwart God's merciful designs towards the outer world, the prophet fled to Joppa and there

took ship. And now again Joppa becomes the refuge of another prophet, who feels the same natural hesitation about admitting the Gentiles to God's mercy, but who, unlike Jonah, yields immediate assent to the heavenly message, and finds peace and blessing in the paths of loving obedience. 2. It was with Simon, the tanner of Joppa, that St. Peter was staying. Tanners as a class were despised and comparatively outcast among the Jews. Tanning was counted an unclean trade, because of the necessary contact with dead bodies which it involved. Yet it was to a tanner's house that the apostle made his way, and there he lodged for many days, showing that the mind even of St. Peter was steadily rising above narrow Jewish prejudices into that higher and nobler atmosphere where he learned in fullest degree that no man and no lawful trade is to be counted common or unclean. II. THE TIME. Joppa is thirty miles from Cæsarea. The leading coast towns were then connected by an excellent road. The centurion's messengers doubtless travelled on horseback, leading spare beasts for the accommodation of the apostle. Less than twenty-four hours after their departure from Cæsarea they drew nigh to Joppa, and then it was that God revealed His purposes to His beloved servant. The very hour can be fixed. Cornelius saw the angel at the ninth hour, when he "was keeping the hour of prayer." Peter saw the vision at the sixth hour, when he went up on the house-top to pray, according to the example of the Psalmist (Psa. lv. 18). St. Peter evidently was a careful observer of all the forms amid which his youthful training had been conducted. He did not seek in the name of spiritual religion to discard these old forms. He recognised the danger of any such course. Forms may often tend to formalism on account of the weakness of human nature. But they also help to preserve and guard the spirit of ancient institutions in times of sloth and decay, till the Spirit from on high again breathes upon the dry bones and imparts fresh life. St. Peter used the forms of Jewish externalism, imparting to them some of his own intense earnestness, and the Lord set His seal of approval upon his action by revealing the purposes of His mercy and love to the Gentile world at the noontide hour of prayer. III. THE VISION. To the mere man of sense or to the mere carnal mind St. Peter's hunger may seem a simple natural operation, but to the devout believer it appears as Divinely planned in order that a spiritual satisfaction and completeness may be imparted to his soul unconsciously craving after a fuller knowledge of the Divine will. And if St. Peter's hunger was taken up and incorporated with the Divine plan of salvation, we may be sure that our own wants and trials do not escape the omniscient eye of Him who plans all our lives, appointing the end from the very beginning. St. Peter was hungry, and as food was preparing he fell into a trance, and then the vision answering in its form to the hunger which he felt was granted. The hour had at last come for the manifestation of God's everlasting purposes, when the sacred society should assume its universal privileges and stand forth resplendent in its true character as God's Holy Catholic Church—of which the Temple had been a temporary symbol and pledge—a house of prayer for all nations, the joy of the whole earth, the city of the Great King, until the consummation of all things. (*G. T. Stokes, D.D.*) *The vision of Peter*:—1. "A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven" (John iii. 27; James i. 17). As a single seed of corn cannot unfold itself without the quickening influence and care of God, so the immortal seed, through which we become "the firstfruits of His creatures," must be vivified by the Almighty! We do not see this influence descend; we only observe the unfolding after it is completed. We see the rose bloom, but not the act of blossoming; but how can we doubt the care of an Almighty hand, or the wafting around it of an invisible breath? All depends on God's blessing (2 Cor. iii. 5). How could we come to God if God had not first come to us! He must bless our labour, and work in us both to will and to do. This work of God in us is a mystery, yet not altogether incomprehensible; it is like the visible and palpable influence of the sun. In order to exhibit this truth we have here a visible example of the invisible influence of God, and of the descent of His Holy Spirit. We may also be assured from the history that if we seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, all things that we need shall be added unto us. 2. The gospel history has depicted with peculiar openness the character of Peter. The Lord had given him the surname of "Rock," not merely in reference to what he should become, but also to that which he was by nature. He was distinguished from the rest of our Lord's followers by an impetuosity of temper which seems to have been born with him, and which showed itself by obstinately holding any opinion which the mind had once embraced. None of the disciples gainsaid our Lord so often as Peter. When Jesus told them of His approaching sufferings, he

said, "Be it far from Thee." When Jesus washed the disciples' feet, Peter withstood Him. In his fall also, in spite of his better judgment, he showed a stubborn obstinacy. He also subjected himself in Antioch to the severe reproof of Paul, when, to please the Jews, he once more came under the bondage of the Levitical law, to the offence of the Gentile Church. The Bible has never been silent with regard to the human weakness and errors of its heroes. 3. It appears to have been particularly difficult for the apostle to comprehend the counsel of God with regard to the calling of the Gentiles. Though he had announced at Pentecost that the Lord was about to call those who were afar off, yet he did not say this from himself, but from the Spirit of the Lord. The time and the hour, the grand moment of the second birth of the world, was now come. Our Lord had often alluded to it before, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold," &c. On another occasion He praised and rewarded the faith both of a Canaanitish woman and a Gentile centurion. He had also commanded His apostles to go to all nations and preach the gospel to every creature. Peter, who found it so difficult to wean himself from the old covenant, had to begin the work of God among the Gentiles. The beginning, however, must first be made in himself. 4. Peter went up about midday to pray on the flat roof of the house. The Jews were fond of praying there under the open heaven, because they were here undisturbed, and could turn their face towards the temple. In this circumstance we may perceive how Peter continued faithfully to observe the rules and customs of Judaism, little aware that they were soon to cease, and give place to the worshipping of God in spirit and in truth. After he had finished his prayer "he became very hungry, and would have eaten," but he must now be fed with other food. He was entranced, *i.e.*, transported out of his natural state into a supernatural one; his outward senses were closed, but the eyes of his inner man were opened, that he might behold heavenly things. "He saw heaven opened," &c. This was done thrice, to strengthen the impression of the Divine testimony. In this vision we behold the condescension of our Lord. The whole of revelation is a letting down, a humanisation of the invisible God; through it alone can man come to his heavenly Father and become His child. Almost all the Old Testament consists of types and similitudes. Even in this day of light we see through a glass darkly the secrets of the future and perfected kingdom of heaven; yet tho time shall come when we shall see them face to face. Thus the Apostle Peter, like all the prophets who were before him, was led to a higher knowledge gradually. We see also in this vision that something entirely new was about to begin in the kingdom of God upon earth. The prophet had for ages foretold it; and our Lord Himself had ordained and predicted it; but the contracted view of the disciples could not distinguish it; therefore the thing itself was done, and they were led to comprehend it slowly and gradually. The lightning's flash destroys the aged tree; but the gentle daylight develops a new life out of what seems passed away and decayed. This new light removed the old covenant and declared the new, by which all the Gentiles, without the law, were led into the path of grace. 5. The time of distinction and separation was now to cease (Eph. ii. 13–16). "Kill and eat," said the voice; the same which commanded Isaiah to write, "They shall bring an offering unto the Lord out of all nations" (chap. lxvi.); the same which inspired Paul to say in Romans (chap. xv.), "That the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost." The sanctification of the Gentiles has been going on, even to the present day, and will continue to go on until all be fulfilled which God has promised. Conclusion: We have visions and words from heaven no longer; we have both in our Bible; nor is there ever awanting a manifestation of the mind of God in daily occurrences, in providential events, and, above all, in the secret history of our souls; thus beholding God in everything, what is in itself common and unclean becomes purified and sanctified; and in this way is the grace of God revealed to all men. (*F. A. Krummacher, D.D.*) *An apostle dreaming*:—1. Aspiring! Hungering! Sleeping! Such manner of creatures we are; strange conjunctions of spirit and flesh, of heaven and earth; in whom "thoughts that wander through eternity" are stopped by needs and cravings identical with those of "all cattle and creeping things"; in whom are arms that reach after the Infinite, with the stomach and the appetites of the beast; one minute lost in lofty meditation, the next yawning for bed, or responding with moist mouth to the odour of baked meats. Yet, "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," and there eating and sleeping are never wholly of the earth earthy. The meal refines more or less toward the grace of a sacrament, and

again and again into the slumber heaven opens. There is an ethereal way of getting your dinner, in which the soul both gives and receives; and some men are greater often in visions than others in their intensest and most active wakefulness. The apostle who prayed, slept after a godly sort, was capable of being Divinely touched and taught through his dreams. There is a latent heavenliness in the flesh of an eminent saint, and there are heavenly possibilities in the saint's sleep. He is more susceptible at all times to communications and impressions from the Lord. 2. Some men can hardly afford to stand at ease and unoccupied without running the risk of immediate invasions from beneath. An habitual downward bent leaves them open in their dreams to hell. But to the pure and lofty heart, its loose, lazy intervals are frequently among its most growing and nourishing times, when that which it loves supremely, and is accustomed to cultivate, visits it without being sought, when its very quiescence becomes a clear mirror, in which new Divine messages form and flash. If only we are earnest, thoughtful, and nobly aspiring, we need not be afraid in the least to pause and play now and then, nor imagine that such occasional abandonment must be fruitless in relation to our higher aims. We are revealed by that which flows in upon us in empty, unemployed moments; and blessed are they to whom in these moments the best has first and facile entrance, whose vacancies angels rush to fill, and with whose earthiest elements heaven can freely mix and blend. 3. But no heavenly susceptibility, however large and fine, will exempt us from having to ask at times, What is it? Is it phantom or reality? Is it God or devil? St. Peter was left wondering whether the strange scenery amidst which he had been moving in the land of slumber was really the shrine of a Divine communication, or merely a coloured vapour exhaled from the sensation of hunger. And how often, in our waking moments, have we been visited with mental glimpses or impressions that we could not understand! "Why," he asked, "have I seen this thing, which yields to my inquiry no fruit of admonition or instruction?" Yet such fruit it was designed to yield him, and would, ere long; not, however, by continued brooding over it, but in the course of events. Let him wait until summoned to come down to men who are even now on their way to the tanner's house, and then all will grow clear. Well, is it not often thus, that life comes in time to explain the Divine reason, concerning which we have wondered, perhaps fretfully, why we were submitted to them, and have thought that they might have been spared us without loss or detriment? And yet long afterwards, maybe, we have discovered that they were not for nothing. In some later crisis of life we have found them contributing to excite and strengthen us for it. We have lived to find in our life the fruit of some of those experiences, the Divine message of which we have been unable to read, have lived to learn that they were needful for us and could not have been spared. We have felt as, in listening to the deputation from Cornelius, St. Peter felt with respect to his mysterious dream. Ah! this is why they occurred; this is what they were intended to fit us for! (*S. A. Tipple.*) **And he saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending.**—*The comprehensiveness of the gospel:* —The gospel is here compared to—I. A GREAT SHEET. A small sheet would not suffice to convey the truth God was about to reveal—that all nations were to be gathered into His Church. Judaism was only a small sheet, just big enough to cover Palestine. But Christianity was a "great sheet"—a clear hint as to its cosmopolitan character. Christianity as let down from heaven is larger than as reproduced in human creeds; as revealed by God it is larger than as apprehended by man. The tendency of man is to narrow the love of God, to contract the Divine sheet till it becomes no bigger than a pocket handkerchief. But just as the creation is larger than science, so is the Church of God greater than any one particular Church. Just as God is greater than man, so is the Divine revelation more comprehensive than any creed formulated by human wisdom. "Our little systems have their day," &c. II. LET DOWN FROM HEAVEN. The idea of the comprehensiveness of the gospel has come down from God. 1. You will not find it in heathenism. The idea of universal fellowship based on universal equality never occurred to any philosopher. True, there was a dark, unconscious feeling after it. Plato's republic was a strenuous groping after the Christian kingdom of God; but it falls far short of it, because it places the ground of unity in the intellect instead of in the spiritual nature. That is only a republic among philosophers; the labouring classes are reduced to a condition of hopeless servitude. 2. You will not find it in Judaism. A few prophetic intimations were given in the Old Testament that the Gentiles would pay homage to the Messiah; but how they were to

reap the benefits of redemption was not known. Now, however, the mystery is made known, but the majority of the believers utterly failed to realise it, and sought to discredit it. Upon this truth hinged the great controversy of the apostolic age; and so novel was it, so contrary to the current of thought of the age, that it took the whole lifetime of the apostles to establish it. A great truth is always slow to be apprehended by the masses of men. Take, for instance, gravitation. At the time of Sir Isaac's death no astronomer above forty years of age believed in it. Take again the principle of Free Trade; to-day England is the only country which thoroughly believes in it, and not all England. But these truths were not by any means of the same consequence to society as the important truth taught Peter. III. KNIT AT THE FOUR CORNERS. The gospel is to extend its frontiers and to exert its influence over the four quarters of the globe. 1. God began with a family. He calls Abraham and separates him to Himself. In Genesis, accordingly, we find family religion the first step in the recovery of the lost world. In Genesis God has a cause, though not a kingdom—just a few worshippers, but no visible organisation. 2. After the family comes the nation. Out of Abraham's posterity God formed a nation for Himself. That is progress. It would not do to take any nation. It was necessary to have a people whose fundamental characteristic was religiousness; and it was equally necessary to train them, else they would constitute a kingdom of the devil. Judaism was not a very spiritual kingdom, but it was the best which could be established under the circumstances, and served as a nucleus for a more spiritual kingdom to come. But this kingdom could only be continued on two conditions: that it be small in extent, and that it be fenced off from the rest of the world. If it were wide in area, the sense of oneness in the subjects would have been weakened, if not destroyed, in the early stage of spiritual education. If it were not partitioned off, there would be such a rush of world-life into it that the Divine element would soon be quenched. The laws of this kingdom, however, as of every new kingdom, point to defensive, not aggressive, measures, which is as much as it can do for centuries in presence of the huge world-powers; and in order to defence it must be consolidated in one country and one nation. 3. But as the family merged in the nation, so the nation must merge in the world. The text evidently points out that another bold move forward is about to be made. Peter is directed to go and convert Cornelius, an uncircumcised heathen. His conversion created more excitement than any single conversion on record, not because one more soul was added, but because of the new principle it embodied, the new policy it served to inaugurate. Circumcision was here declared to be nothing, and uncircumcision nothing, but to many they were then everything. This shows a marvellous change in the policy of the kingdom. Henceforth it is to act on the aggressive. It is no longer to be confined to one people—it claims all nations. "God shall enlarge Japheth, and He shall dwell in the tents of Shem." Shem means concentration, Japheth expansion. Therein we have summed up the characteristics of religion among the Asiatics and Europeans. IV. CONTAINING ALL MANNER OF FOUR-FOOTED BEASTS OF THE EARTH, AND WILD BEASTS, AND CREEPING THINGS, AND FOWLS OF THE AIR. Peter is here taught that the distinction between clean and unclean is abolished. 1. We trace here the same progress. First, the family is made clean. Through the fall the whole creation had become common and profane. Is it to remain so? Is God to be for ever cheated out of the world His hands had made? No; He resolves to reclaim it. Not, however, all at once. God will make a beginning by separating one family. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are each separated, made clean unto God. 2. Will God stop there? No; the order of His operation is progress. The Israelites, like all other nations, were by nature unclean, lying under the curse. But by the sprinkling of the blood of the covenant they were made clean. But this nation is the "firstfruits." Not only man had become unclean, but the irrational creation. Sin struck the universe with leprosy to its very heart. The animal creation, therefore, needs to be made clean. The clean nation must have clean food. God accordingly cleanses certain species of animals. Behold then a small proportion of the rational and irrational creation made clean by the establishment of the kingdom of God. In Genesis all the world, with the exception of one family only, is unclean; but in Exodus, one nation, at least, and a certain proportion of animals, have been made clean. That is progress anyhow. 3. Is the rest of the world to remain under the dominion of sin? No; the kingdom of God under the New Testament undertakes the task of cleansing the whole universe. The difference once established between the Jews and other nations is annulled, not because the Jews are made unclean, but because

the Gentiles are made clean. The whole world was lying under the curse, and therefore unclean; but Jesus Christ was made a curse for the world, and consequently lifted it from men and animals. Since His sacrifice the world in its totality is clean, not morally, but judicially. What Judaism did ceremonially for one nation, Christianity has done efficaciously for all nations. The whole world is now clean. All mankind now virtually belong to the kingdom of God, and it is the paramount duty of the Church to take possession of them in the name of the Redeemer and make them so in reality. "What God hath cleansed call not thou common." "Clean"—this is the keyword of the kingdom of God. Beauty was the keyword of Greek civilisation; strength of the Roman; but the keyword of Christianity is "clean." V. After the vision came THE INTERPRETATION. 1. Peter thought on the vision. This truth of revelation was to become a truth of reason. The Church is to continue its study of the Divine Word till all the truths of revelation become at last truths of reason. Revelation answers its purpose only as it becomes the legitimate property of reason. Take, *e.g.*, the existence and unity of God. When this truth was revealed to Israel, no man in the native light of reason had a clear perception of it. But the reason has at last been educated up to it. So again with the moral law—the eternal difference between right and wrong. When this truth was revealed to Israel it was in advance of reason. But the reason has been gradually educated up to it. The Incarnation is still in advance of reason. But then is it never to enter reason? It is no more unbelievable to Christians than the unity of God to the Hebrews; and as the latter has passed from the region of mystery to that of reason, so I believe will do the former. Take again the truth made known in the text—the equality of Jews and Gentiles. At the time it was made it was far in advance of reason. Peter thought on it and believed it; but his whole history shows he had never been able to think right into it and through it. To the last it was to him more of a truth of faith than a truth of reason. But this truth is gradually working its way into the universal reason. 2. But Peter was not left to unravel the meaning of the vision—the clue was afforded him by the arrival of messengers from Cornelius. God always explains His supernatural revelations by natural events. Providence is the best commentary on the Bible. Just when God was stirring large thoughts in Peter respecting the universality of the gospel, He was also working in Cornelius to send a messenger to the apostle desiring a fuller knowledge of salvation at his hands. God often brings about these secret correspondences. Hardly is there an important discovery made in science but two or three inventors, ignorant of each other's designs, claim it as their own. (*J. Cynddylan Jones, D.D.*) **Creeping things.**—The presence of "creeping things" in the sheet is a voice—I. MANIFESTING GOD. 1. The largeness of His mercy. This sheet was a great sheet, and it included "creeping" things. Satan aims at contracting our views of God; at making us think that He has no room for us, or that He has no room for others. 2. The sovereignty of God's grace. He makes as much of the creeping things hidden away, despised by men, as of the four-footed beasts. He sent His messengers out into the highways and hedges to compel the poor to come in. 3. The minuteness of God's arrangements. The lesser were not lost to sight in that great sheet; they were presented to the apostle's eye in their proper place, as well as the four-footed beasts. 4. The depth of God's condescension. Proud man would have gathered into that sheet only what was of apparent value; it would never have entered into his mind to think about the creeping things at all—to tame a wild beast would be something, but what credit or honour or profit could he get out of "creeping things!" II. DIRECTIVE TO OURSELVES. And this—1. When we are oppressed with a sense of our insignificance and meanness. Satan, for his own purpose, helps on this thought. He says, "I can understand God caring about so and so, he is worth something; but who knows or cares about you?" Then we are troubled about the little capacity we have for glorifying God, and Satan marshals before our minds all our weaknesses, our unfavourable position, our want of intellect or wealth. And how shall we meet all this? Only by falling back upon God Himself. We cannot explain His making any account for us, any more than we can for His including "creeping things" in that great sheet let down from heaven. Then, again, the child of God is often tempted to have heart sinkings about the future; but let him remember that God has His eye on every particle of the believer's dust. It is recorded of Lady Maxwell that she was at one time much troubled by the curious temptation that she was so insignificant she would be liable to be passed over hereafter. But we may meet all such tempta-

tions as Monica, the mother of Augustine, met the surprise of her friends at Ostia, when they expressed their wonder that she did not fear to leave her body so far from her own country. "Nothing," said she, "is far from God, and I do not fear that He should not know where to find me at the resurrection." The small, as well as the great, are remembered in the grand distribution of rewards. 2. When we compare ourselves with those who seem to have some pretensions. The creeping thing seems ready to shrink into nothingness when placed side by side with the four-footed beast. Very often we review the character of such and such a believer, and we say, "Oh, if only I were like this man, I might feel some comfort." But remember the great beasts had no cleanliness, except from the solitary fact of being in the sheet, and so the safety and acceptance of small and great alike are due to the goodness of the Lord. 3. In forming our estimate of others we shall not exalt the great ones nor despise the weak ones if we remember well what there was in this sheet that Peter saw. 4. We have also the comforting thought that, however humble, we have our place. We may be small, and of no reputation, but the Lord thinketh on us, has a place for us, and this should be enough. And as regards our affairs, it is true that they are mere straws in comparison with the great affairs of others; we have only to do with shillings where they have to do with thousands of pounds; we have only to do with aches and pains, where they have to do with life and death. But He who fashioned the creeping thing knows its needs, and He who fashioned us knows ours. (*P. H. Power, M.A.*) **Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. . . . Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.**—*Peter's blunder: a lesson to ourselves*:—"Not so, Lord," is a very strange compound. "Not so" would have been consistent. But "Not so, Lord," is an odd jumble of self-will and reverence. We are not without fault in the matter of incorrect speech. In our utterances there has been faith mixed with unbelief, love defaced with a want of submission, gratitude combined with distrust, humility flavoured with self-conceit, courage undermined with cowardice, fervour mingled with indifference. Note here—I. THAT THE OLD MAN REMAINS IN THE CHRISTIAN MAN. Though crucified, it is long in dying, and struggles hard. 1. Peter was Peter still. I think that if I had read Peter's life in the four evangelists, and somebody had newly shown me the present text, and asked, "Who said that?" I should have been sure that it was Peter. The best of men are but men at best. And Peter, after the Holy Ghost has fallen upon him, is, nevertheless, Peter; the accent of his words still bewrays him. 2. Peter here shows how readily he fell, not precisely into the same sin, but into the same kind of sin. This Peter who said, "Not so, Lord," is the same man who rebuked his Master, and said, "That be far from Thee, Lord." It is the same man who at supper-time refused his Master. When the Lord was about to wash the disciples' feet, Peter said, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." And this is he who flatly contradicted his Master, and said, "Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will not I." He did this in his earlier days, but after the Holy Ghost had come upon him, yet he still tripped in the same place where he used to fall. What were your faults before conversion? Guard against them now. You notice about Peter, then, this thing still remaining, that he blurts out what he feels. Be it for bad or good, prompt deliverance of his mind is still the characteristic of Peter. He was always blundering because he was in such a hurry. I may be addressing young folk here who are very impulsive, and speak all in a hurry things which they afterwards are sorry for. Be on your guard against it. It is a strength if it be rightly managed. Give me the man who in a good cause does not think twice, but acts upon the warm impulses of a ready mind; but that same characteristic, if not kept in proper order by the Spirit of God, may lead you into a world of mischief. You cannot call back the words which now cause you to bite your tongue with regret. 3. Yet Peter as Peter still has good points, for he owns all this. Luke could not have recorded this incident in the Acts of the Apostles unless Peter had personally told him, and when Peter was brought up before the other apostles for what he had done, he confessed, "But I said, 'Not so, Lord'"—always outspoken, honest, and clear as the day. In this let us be at one with him. II. THE OLD MAN GENERALLY FIGHTS AGAINST GOSPEL PRINCIPLES. This "Not so, Lord," applied to —1. The abolition of the ceremonial law. Peter was to know that those laws, which forbade the eating of this and that, were now to be abrogated. All of us are apt to err here, for we incline to attach undue importance to matters which are proper and useful in their places, but which are by no means essential to salvation. Where Jesus has made no rule we are not to make any.

None are unclean whom He has cleansed. Yet this lesson is not soon learned by sticklers for propriety. 2. The equality of men before the law and under the gospel. An evangelist attracts the poorest and worst. This ought to be a great joy, but in certain cases it is not. Many in effect say, "'Not so, Lord.' I do not like sitting next to one who smells so vilely, or to a woman of loose character." Never let us set up the tyranny of caste, and rebuild the middle wall of partition which our Saviour died to throw down. We sprang of a common parent, and for men there is but one Saviour. 3. The gospel principle of free and sovereign grace. You war against this yourself when you are conscious of having done wrong, and therefore doubt the grace of God; as if God wanted some good in us before He would bestow His grace upon us. A diseased man is fit to be healed, a poor man is fit for alms, a drowning man is fit to be rescued, a sinful man is fit to be forgiven. III. THE OLD NATURE SHOWS ITSELF IN MANY WAYS. "Not so, Lord," is the cry of our unregenerate part against—1. The doctrine of the gospel. Some persons do not believe the gospel because they do not want to believe it. They studiously omit to read all such parts of Scripture as would enlighten their minds. It is mine to believe what the Bible teaches; it is not mine to object, and cry, "Not so, Lord." 2. Duty. We can do anything except the special duty of the hour, and as to that one thing, we say, "Not so, Lord." Yonder young woman knows that according to God's Word she must not be unequally yoked together with an unbeliever. Now, she was quite willing to be baptized, to give her money to the Lord, and, in fact, to do anything except that one act of self-denial. Yet I do not know what sorrow you will make for yourself if you really break that salutary rule. Take you the precept, and knowing that it is God's mind concerning you, never dare even for a moment to hesitate. "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." 3. Processes of sanctification. We are anxious to bear fruit, but we do not care to be pruned; we are glad to be delivered from dross, but not by the fire. 4. The dispensation of the kingdom. We like not that God should bless men by a sect to which we do not belong; we are envious for our own Moses, lest the irregular Eldads and Medads should eclipse him. 5. Our sufferings. Whenever you are called to endure trial, do not complain of the particular form it takes. Perhaps it is great bodily pain, and you say, "I could bear anything better than this." This is a mistake. God knows what is the best for His child. Do not cry, "Not so." "Oh, I could bear sickness," says another, "but I have been slandered!" Thus our will asserts its place, and we pine to be our own god and ruler. This must not be. A dear sister had quarrelled with the Lord for taking away her husband, and she would not go to any place of worship, she felt so angry about her loss. But her little child came to her one morning and said, "Mother, do you think Jonah was right when he said, 'I do well to be angry, even unto death'?" She replied, "Oh, child, do not talk to me," and put the little one away, but she felt the rebuke, and it brought her back to her God, and back to her Church again, humbly rejoicing in Him who had used this instrumentality to set her right with her Lord. 6. Our service. The Lord says, "Go into the Sunday-school." "Not so, Lord; I should like to preach," says the young man, and thus he misses his life-work. Who would employ servants who, when they are told to do this or go there, should say, "No, sir; I prefer another engagement"? IV. IT IS A GREAT PITY WHEN THIS KIND OF WILFULNESS STANDS IN THE WAY OF USEFULNESS. In some things Peter was—1. Too conservative. He says, "Not so, Lord," and some read it, "Never, Lord, never, Lord, for I have never"; that is, "I must never do a thing I have never done." Many are of this mind; they cannot advance an inch. Many will only act as others act; they must keep in the fashion, even though they fall asleep in the doing of it. This kind of routine forbids enlarged usefulness, prevents our getting at out-of-the-way people, and puts a damper upon all zeal. 2. Propriety hinders very many; decorum is their death. Shake yourself up a little. If you are too precise may the Lord set you on fire, and consume your bonds of red tape! 3. Some are hindered by their great dignity. We have seen very great little people, and very little great people who have given themselves mighty airs; but we have never seen any good come of their greatness. God seldom sends His Elijahs bread and meat by peacocks. If you go into the houses of the poor very finely dressed, and you "condescend" to them, they will not want to see you any more. Let I grow very small, and let J grow very great. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The idolatry of self-will*:—He that will not submit himself to nor comply with the eternal and uncreated will, but, instead of it, endeavours to set up his own will, makes himself the most real idol in the

world, and exalts himself against all that is called God, and ought to be worshipped. To worship a graven image, or to make cakes and burn incense to the queen of heaven, is not a worse idolatry than it is for a man to set up self-will, to devote himself to the serving of it, and to give up himself to a compliance with his own will, as contrary to the Divine and Eternal Will. (*John Smith.*) *Sectarian narrowness*:—Whitefield, on arriving at Edinburgh, found great commotion among the Presbyters, who would not hear him preach unless he declared himself on their side. "I was asked," he says, "to preach only for them until I had further light. I inquired why only for them. 'Because,' said Ralph Erskine, 'they were the Lord's people.' I then asked were there no other Lord's people but themselves; and supposing all others were the devil's people, they certainly had more need to be preached to; and therefore I was more determined to go into the highways and hedges, and that if the Pope himself would lend me his pulpit I would gladly proclaim the righteousness of Christ therein." (*J. R. Andrews.*) *Common and unclean things*:—Ruskin, in his "Ethics of the Dust," calls our attention to the silent forces of nature, which never appear so grand as when they transmute baser materials into higher forms. We see the pool of slime transformed by the action of light and heat, repose and quiet, so that the clay hardens into blue sapphire, the sand into burning opal, the soot into flashing diamond. And even Jesus never appears so glorious in loveliness as when we see Him transforming the very filth and slime of society into gems fit to burn and shine in an immortal crown. (*A. T. Pierson.*) *The beautiful in the common brought out by cleansing*:—In Florence there is a fresco by Giotto that for many ages was covered up by two thicknesses of whitewash. It is only within a very few years that the artist's hand has come and removed that covering, and the fresco has come out clear and beautiful. Sometimes we see a person whom we feel inclined to despise, and think of little value, but God comes to him, cleanses him by removing his sin, and reveals a beauty in him that we little dreamt of. *The ground of the antipathy between Jew and Gentile*:—The distinction between clean and unclean meats was one of the insuperable barriers between the Gentile and the Jew—a barrier which prevented all intercourse between them because it rendered it impossible for them to meet at the same table or in social life. In the society of a Gentile a Jew was liable at any moment to those ceremonial defilements which involved all kinds of seclusion and inconvenience; and not only so, but it was mainly by partaking of unclean food that the Gentiles became themselves so unclean in the eyes of the Jews. It is hardly possible to put into words the intensity of horror and revolt with which the Jews regarded swine. They were to them the very ideal and quintessence of all that must be looked upon with an energetic concentration of disgust. He would not even mention a pig by name, but spoke of it as "the other thing." When in the days of Hyrcanus a pig had been surreptitiously put into a box and drawn up the walls of Jerusalem, the Jews declared that a shudder of earthquake had run through 400 parasangs of the Holy Land. Yet this filthy and atrocious creature was the chief delicacy at Gentile banquets, and in one form or other one of the commonest articles of Gentile consumption. How could a Jew touch or speak to a man who might on that very day have partaken of the abomination? The cleansing of all articles of food involved immediately the acceptance of Jews and Gentiles on equal footing to equal privileges. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) **What God hath cleansed, that call thou not common.**—*The cleansing of all meats by Christ*:—Doubtless Peter remembered that remarkable parable of Jesus (Mark vii. 14-19) of which he and his brother disciples had once asked the explanation. Jesus in few words, but with both of the emphatic formulæ which He adopted to arrest special attention, had said, "There is nothing from without a man entering into him which can defile him." What He had proceeded to say—that what truly defiles a man is that which comes out of him—was easy enough to understand, and was a truth of deep meaning, but so difficult had it been to grasp the first half of the clause that they had asked Him to explain a parable which seemed to be in direct contradiction to the Mosaic Law. Expressing His astonishment at their want of insight, He had shown them that what entered into a man from without did but become a part of his material organism, entering "not into the heart, but into the belly, and so passing into the draught." "This He said"—as now for the first time, perhaps, flashed with full conviction into the mind of Peter—"making all meats pure," as he proceeded afterwards to develop those weighty truths about the inward character of all real pollution, and the genesis of all crime from evil thoughts, which convey so solemn a warning. To me it seems that it

was the trance and vision of Joppa which first made Peter realise the true meaning of Christ in one of those few distinct utterances in which He had intimated the coming annulment of the Mosaic Law. It is doubtless due to the fact that Peter, as the informant of Mark in writing his Gospel, and the sole ultimate authority for this vision in the Acts, is the source of both narratives, that we owe the hitherto unnoticed circumstance that the two verbs "cleanse" and "profane"—both in a peculiarly pregnant sense—are the two most prominent words in the narrative of both events. (*Ibid.*) *The transition from the Old to the New*:—1. We have here one of the great hinges on which history turns. Peter's vision opened up a new era; and here, too, as in every act of the human life-drama, is made visible the hand of God. He stood by man in the dawn of his personal history, and spoke to Adam face to face; in the dawn of the patriarchal era, and spoke to Abraham as the Father of the family relationship; in the dawn of political life, and spoke to Moses the head of the nation as the God of nations; at last, at the dawn of the world's consciousness of its final vocation, God made the fact of the God-manhood the spring from which eternal progress should proceed. 2. The questions raised by the narrative are not met by the consideration of Peter's narrowness, nor of the liberal teachings of the vision. The apostle's views were narrow as the discipline of the school is narrow to the student, and that of the student to the man; but they were God's handiwork, and Peter was only pleading God's Word against another which seemed to be opposed to it. You will ever find some of the truest lovers of liberty among the partisans of ancient forms, while the man who throws up his cap and cries liberty is often the veriest tyrant at heart. Nathaniel was resisting the idea that good could come out of Nazareth when Jesus said, "Behold an Israelite indeed," &c. Note —I. THE EXCLUSIONS OF THE MOSAIC LAW. 1. Here was the school in which Peter learned his prejudice (Lev. xi. 2–20; Deut. xiv. 3–21). It is easy to speak of his proud and arrogant Judaism (Ezek. iv. 14 is a parallel case). But as we live and learn we get more distrustful of the so-called spirit of progress which cares not what it destroys, so that it may reach its Utopian goal. An intellect quick to seize novelties is mostly found in conjunction with a vain and shallow moral nature, and is sure to disappoint. The moral qualities are those which tell, and among the deepest of these is reverence; and one gets to bear with the slow movement of a reverent spirit for the sake of the great prizes it wins for mankind. The men who work most solidly at the construction of the new are men who are most deeply rooted in the old. You cannot build from balloons, but must have firm foundations. 2. Consider the philosophy of the Mosaic system. Man is a being of a double nature. An animal cannot go far wrong about food; he has an instinct which tells him what is good and what bad. But man is far more richly furnished with appetites, and with objects which gratify them. Why? Because God intended to teach him that appetite is not a sufficient guide, and that he must bring judgment into play. This remark applies far more widely than to matters of eating and drinking; our habits, associates, work, are to be by the elections of a will guided and governed by a reason which acquaints itself with the mind of the Creator. When man was in his first estate this was a simple "of course." Hence the liberty of Adam (Gen. ii. 15–17) and of Noah (Gen. ix. 1–3). But man again corrupted his way, and the wanton indulgence of appetite became the great bane and destroyer of mankind. So God took the Jewish people, and instructed them in the art of discernment of moral choice. His way with their food is but a specimen of His way in all the education of their souls. And men had to ask about everything—"Is it lawful?" The aim of the discipline being that they should ask, "Is it good?" and make their election accordingly. Pork is a harmless thing to us; eaten freely in the East, leprosy results. But the real question is, Why does not the law put the prohibition on the simple ground—it is not for your good? This leads me to another principle. 3. In the early stages of human culture nothing is strong enough to curb man's desires and to stimulate the exercise of discernment but religion. There is hardly one thing precious to man's secular life which has not been won for him by the force which religion has brought to bear on his natural powers. The knowledge of letters was kept alive solely by the desire of man to read and understand the Word of God and religious books. The desire to calculate rightly church festivals began all the investigations and triumphs of modern astronomy. Monks established the truce of God, and only by the strong hand of religion could the horrors of war be mitigated. The right of our dead to undisturbed repose was secured by the cross of the Church under whose shadow

the ashes of our ancestors lay. And God began from the beginning with the Jews, and made the simplest matters of right or prudence matters of religion from the very first. They were to eat, and fulfil every function of life "because the Lord their God" would have it so. II. THE PROGRESS OF SOCIETY HAS TENDED TO RELEASE MEN FROM THESE BONDS, and to bring all that concerns man's welfare under the influence of the special faculties which have charge of the separate departments of life. 1. Of old men wrote books for the glory of God; and the religious guardians of men judged whether they fulfilled that purpose and might be safely read. Now men write books simply to tell what they know, and it is left to the taste of society to read them or not. Of old men abstained from meats because they were an abomination to God; now He leaves them free to judge and to choose that which they find to be for their good. Peter might still practise an abstinence which a Roman might regard as idle, but Peter would not be suffered to let that stand in the way of the conversion of the world. The child full-grown was to judge for himself where his legal tutor had hitherto judged for him. Paul fully understood this (Rom. xiv. 1–9). And so it is with all things. A man may eat in England not what he likes, but what he finds to be for his good. So with fast and feast days, services, places, &c. 2. But is this use of the natural faculties a less sacred religious duty than was of old obedience to a religious law? Certainly not. The secular duty becomes sacred to the spirit, and the whole life is brought under the broad religious obligation of a freeborn son to a gracious God. "Shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid." The progress of Christianity tends to place all man's acts under the rule of his natural faculties given to him for this very end, and to make the right use of these faculties the most sacred duty of his life before God. First law, then liberty, in order to the discovery of the Diviner law, "the perfect law of liberty," wherein to continue is to be blessed. God has made all life sacred. He gives up some, to claim the whole; but to claim it, not peremptorily as a Master, but lovingly as a Father, who seeks not your works, but yourself. 3. God hath cleansed all things to the godly, but to the ungodly nothing is clean. There is nothing common or unclean but a common and unclean soul and its life. That is essential uncleanness, and only one Fountain can cleanse it, only one Spirit consecrate it. (*J. Baldwin Brown, B.A.*)

Now while Peter doubted . . . the men which were sent from Cornelius . . . stood before the gate.—*The messengers of the centurion at Peter's door*:—How proud heathenism knocks humbly at the gates of Christ's kingdom. I. THE GREAT GULF WHICH HAD TO BE OVERPASSED. 1. Roman pride. 2. Jewish prejudice. II. THE HEAVENLY POWER WHICH PAVED THE WAY. 1. With the centurion, the drawing of the Father to the Son. 2. With the apostle, the emancipating Spirit of Truth, and the constraining love of Christ. III. THE PROPITIOUS WELCOME. 1. On the part of the messenger's humble request. 2. On the part of Peter's friendly reception. (*K. Gerok.*) *Doubt: its cause and cure*:—Peter was a type of the better class of sincere, humble, open-minded doubters. There is no affinity between his case and that of the inveterate, conceited, and propagandist sceptic who airs his infidelities as symptomatic of genius, and bids thereby for leadership in modern thought. But there is considerable resemblance between the apostle and a large class who deserve from us what he received from God—sympathy and guidance. I. THE CAUSE OF DOUBT. 1. Prejudice arising from early education. Peter only held what he had been taught upon parental, ministerial, and even Divine authority. Much of modern doubt is a mere matter of prejudice. Ideas received as truths from others clash with what Christians believe to be Divine truths, and the former are preferred. 2. Habit. The ingrained custom of eating only "clean" meat, and conversing only with "clean" men, incapacitated Peter to conceive of the abandonment of ceremonial distinctions. And so there is a sceptical habit of thought which grows with indulgence, and which almost without any volition on the part of the doubter bars the entrance of Christian truth. 3. Narrow views of God's dispensations and purposes. What God meant for a time only, Peter held He meant for ever. So sometimes the sceptic fastens on some temporary act or partial principle of the Divine administration as types of the whole. He raises objections, *e.g.*, against suffering, overlooking its disciplinary character, or against the immoralities of some of God's agents, forgetting that God makes the wrath of men to praise Him. 4. Mental unrest. The vision was the cause of Peter's doubts. His mind was in a state of chaos, as the foundations of all that he held dear and certain seemed to be undermined. All the convictions instilled by training, ingrained by habit, and deepened by narrow but intense thought, suddenly began to give way—a state of

mind familiar to sincere doubters. The truth has not dawned, but all that justifies scepticism as a defensible intellectual mood has disappeared. II. ITS CURE. 1. The illumination of the Spirit of God. Reason will not resolve doubt, hence the futility of mere controversy. Truth must be apprehended by the heart, and only He who made it, and knows what it needs, can reach that. Pray, and sooner or later the Comforter will guide you into all truth. 2. Promptitude and activity in duty. "Arise and get down." Brooding over it will only intensify that morbidity of mind which is its most fruitful soil. Working will at least find an outlet for the imprisoned sentiments which knock so painfully at the interior walls of the soul. And get about some practical employment at once. Delays are weakening. 3. Obedience to Divine impulses. These are seldom still in the seeker after truth. What God's Spirit did to Peter miraculously He does for us naturally by impressions, opportunities, strange feelings leading or driving us now here and now there. But as Peter's going with the men led to the dissolving of his doubts, so if any man will do God's will he shall know of the doctrine. 4. The cure is often effected by unexpected incidents, and in unlikely ways; but the man who prays, works, and is obedient to the light he has, will find these lying across life's ordinary path. (*J. W. Burn.*) **While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said, . . . Arise.**—*Devotion and action:*—The Spirit calls the apostle from prayer and meditation to action. The contemplative life is but the preparation for the active, as the active is strengthened by solitude and contemplation. The man of God needs both, and either without the other is a maimed and imperfect life. (*Dionysius of Carthage.*) *A Divine call to preach:*—I was present at the Rev. Peter Mackenzie's oral examination. At the close the president said, "All may retire except Mr. Mackenzie." When by himself he was asked, amongst other questions, "What led you to preach?" He answered, "After my conversion I was asked to address the Sunday School, and did so. Then two local preachers asked me to go with them to try and preach. I hesitated, and they said they would call for me. While praying upstairs that God would direct me, I heard them below asking for me. I got up from my knees, still undecided, and opened my Bible on these words: 'While Peter thought upon the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Arise, therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, nothing doubting, for I have sent them.'" This answer produced not only surprise, but something like a scene. Other questions followed, which he answered with such beautiful simplicity and naturalness that several members of the committee were moved to tears. (*T. McCullagh.*) *Ministry of men:*—In photography it is the sun that makes the portrait. There is no drawing of the outline by a human hand, and no shading of the figure according to rules of the painter's art. The person stands up in the light, and the light lays his image on the glass. Yet in this work there is room for the ministry of man. Without the ministry of man the work could not in any case be done. A human hand prepares the plate for securing the picture, and adjusts the instrument for throwing the light at the proper moment on the prepared surface. Although in the real work of making the picture man has no hand at all, his place is important and necessary. A similar place under the ministry of the Spirit is given to the ministry of men. God does not send angels to make the gospel known. We learn it from men of flesh and blood like ourselves. Cornelius and his house will be saved, but Peter must go from Joppa to Cæsarea and open up to them the way of salvation. *The humility of Cornelius:*—The Romans were quite as proud as the Jews, and "the condescension of a man in the station of Cornelius, in sending to a tanner's house for light from an obscure person of the common sort seems incredible in the ordinary course of Oriental thought and custom. To send to such a one for religious instruction is altogether incredible. No one among us, even in the face of cruel religionist riots, can conceive of the wall that exists between religious parties in the East, or the way that religious sects wield power and maintain their adherents. The truth is, that this lesson, with the passages that precede it, heralds one of the greatest Oriental revolutions that the world has ever seen, and one which gives the deepest view of the prophecy of Isa. lii. 13–15. (*Prof. I. H. Hall.*) **Get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing.**—*How may we know our work?*—"Doubting nothing"—that is the secret of liberty, efficiency, and success. You see it in the inventor who is certain of the combination of instruments by which he is to accomplish a result of value to mankind; in the teacher who knows that he has a truth to communicate which it is of importance to men to apprehend; in the soldier who knows, because he knows the commander, that the order which has

been given is wise, practicable, needful; in the sailor who trusts his clock and his compass, and goes on his course, after his observation, doubting nothing, knowing where he is exactly. Everywhere this confidence is the condition of enthusiasm and of success, and in Christian enterprises it is a confidence not merely in the usefulness of the work, but in the Divine authority, care, affection, impulse, which attend us in our endeavours to perform it. It was precisely this that Peter felt. Except for the vision out of which this confidence was flashed, except for the voice of the Spirit which interpreted the vision, he would hardly have been ready to go. But, in consequence of this, he recognised the call which was made upon him by the centurion's servants. They were not bearing merely a message from the Roman officer, but from the Author of the world and the King of the Church. Peter doubted afterward, in the characteristic reaction of his impetuous spirit, whether the Jew could receive a Gentile and eat with him. But at this point he went, doubting nothing, and made the world free to enter into the Church of Christ. There come often questions of duty to individual Christians or to Churches who wish that they could have instruction like that which was given to the apostle. The work to which they appear to be called by God is difficult and dangerous and costly. There are arguments for it and against it; and so they confuse themselves in perplexities, balancing the reasons for and the reasons against, until, perhaps, the opportunity has passed. Now we do not see visions or hear voices, but there are certain indications, when a work is appointed for us, which are as intelligible and impressive. I. WHEN THE WORK IS PART OF THE PLAN GOD WOULD HAVE ACCOMPLISHED. When it concerns His glory properly it is then connected with His plan. Not that Christian duty is restricted to efforts for the religious instruction and conversion of men; there are multitudes of interests which are connected with this. Enterprises that seek the intellectual culture of mankind, the secular and social interests of the community; the public welfare in the matter of health, order, just and liberal government; all these are as obligatory upon the Christian as a duty as that which immediately concerns the instruction of men in religious truth. Every stone in the wall has its office to accomplish. A man who is building a cathedral cannot say, "I will make it all of statues, or spire." And, therefore, Christian duty is never narrow. When any work, then, contributes to the plan of God and meets us directly in our path, we may be persuaded that it is a part of the work which God assigns to us. II. WHEN IT IS POSSIBLE TO BE REALISED YET WITH EFFORT AND SELF-DENIAL. We are not responsible for what we cannot accomplish; *e.g.*, for preaching in tongues we do not know, for building churches and floating them over the seas to China and Japan. God's errand is always a practicable errand, and in proportion to the effort and self-denial required, His authorship of the message concerning the work becomes more evident to the thoughtful Christian mind. We usually judge exactly the opposite. We say, "That is a good work, and I can do it in a minute; therefore that is God's errand for me. It is a good work, and I can help it by a little gift which I never shall miss. That is evidently God's plan." No; God's plan exactly reverses that. He makes duty the more obligatory the more difficult it is, for the development of Christian energy, generosity, patience. God does not need our help. Why, then, does He ask for it? Because thus He develops us. He applies not tests merely, but stimulants to whatever is best in us. The man who has given himself to his country loves it better, the man who has fought for his friend honours him more, the man who has laboured for his community values more highly the interests he has sought to conserve. III. WHEN THE CALL FOR IT COMES UNEXPECTEDLY AND BY NO PRE-ARRANGEMENT OF OURS. We recognise God's intervention in our plans, in part, by the suddenness with which the event occurred contrary to expectation, as when a friend is restored from sickness when all our hope had faded; as when a path is suddenly opened to prosperity and usefulness, where everything seemed hedged up and we could not contrive any way by which to reach the result. When the Bible Society was formed no man was expecting it. A Welsh missionary had distributed some thousand copies of the Welsh Scriptures, and went to London to get more and could not. He said to one and another, "Why cannot we have a society to print the Bible in Welsh?" They came together to see if it could be done, and one man, whose name had hardly ever been heard, rose and said: "Yes; but if for Wales, why not for all the world?" Sudden as a flash it came out of the clear sky, and instant was the response. Out of that came the Bible Society of England, of America, of the world. When a man contemplates God's glory in the sanctification of men, proposes to us a work possible for us with effort and self-denial, comes to us without our prevision or pre-

arrangement, it is God's work. IV. WHEN THE IMPRESSION IS BURNED IN UPON THE MIND, day after day, week after week, an ever-deepening sense of duty concerning that work—that is God's voice to us. This silent influence of the Spirit was what wrought for us the Bible. This silent influence of the Spirit is the privilege of every Christian now. When that remains, deepening continually in you, becoming clearer and stronger, we must trust it as the discovery of God's mind to us concerning our duty. No man who has once learned to trust it will ever trust anything else in preference to it. In the great crisis of life that is always the way. Hold the mind prayerfully in conference with God, unresistingly under the impression of His Spirit. When it points in a certain direction, then follow it into darkness or day; wheresoever that leads, go. We are certain of success; go, nothing doubting. When all those signs combine, then Peter may keep his vision and the voice of Zion which spoke in the air around him. I hear a voice within, and whosoever follows that voice follows God and follows Him into His glory. (*Christian Age.*) *Peter's obedience to an unexpected intimation*:—Mr. Joseph C. Palmer, in the early days of California, was a member of a bank which did an immense business. Once a depositor called to draw £5,600 from the bank. Mr. Palmer's consent was necessary, but he had been called away to attend some duty a mile or more from the bank. Thither the depositor hastened and made known his wants and the necessity of having them attended to at once. Mr. Palmer could find neither pen, pencil, ink, nor paper. But without a moment's hesitation he picked up a shingle, borrowed a piece of red chalk, and with it wrote a cheque on the shingle in large and distinct letters for £5,600. This was promptly honoured when presented. It is probably the only instance on record of such a cheque being drawn and honoured; but in this case the paying clerk accepted the instructions of his principal, though conveyed in an unusual manner, without hesitation. Would that Christian men were as ready to obey the intimations of God's will, even if they are revealed in unlooked-for ways and are opposed to pre-conceived notions. The apostle Peter showed this readiness on one memorable occasion (chap. x. 10–23). (*Christian Herald.*)

Vers. 24–33. **And the morrow after they entered into Cæsarea. And Cornelius waited for them.**—*Model pastoral visitation*:—I. THE PREPARATION FOR IT. 1. With the household, an earnest desire for salvation. 2. With the minister, a holy impulse of the Spirit. II. THE CONVERSATION AT IT. 1. On the part of those confessing, an honest exhibition of the state of their heart. 2. On the part of the pastor, a powerful testimony of Christ and His salvation. III. THE FRUIT THEREOF. 1. For the hearers; strengthening and vivification by the Holy Ghost. 2. For the minister; joy in the Lord over rescued souls and the increase of His kingdom. (*K. Gerok.*) *Peter and Cornelius*:—The incident before us teaches—I. THAT CHRISTIANITY CAN ERADICATE THE MOST INVETERATE HABITS. Until this hour Peter had not understood the world-conquering mission of Christianity, so that when the messengers of Cornelius met him he was the very embodiment of ceremonial sanctity. He must now feel the expansive power of Christianity—and run to the moral rescue of a branded Gentile! In achieving this eradication of habit, no compulsory agency is employed. Conviction is produced by illumination. How was it in the case of Peter? There was—1. Visible revelation—the descending vessel was patent to his vision. 2. Oral communication—"What God hath cleansed that call not thou common." 3. Concurrent personal evidence—"while Peter doubted himself, the men which were sent from Cornelius" stood at his door. 4. Divine instigation—"Get thee down, and go with them." 5. In all this, however, there was nothing beyond moral suasion. Peter's conviction was won, hence he avers, "God hath showed me." Is aught so mighty as religious conviction? Has it not shaken thrones, convulsed dynasties, and made the history of humanity glorious? It is by the force of conviction that Christianity is to eradicate moral evil. II. THAT THE PROPAGATION OF CHRISTIANITY HAS BEEN DEVOLVED ON HUMAN INSTRUMENTALITY (vers. 5, 6). The angel might have been delegated and thus obviated the necessity of Peter's ministry. But there are three all-sufficient reasons for the employment of human agency—1. Man can practically attest the advantages of Christianity. He testifies to what he has experimentally realised. It is not a "thing of beauty" to his outward eye, but a reality and a power in his soul. 2. Man can sympathise with the peculiar difficulties which beset the human mind. The Christian has passed through the purifying process. Hence, having "passed from darkness to light" himself, he may guide others into the mysterious way. When he meets the doubter, the anxious inquirer, the tempted, he can sympathise with each phase of human experience, and

thus is qualified to propagate the gospel. 3. Man can expose the delusiveness of sin. He has experienced its hollow and heartless treachery. This gives him power in reasoning with the Felixes of society. When they recount their pleasures, he can testify of their bitterness. These qualifications were combined in a superlative degree in Peter. Could not he attest the advantages of Christianity? III. THE TRUE METHOD OF EXPOUNDING CHRISTIANITY. Mark the directness of this sermon! Wherever the preacher travels he never loses sight of Christ. If he reverts to the "children of Israel," he connects them with Jesus; if he traverses the Holy Land it is to track the footprints of the Saviour; if he refers to the Great White Throne of time's final day, it is to point to the Redeemer Judge. 1. There are lessons for preachers here. The world is to be saved by the preaching of "Christ crucified." 2. There are lessons for listeners here. For what purpose do ye assemble? Cornelius summoned the apostle "to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." Come for mental gratification and your hope may be turned to confusion—come to commune with the condescending Deity, and answers of peace will refresh your soul! 3. Peter emphatically preached the gospel. His address was not an essay upon the gospel nor a dissertation upon any of its doctrines—it was a bold and powerful proclamation of "remission of sins" through faith in Christ. In modern days such a sermon might be termed commonplace—scholars might describe it as being fit for unlearned plebeians, and critics might charge it with want of finish: notwithstanding this, however, can we imagine anything more exquisitely adapted to the necessities of Cornelius and his fellow-auditors? Adaptation, in fact, is the true secret of power. Paul could reason, Apollos could declaim, and Peter could present the gospel with condensation and comprehensiveness unsurpassed by any of his contemporaries. So, in the modern Church, every man must work in his own order; each, however, striving to exalt the Cross as being at once a pledge of infinite love and the medium of human salvation. IV. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN HUMAN AGENCY AND DIVINE POWER (ver. 44). This fact shows us—1. That human agency is not self-sufficient as to spiritual results. It is not in man to raise the Lazaruses of society from their moral death. They may "roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre," but God alone can relax the tyrant's grasp. 2. That, apart from the delivered Word, there must be distinct Divine influence. The word had been spoken, and in addition to the oral message there was a distinct effusion of the Holy Ghost. While, therefore, we "search the Scriptures," and give ear to the human ministry, we must implore the presence and benediction of the Eternal Spirit. Conclusion: Lingering near this house in Cæsarea, one may overhear lessons vitally affecting our personal peace and destiny as well as witness the triumph of evangelical truth. We learn—1. That spiritual perfection is an impossibility apart from Christ. Cornelius was an evidently religious man, yet he lacked the true light; something more was needed to purify and perfect his character. 2. That man's worth is to be estimated by his moral condition. "In every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness." The time will come when every man shall be estimated according to his character. 3. The transcendent honour connected with Christian usefulness. Was ever man crowned with higher honour than that of being the instrument of leading sinners to a knowledge of the true Saviour? (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Peter and Cornelius*:—1. Surely this is put on record as a pattern of the Lord's chosen way of doing His work, by making each one who receives His grace a centre for making his own immediate surroundings bright therewith. Cornelius "called together his kinsmen and near friends." 2. When each agent in the Lord's service obediently fulfils his own task "without gainsaying or tarrying," all the manifold parts fit together in a wondrous completeness of success. It is one portion of a perfect design which the Master accomplishes when He works in you to serve Him. Another portion of the same design He is preparing elsewhere. Obedient faith brings the portions together. 3. When Peter received the Lord's Word about "the keys of the kingdom of heaven," he little thought that it would be given to him to throw open the gates of the kingdom to the Gentile world. Glad surprises of result are given also to the humblest and weakest disciple, who simply takes each step of service, waiting on Jesus with dutiful love. 4. In the few full words of Peter here, we are made to feel how all the gathered riches of the old covenant are completed and freely given to all in Christ, so that "whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." This "the law could not do." (*G. S. Rowe.*)

Ver. 28. **A man that is a Jew.**—*The Jew*:—I can conceive of no object more pro-

foundly interesting than this—"a man that is a Jew!" All that is venerable in antiquity, sacred in religion, rich in story, sublime in poetry, cleaves to this extraordinary race. But for such a man infidelity would have lost one of the most unanswerable proofs of her falsehood and her folly. I. HIS COMMON CLAIMS AS A MAN. A recent pope was passing through Rome; a Jew, fallen in a fit, lay prostrate on the pavement; the people who saw him, like the priest and the Levite, passed by on the other side; but the sovereign pontiff, alighting from his carriage, ran to his help. "He is a Jew!" they cried, as if in horror of a contact so contaminating. "He is a man!" cried the pontiff; and, like the good Samaritan, he hastened to his relief, saw him safely conducted to his home, and sent his own physician to attend him. 1. He is a man as well as a Jew, although he is a Jew, and all the claims that humanity can present to the sympathy of the species belong to him. He, too, may make the appeal, so long urged in vain by the enslaved African, "Am I not a man and a brother?" You owe to him the performance of a brother's part; and if you fail to render it the voice of your brother's blood will cry against you. 2. He is a man, the offspring of the same parent, the workmanship of the same Creator, as fearfully and wonderfully made as you are, the same life-blood flows in his veins, the same heart throbs in his breast, and to all the ills to which flesh is heir, he is subject as well as you. 3. That man that is a Jew has a soul, precious as yours. God's breath inspired it; His Spirit endowed it; and He who has emphatically said, "All souls are Mine," claims it as His own. Think of the faculties with which it is endowed, its vast capacity of happiness or misery, the perilous circumstances in which it is placed under the curse and condemning sentence of God's violated law, and the dread eternity it is destined to inherit if it pass into it unforgiven. 4. And was not the same precious blood shed for its redemption? On what other ground than this can you seek with any degree of propriety, or with any hope of success, the salvation of the Jews? And if it be so precious, what an argument does that consideration furnish for our best efforts to promote the salvation of the soul for whose redemption even that was not esteemed a price too great. II. THE CLAIMS PECULIAR TO HIM AS A JEW. He belongs to a race—1. Venerable in antiquity. Who can boast of a heraldry or of a history like theirs? A heraldry whose emblazonment is from heaven, and a history whose records are written by inspired pens. The origin of other nations is veiled in obscurity and so blended with fable that it is hard to separate fact from fiction. But here is a people, all whose story is drawn out in lines of accuracy and in characters of truth. And is it not an affecting spectacle to behold a people, thus hoary with the accumulation of ages, treated with contumely, and left to perish? 2. Which once enjoyed the special tokens of the Divine favour. Now, indeed, they are trodden under foot of the Gentiles. But they were a great nation once. They, and they alone, could boast a pure theocracy, and laws given from heaven. Are a people, then, once thus signally owned and honoured by God, to be regarded with indifference or contempt? A people too, whose abandonment by God is not final, and whose restoration to His favour shall assuredly come. I am not sure that the tardy progress of the Christian cause may not be, in some measure, attributed to the unconcern which Christians have manifested towards Jews. 3. To which we are laid under the deepest obligation. There is nothing great or good that we possess but we are indebted for it to the Jews. The best of books, the best of gifts, we owe to them—the sacred volume and the Saviour of the world. Who is the most ancient and the most authentic of all historians—but a Jew? What poets can compare with theirs? Beloved they must be, for the fathers' sake if not for their own; and though we may well despair of ever paying the debt due to them, still, by our efforts for their welfare, we will testify that we are not altogether unconscious of or unwilling to acknowledge it. And think how long this debt has been contracting, while scarcely a fraction of the interest has been paid. Societies there are expending hundreds of thousands on the distant heathen, but how few there are interested in the restoration of the lost sheep of the house of Israel! 4. To whose conversion prodigious advantage must accrue. If the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness? The Jews, in the event of their conversion, will become the most zealous and successful missionaries; while the Church herself, aroused by this event to a life and energy and unanimity unknown to former times, will take the field against the common foe in numbers compared with which all present figures will appear contemptible. Who can go forth and announce the faithful saying, "worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," and add, with the same emphasis as the Jew, "of whom I am

chief"? 5. For whose salvation there has never been a period more favourable than the present. Already there seems to be a shaking amongst the bones in the valley of vision. The Jews begin to be weary of the long delay that attends the coming of their vainly expected Messiah. They have their misgivings as to the correctness of their views. They feel as though the system to which they have so tenaciously clung had waxen old and was ready to vanish away. Hope deferred begins to make the heart sick. They long for some better teaching than their Rabbins give, and for some more satisfying and sustaining influences than their Talmuds and their Targums yield. In this state of things their enlightened and intelligent men are more disposed to converse and argue upon the subject of the Messiahship of Christ in former times. And most assuredly when infidelity, under the guise of rational Christianity, is overspreading the continent, we shall do well to seek the conversion of the Jews. Infidelity can meet no antagonist more formidable than a learned, intelligent, and converted Jew. (*T. Raffles, D.D.*) **God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.**—*A beautiful faith in the sparks of divinity in every human soul*:—I. ITS GOOD GROUND. 1. By creation. (1) After the image of God. (2) All from one pair. 2. By redemption. (1) God will have all men to be saved. (2) Christ sends His apostles to all nations. 3. By experience. (1) In the heathen world. (2) In the pastoral oversight of criminals. II. ITS BENEFICIAL INFLUENCE. 1. For the Christian contemplation of the world and conceptions of history in general. 2. For Christian intercourse in daily life. 3. For the Christian ministry. (*K. Gerok.*) *The value of common things*:—A rich nobleman was once showing a friend a great collection of precious stones whose value was almost beyond counting. There were diamonds, and pearls, and rubies, and gems from almost every country, and had been gathered by their possessor at the greatest labour and expense. "And yet," he remarked, "they yield me no income." His friend replied that he had two stones which had only cost him five pounds each, but which yielded him a very considerable income, and he led him down to the mill and pointed to two toiling grey millstones. (*W. Baxendale.*)

Ver. 29. **Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying.**—*Pastor and people*:—I. CONCERNING THE TRUE MINISTER, I affirm that—1. He is a special creation of Divine grace. The mantle of the prophet is not personal property; God is its owner, and He Himself must determine who shall be invested with it. (1) The processes through which men reach the pulpit are diverse; but if true, each has been guided by the Divine eye. Some require years of mental preparation; others are summoned at once from obscurity. What then? Shall each question the Divinity of the other's mission? God forbid! "There are diversities of operation, but the same Spirit." He who spoke the universe into being can suddenly qualify men to bear the standard of the Cross. He also who has established the processes of creation may gradually train men. We must therefore test the Divinity of each man's mission more by the results secured than by the discipline undergone. Every true minister is a special creation of Divine grace, just as every planet is a special creation of Divine power. He does not enter upon the publication of the gospel as a profession, but as a vocation. "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel." You may as well attempt to arrest the whirlwind, or roll back the planets, as to silence the God-created minister. Kings and councils have attempted the task; but above the fury and clamour of hell this voice has sounded, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Aye! that is one secret of the true minister's power—he has "seen and heard" his Divine Master. (2) The Divinity of this mission is in no wise affected by the variety of manner which may be adopted by individual ministers. Each man has his own style of working, and is never so effective as when he is natural. The whirlwind has a mission, and so has the zephyr; the summer sun and the wintry blast are alike useful; and so in relation to the spiritual ministry one man speaks in tones of thunder, and lays his grasp upon the pillars of the temple of sin. Another speaks in tenderness, and stretches forth a helping hand to those that "have no might." One man is peculiarly qualified to make havoc among the ranks of infidelity; another is constructive, and builds up the Church in its most holy faith. In the Christian ministry you find the accomplished scholar, the eagle-eyed critic, the eloquent orator. But you must not expect in any one man a summary of qualifications; take each in his own sphere, and be thankful for what he is, rather than regretful for what he is not. Do you depreciate the sun because without fragrance? the rose because without

light? 2. He seeks the highest spiritual culture of his auditors. (1) The sanctuary is not an academy in which the sciences are courted, or in which learned prelections are to be delivered. Men are less anxious to understand a technical theology than to be brought into contact with the life-giving religion of Jesus. After the anxieties of life, after fellowship with men destitute of Divine sympathy, your spirits require something more than scholastic criticisms. (2) There will be great diversity in the character of my hearers. I shall not address all in the same strain, nor always luxuriate amid the green pastures of doctrine, assurance, and promise. I shall erect the standard of eternal rectitude, and give men to feel their true moral stature. I shall tear the mask from the hypocrite, and lay hold on the prodigal and try to woo him to repentance. (3) The power of the Church consists in its piety. There is force in genius; but, contrasted with the strength of piety, it is weakness. There is power in money; but the pauper whose heart glows with love to the Saviour is a mightier power than the millionaire. Holiness is power; with it we are valorous as giants—without it we are "reeds shaken with the wind." Holiness is peace. The peace which exists apart from holiness is a treacherous lull. The mischief-maker can secure no sympathy in a holy Church; every ear is closed to his slander, and every tongue ready to rebuke his impiety. II. CONCERNING THOSE WHO WAIT UPON THE MINISTRY. 1. The pastor has a right to expect—(1) Their punctual and regular attendance. This is necessary to enjoyment. The devotional part of the service is of the highest importance. And even, taking the lowest ground, there is something opposed to public decency and rectitude in late attendance. (2) The exercise of a charitable judgment. While the enemy rages, let the friends unite! If you prove faithful, I shall calmly survey any external storm! (3) An abiding interest in their prayers. Without prayer we shall perish. Prayer gives strength, elevation, self-oblivion. (4) Their zealous co-operation. A minister feels himself strong just in proportion as he possesses the sympathy of his people. 2. The people must not expect—(1) Uniformity in the mode of address. Ministers are but men. Their physical functions may be deranged, their social peace may be invaded, their souls may be distracted, and all such disturbances will produce an influence on their ministry. We must, therefore, be discriminating and sympathetic in relation to pulpit services, and must at all times endeavour to secure in worship what is lacking in meditation. (2) A system of theology in every sermon. Some auditors are unreasonable enough to expect a preacher, in every discourse, to commence at the creation and end at the harps of heaven, paying special attention to intervening circumstances. My object will be to analyse each text, and to develop the meaning peculiar to it. I hold most tenaciously the great doctrines of Scripture; but it would be impossible to discuss these in connection with every Scriptural statement. At the same time it will be my aspiration ever to exalt Jesus as man's only and all-sufficient Saviour! (3) Periodical visitation. Much time will be required to prepare for the pulpit, and the calls of the sick, the dying, and the penitent shall secure my fullest attention. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The design of the Christian ministry*:—Let us consider the reasons under which a people ought to act when they seek the aid of ministers. I. PERSONAL SALVATION. The end of the ministry is the salvation of men—not the performance of ceremonies, nor the pronouncing of discourses. The forms and shadows of the Levitical priesthood have passed away; and disputation and laboured oratory have their places in the schools. Could we speak with the tongues of men and angels, or open to you mysteries, yet eloquence and learning would not be a reason why you should have sent for us. What is the harmony of periods, if all is to end in words? What are the researches of the study, if all is to terminate in the increase of your knowledge? The question with us is, how we may turn any talents with which God has endowed us to the account of your salvation. II. INSTRUCTION IN THE TRUTH. Salvation and truth are inseparably connected. Cornelius sent for Peter, that he might "hear words of him." Words of Jewish tradition or Gentile philosophy? No; but "words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved." You have sent for us, then, to declare the truth; but have you considered its nature and extent? And can you bear it? It is not all comprehended in the love of God. Can you bear to be slain by the law? Can you bear the ministry of the Baptist? Can you bear to be told that, virtuous as many of you may be, you must seek this salvation as sinners, and that, if any man will be Christ's disciple, he must deny himself daily, and take up his cross, and follow his Lord? Can you bear to have it enforced upon you, "Be not conformed to this world," and to be reminded that there must be no intermission in duty; that you must run with diligence the race set before you,

and war a good warfare? If you have sent for us for this "intent," you may say, "Thou hast done well that thou art come." May you therefore so "purify your souls by obeying the truth," that you may "know the truth, and the truth may make you free!" III. FAITHFUL AND CONSTANT APPLICATION AND ENFORCEMENT OF TRUTH. Ministers ought to be better skilled in Divine knowledge than the majority of their hearers; but it would be a false view that the ministry is appointed to teach us constantly some new thing. It is, on the contrary, no less important that we should apply and enforce known truth. For—1. Conscience often sleeps, and needs another to awake it. 2. We are prone to judge others. The ministry is appointed to oblige us to judge ourselves. 3. We are liable to religious delusions; and we avoid those truths which would disturb us. The minister of Christ must declare the whole counsel of God; and the very truths you need are thus pressed upon you. 4. All sinful habits and passions raise a haze and mist about themselves; and it is for the Christian ministry to dispel that delusive atmosphere. 5. All temptation, too, places a bias on the judgment. You only see the fruit pleasant to the eye, and to be desired to make one wise. It is for the ministry to remind you that God hath said, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Or your temptation may be to discouragement and unbelief; and then it is for us to call your attention to the great and precious promises. IV. THE ESTABLISHMENT OR CONTINUANCE OF THE ORDINANCES AND DISCIPLINE OF THE CHURCH. St. Peter here opens the Church to the Gentiles. They come in; and this was their mercy and their privilege; and so it ought to be esteemed by us. For a Christian Church is one of the most important institutions on earth. Its members are in special covenant with God. Sabbaths are observed, public assemblies are held; and in these the Divine presence is both promised and realised. Christian fellowship is enjoyed. The Church is an association formed to make war upon sin and error. Here the aged are comforted and strengthened; children are brought to Christ, and trained up for His service; and servants made free by the truth. In the Church there are holy rules of living and acting in force. Baptism is administered; and "by eating" of the sacramental "bread, and drinking of that cup," the followers of Christ "show forth His death till He come." Did you send for us to maintain or subvert this beautiful order? "To maintain it," I know you say. We rejoice to meet you on this ground. Well, then, be co-workers with us, or the end will fail. Conclusion: 1. If you have proposed important ends in sending for us, these impose important duties upon us, which we cannot perform but by special assistance. We shall need your candour, and, above all, your prayers. 2. Maintain the teachable spirit. Except a man receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he cannot enter therein. 3. Be "intent" upon growth and advancement in knowledge and piety. (*R. Watson.*)

Vers. 30–48. **And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting.**—*Peter at Cæsarea:*—We welcome his revelation that the grace of God has so boundless a reach; that in His government men are accountable not for knowledge which they have not, but for what they have. It suggests certain practical lessons like the following: I. IT IS OUR PRIVILEGE TO EXERCISE A WIDE CHARITY TOWARD RELIGIONS WHICH DIFFER FROM OUR OWN. We have the authority of Scripture for recognising the truth wherever found. No one of the apostles stands more resolutely for sound doctrine, for righteous living, than Paul; yet more than once he takes pains to quote from heathen writers opinions that are correct as far as they go. He believed that so far as they had any truth, it was the truth of God. We have a feeling sometimes that to acknowledge anything of good in one who is not a Christian, or in a Church with which we have no fellowship, or in a nation that is in spiritual darkness, is disloyalty to God; but we are really doing Him larger honour to believe that something of His image is left in His creatures everywhere; that, in the plenitude of His grace, His Spirit is working to some extent in all men the fruits of righteousness; that He only demands of His creatures, in Christian or in heathen lands, to follow the knowledge which they have; that "in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him." II. WE MAY BE INSPIRED BY THE VIRTUES OF THE PAGANS. It is a part of charity not only to recognise virtue anywhere, but to be willing to copy it. That is a high attainment in the study of this grace. If a man is, in your judgment, a heathen or a heretic, it is humiliating to admit that he can teach you anything of goodness; but perhaps he can. He may have some excellencies that are far beyond yours in the same line. Why should you not make these a subject of study and emulation? Certainly it is not dis-

paraging the Christian system; it is not reflecting upon God; they all came from Him; they are not the product of the human will; they are fruits of the Spirit, and in copying them you are but copying God. For example, the Stoics, who knew little of Christianity, had rules for right living as exalted in some particulars as those prescribed by Christian men in any age. One of their philosophers says of human depravity: "Let us first persuade ourselves of this, that there is not one of us without fault." "If you wish to be good, first believe that you are bad." That is as strong as the Saviour's words: "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Another, writing of self-examination, refers to an old scholar who, when the day was over and he went to rest, used to ask himself, "What evil have you cured to-day? What vice have you resisted? In what particular have you improved?" That would be a good rule for Christians. Here is another precept: "What ought not to be done, do not even think of doing." Virtues like these were taught by a few, at least, centuries before the Christian era. There seems ground for the opinion that the prevalence of these to such an extent helped to prepare the world for the gospel, as St. Augustine admitted that he had been led first toward Christianity by the stoical teachings of Cicero. A flower that springs up in a field of weeds and surprises you with its fragrance, is as really the work of a Divine Creator as that which grows in a gardener's bed. Virtue is always Divine, and wherever she leads it is safe to follow. III. WE OUGHT TO BE GRATEFUL FOR THE LIGHT OF CHRISTIANITY. But why, if there is so much to commend in the pagan philosophers? What need is there of the gospel? This simply: religion is something more than a system of ethics. If it be asked more definitely what was it that they lacked as compared with us, the answer is many-sided; but this is its substance: they lacked Christ. Here, then, is a vast gulf between those sages and ourselves. They did not have the idea, as we do, of a personal God—a Father, a Friend. More particularly they did not know Jesus, did not have Him as a guide. With all their beautiful precepts, they had no example; they did not know of any one who had ever obeyed these laws. One of them writes, "Follow the guidance of nature: that is the great thing." What a rule for a weak human being! One of them speaks of waiting for death with a cheerful mind; but look back a sentence or two, and see what he means: "What, then, is that which is able to enrich a man? One thing, and only one—philosophy." That is as far as their wisdom rose. That is why we have reason for gratitude that we know of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of men. He is "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." "Every man," whoever, wherever, whatever he is. If any one claims that he is sufficient in himself, and needs no Divine revelation other than that which comes from his own consciousness, he is making a fatal mistake; he cannot quote Cornelius as an example. (*T. J. Holmes.*) *Peter at Cæsarea:* —Peter's bringing of the gospel to Cornelius, and Cornelius' subsequent baptism, seem very much matters of course to us; but they were revolutionary. They were like John Wesley's ordination of men to preach the gospel in America. Thenceforth he knew he had violated the canons of the Church of England. Thenceforth Peter knew that he had repudiated Judaism as a necessary preparative to Christianity. I. CORNELIUS' PREPARATION. No man can make himself worthy of God's blessing. But one can so prepare himself for the Divine blessing, that it shall come more easily down and find a quicker acceptance. In this sense Cornelius had made ready for God. He says he was fasting at the time the special revelation came to him, and, indeed, it was at the very moment of prayer (ver. 30). God's ways of dealing with men conform to none of the laws which we might construct. We cannot say that religious exercises, in which Cornelius was engaged, offer the only occasions when God may come to men. We recall Balaam, addressed when on an ungodly mission; we recall Saul, converted while journeying to persecute the saints. But these revelations were not in congruity with the soul's antecedents. They came by crushing down opposition. Yet we are safe in saying that such is not God's usual way of granting insight into His truth. We cannot bind God by law; but conversely we can assert law of ourselves, and say confidently that prayer and all religious exercises are used by God in leading us into new visions of truth. The angel told Cornelius that his prayerful and upright life had commended him to God for His blessing (ver. 31). What God remembered was not Cornelius' worthiness of a blessing, but his fitness for a blessing, shown by the desire for it, witnessed to by a prayerful and righteous life. Cornelius' life commended him to God not as accomplishment, but as a sign of aspiration. A good man is one who wants to be better. For such God's blessing is surely prepared. Being of such a temper of

mind, it was natural that Cornelius showed an immediate acceptance of God's revelation and an immediate obedience toward it (ver. 33). II. PETER'S ADDRESS was the fuller form of God's answer to Cornelius. The appearance of the angel, and the directions he gave, were only preliminary to something else. This was furnished by Peter; it was the revelation of Christ as a Saviour. Peter's address divides itself easily into three parts—1. The introduction (vers. 34, 35) lays down the double statement that God is no respecter of persons, but that a good man, whatever his nationality, is accepted of Him. The special lesson needed by Peter and the other leaders of the Church then was that circumstantials make no difference to God. The passage has been immensely abused by misinterpretation. It has been supposed to teach that all religions are equally pleasing to God; from which has been deduced the inference that our duty is to let men alone in their religions, and not try to convert them to Christianity. But if Cornelius was already in the proper condition Godward, why did he need conversion? Again, the passage has been used to teach the doctrine that if one is a good man, and tries conscientiously to do his duty towards his fellow-men, and reveres God, he is all right, is "accepted with Him," and needs nothing more. Faith in Christ is thus not enumerated among the things necessary to reconciliation with God. But if to fear God and to work righteousness were enough in Cornelius, why did Peter preach to him the gospel? The truth is, "accepted" here does not mean accepted as all he ought to be, but accepted as a proper subject for that work of conversion which tends to make one what he ought to be. 2. The main part of Peter's address describes the life and function of Jesus (vers. 36–42). The external facts of His career are touched upon in such a way as to show the solid grounding of His supernatural work upon indisputable material fact. 3. The application of Peter's address (ver. 43) makes the doctrines concerning Christ which he has just stated practical and pointed. Christ is given to men that "whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." The other functions of Christ do not press so immediately upon us as His office as a Saviour. To miss this is to miss all that He would have us know. III. THE BLESSING FROM ON HIGH CAME WHILE PETER WAS SPEAKING. The Holy Ghost fell upon them (ver. 44). No distinction of nationality was observed by the heavenly Visitor. (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*) *Cornelius and Peter*:—I. READY TO HEAR THE WORD. Cornelius was a Roman centurion—in modern phrase, a heathen. How did he become ready to hear the Word? 1. By prayer. At the time the angel came he was engaged in prayer. This prayer was not a mere form. (1) He had not stopped just when the ninth hour expired, but had persisted in his supplications "until this hour." It is fair to infer from that, that he was in earnest about something. Such prayers only are effective. General prayers, that seek for nothing specific, get just what they seek, and no more. It is safe to take the mission of the angel as an answer to Cornelius' prayer, and to deduce that Cornelius was praying that he might be shown the way of salvation (chap. xi. 14). (2) The angel came in response to his prayer. No celestial messengers are sent where the prayers are merely formal. 2. By a vision. His vision was not a dream or a trance. "He saw in a vision openly" (chap. x. 3). He was wide awake, as one engaged in earnest prayer could not help but be. "A man stood before me in bright apparel." Cornelius tells how he looked. Luke tells what he was (chap. x. 3). When Cornelius saw him, he was affrighted, and said, "What is it, Lord?" The celestial character of his visitor, the circumstances of his appearing, and the fear that sinful mortals must ever feel in the presence of sinless immortals, combined to compel Cornelius to accept without questioning whatever the angel might say. 3. By the angel's words. They were—(1) Words of assurance. "Thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance." Faith now takes the place of an angel in assuring all who approach the throne of grace that their prayers have prevailed. Neither are their alms or good deeds forgotten. "God is not unrighteous," &c. The declaration that his prayers and his alms were gone up for a memorial before God, gave comfort and prepared for further revelation. (2) Words of direction. "Send therefore to . . . Peter." Whatever Peter might say had celestial endorsement beforehand. Many hearts are Divinely made ready for the reception of the gospel, when the Spirit moves one to speak the words of life. But observe, the angel himself did not tell the story of the Cross to Cornelius. He left that to Peter. No one can tell the story of redemption so well as one who himself has been redeemed. That Cornelius was thus prepared to hear the Word is made evident—(*a*) By his sending for Peter. He sent "forthwith." He was in haste to hear. (*b*) By his commendation of Peter. "Thou hast well done that thou art

come." Cornelius believed that Peter was about to do that which would show him that he was right in disregarding the ceremonial barriers between Jew and Gentile. (*c*) By his declaration to Peter. "Now therefore we are all here present in the sight of God to hear." Cornelius had improved the time while waiting for Peter to come (ver. 24). He was in earnest to learn the way of life, not only for himself, but for all of his friends. II. PROCLAIMING THE WORD. We turn now from Cornelius to Peter. 1. The truth perceived. (1) "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons." Until this moment, Peter had not known why he had been sent for, nor the real meaning of his vision. So far he had interpreted the vision to mean nothing only that he must not hesitate to associate with the Gentiles, to whom he was sent. But now he sees it meant a great deal more—spiritual as well as social equality. This was no new thought (Deut. x. 17; 2 Chron. xix. 7; Job xxxiv. 19). But Peter and others had been thinking of this as true only as between Jews. He had not realised the truth he himself had declared (Acts iii. 25). (2) "But in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to Him." Mark here two things—(*a*) Peter's change of standards. His criterion for judging was outward no longer. He instantly dropped the notion that circumcision was necessary to salvation. All essentials were suddenly reduced to two—fearing God and working righteousness. (*b*) That those two essentials were not enough. They made Cornelius "acceptable," but not accepted. If any one, by good works, could be saved, there was no need for Cornelius to hear about Christ the Saviour (ver. 2). But his good works did not satisfy God, nor did they satisfy himself. Salvation cannot be purchased with good works. The only adequate price for that is the precious blood of Christ. 2. The truth preached. Note—(1) That Peter did not tell anything new. His auditors were aware of the story of Christ. "Ye yourselves know." It was "the old, old story" that was effective, and that will be effective to the end of time. (2) That he verified what he did tell. He offered himself and the other apostles as witnesses of the death and the resurrection of Christ. He offered also the prophets as witnesses, and probably showed how the sufferings and atoning death of Christ were symbolised in sacrifices and foretold in prophecy. III. BLESSED BY THE WORD. "The Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the Word." Notice—1. The time. "While Peter yet spake." There was no laying on of apostolic hands. The conferring of the gift was as direct from God to those Gentiles as it had been to the Jews on the day of Pentecost. 2. The abundance. "Was poured out." 3. The manifestations. "Heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God." They were affected and endowed in the same way that their Jewish brethren had been. Thus this Pentecost of the Gentiles proved their right to an unquestioned place in the brotherhood of the saints—their baptism of the Spirit to baptism by water. (*M. C. Hazard.*) *Peter and Cornelius:*—Here we have a Conservative Jew and a Liberal Gentile. The Jew wants to keep things as they are. He is quite content to preach Christ to his countrymen. The Gentile, on the other hand, has come to feel that all truth is not confined to the systems of his fathers. He has heard of Christ, and wants to know more of Him. So the narrative shows how, in the providence of God, these opposite men meet at the Cross, and there forget their differences as they learned that God is no respecter of persons. Let us consider—I. A GOOD PREACHER. 1. Opinions greatly differ on what constitutes a good minister of Jesus Christ. Some say educate your men; others say you will educate all the fire out of them. Some say that the minister must take an active part in social movements; others, that he must do nothing of the kind. Some think he must give his strength to visitation; others, that he must be strong in the pulpit. Some leave a man's ministry because he is too noisy; others, because he is too quiet. Some object to men who do not rush to the door to shake hands with everybody; others object to such familiarity. 2. But there was one thing about Peter that all may imitate—he was a man of prayer, as every good preacher, teacher, Christian must be. Christ Himself was. Nothing great or good can the man of God expect without prayer. While Elijah prayed the fire fell; in answer to prayer Joseph was able to interpret Pharaoh's dreams; while the little Church prayed at Pentecost the Holy Ghost came down; while the disciples prayed Peter was released from prison; and as he prayed on the housetop God gave him the vision. You cannot preach, but you can pray, and that will make the weak strong. II. THE REMARKABLE CONGREGATION (ver. 33). Observe—1. They were all in time. No notice was put up in the porch, saying, "You are requested not to enter during prayer." No one disturbed the singing or preaching. We are not told that anybody came in knocking down

half a dozen hymn books, and attracting attention to the last new bonnet. 2. No one went to sleep. Judged by modern practice that was remarkable. Our fathers must have been wakeful people, for they would listen to sermons two hours' length in straight-backed pews. Now the pews are so shaped and furnished as to invite sleep. 3. They were anxious to hear. That, too, was remarkable. How vastly different would be our worship if we came in that expectant condition! How helpful would be the preacher's word! Once a week worship, empty seats, and deserted churches would be things of the past. III. THE VERY STRIKING SERMON. 1. It was very short; one could have wished it longer. The main objection to long sermons is that the quality is not in proportion. 2. It was full of Christ, although the Name appears only twice. We should not be always repeating the Name, but all our sermons and lessons should be as full of Christ as they can carry; and our daily life and conduct too. You need not for ever carry a Bible in your hand. When your little one draws a cat she is obliged to say so underneath, or no one would recognise it; but by and by she will draw what will describe itself. So all should be able to recognise the Master in us. "Let your light so shine," &c. So let it be with your lessons. Christ is to be your diamond; set it as you like, but be sure it is seen. 3. One which declared God's impartiality (vers. 34, 35). "God cares for lowly toilers," &c. IV. THE GLORIOUS EFFECTS (ver. 44). We learn that—1. Peter did not labour in vain. He had immediate results; you may not; but wait God's good time. 2. The people did not hear in vain. How could they, listening as they did. (*C. Leach, D.D.*) *The gospel to the Gentiles*:—The hasty and impetuous Peter had now become, under the influence of transforming grace, a considerate and self-governed man. But though he had lost his impetuosity and was fast losing his prejudices, he had not lost his vigour nor his readiness to give effect to conviction. After one night of calm reflection, diligent search, and earnest prayer, he was ready to set forth on his errand. At the door Cornelius meets him with an act of homage to the exalted character of his visitor, which was already familiar to a Roman in the case of his emperor, but which the apostle refused as an act of superstition. The minister of Christ, even if he be an apostle, is still but a man: in that identity of nature with his people lies as much his strength as his weakness. Compassed, like them, with every infirmity, he can both feel for the sins and the weaknesses of others, and also comfort them with the comfort wherewith he himself is comforted of God. Now, therefore, having come, he must know for what intent they have sent for him. Cornelius answers by recounting the story of his vision. Ten verses comprise the whole of St. Peter's answer; the whole of that revelation which was to be the eternal life of Cornelius and his house. Note that—I. THE GOSPEL WAS A RECORD OF FACTS; AND OUT OF THE FACTS GREW THE DOCTRINES. It was not a mere lesson of morality. It did not say, Do your best and God will accept you. It did not say, Care not about opinion, or doctrine, if only your life is right. Cornelius, whose life was blameless and exemplary, still needed Christ, and the Holy Spirit for his salvation. His diligent use of the light he had, brought him more light: such is God's rule: but it did not enable him to dispense with it. What showed God's acceptance was, God's teaching, God's illumination; not God's acquiescing in his condition, and leaving him as he was. 1. And when that teaching and illumination came, what was it? It was the account of a Person; of One who, though Himself man, had altogether changed and reversed man's condition; had broken the yoke of sin and Satan in instances numerous and decisive enough to show that He could do it in all; had lived a life such as never man lived, and spoken words such as never man spake; had then given His very life as a ransom for many; had died upon the Cross to take away sin, and after dying had also risen again to be the living High Priest, the Mediator and the Advocate with God, of all who believe; to be both the Judge of human kind, and also the Atonement and the Propitiation for human sin. It was our apostles' creed which formed the original gospel to the Gentiles. 2. And is it not so still? And has that gospel now lost its savour? Must we look out for some other because the first is worn out? So the world judges, and the Church has too much caught the infection. We fear that even Christian sermons are too much estimated now by their eloquence or their novelty, and too little by their proclamation of Christ Himself. God help us to come back to the simplicity and (with it) to the strength of St. Peter's first sermon to the Gentiles! II. GOD IN A REMARKABLE MANNER BARE IT WITNESS. 1. While the narrative was proceeding, the gift of Pentecost was poured upon the hearers. The fire of the Lord fell, and attested the sacrifice. By an inversion of which we possess no other record in Scripture, the inward gift

preceded the outward dedication. Elsewhere baptism went first, and the gift of the Spirit followed. God is a God of order, but He is not restricted by His own laws. Nothing less than the Pentecostal sign would have furnished an irresistible argument for this first Gentile baptism (chap. xi. 17, 18). 2. Yet, lest any should draw from this an argument against the importance of forms, it was required that the outward sign should follow. How presumptuous then, in later times, to say, Because the form is not all, therefore the form is nothing! if I have the Spirit, I may dispense with the baptismal water! God has been pleased, in His two holy Sacraments, to remind us that in this life we are body as well as soul, and that the two elements of our being are wonderfully and fearfully commingled. The body acts upon the soul; the soul, in all its volitions, must act through the body. 3. Those who talk slightingly of forms are seldom those who know most of the Spirit. Not without form, though not by forms only, can the work of Christ be carried forward in the world. If the doctrine of the gospel had been launched in the world without the institution of a Church, it might have waxed feebler, generation by generation, until at last it actually died and vanished away. The Church is the pillar and ground of the truth. And we all know how much our faith owes to the possession of a house of prayer, regular seasons of worship, and a standing ministry to lead and to guide and quicken our devotion. Take away all these things, or any of these things, and where should we be? Destroy this temple, make its services rare or repulsive; let there be no one to exercise a regular ministration; let there be no visitation of the sick, no care for the poor, no catechising of the young; and who does not know how serious would be the loss to himself and to the cause of good? I know not whose faith would stand the test of an utter denial of all help either from public worship or from private ministrations; an absolute removal of that candlestick, the Church, which is not indeed, but which yet holds, the light of the Word, the lamp of the truth. Let us not lose, my brethren, by lethargy of soul, the advantages which God has given us. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Complemental ministry*:—In the Garden of Plants at Paris a certain rare tree grew for many years. It was a thriving and mature plant. Year by year it was covered with blossom, and year by year the white blossoms were shed on the ground leaving no fruit behind. After every promise it remained barren still. At last one season, although nothing extraordinary had been observed, after flower came fruit; it swelled apace, and in due time ripened. The tree for the first time brought to maturity self-propagating fruit. They sought and found the cause. Another tree of the same species, but bearing flowers the counterpart and complement of this, had then for the first time blossomed in a garden at some distance. The small white dust from the flowers of that other tree, necessary to make the flowers of this tree fruitful, had been borne on the feet of bees, or wafted by the wind into their bosom, and forthwith they bore fruit. This in the natural department is the work of the same all-wise God, who prepared Cornelius for receiving Peter's word, and brought Peter with the word to Cornelius. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) **Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come.**—*Cornelius's sending and Peter's coming*:—I. CORNELIUS'S SENDING WAS—1. The outcome of a felt want. Heathenism, Judaism, devotion, moral excellence, noble birth, popularity were insufficient to fill the void in this good man's soul. 2. After prayer, or he might have sought the counsel of Jewish rabbi, Gentile philosopher or candid friend who would have directed him to ritual, wisdom or self-complacency, but never to one by whose words he might be saved. 3. By Divine direction. (1) To an unlikely man. (2) At an unlikely place. "God moves in a mysterious way," but always in the right way. II. PETER'S COMING. Peter did well in coming, for thereby—1. He conquered his Jewish prejudices. This was well for himself. Bigotry and exclusiveness are everywhere self-hindering and harmful. 2. He opened the door of the gospel to the Gentiles, thus anticipating and preparing for the world-wide mission of Paul. 3. He satisfied the aspirations of a genuine soul, and in doing so who knows what else? The influence of the converted centurion could not but have been felt in the army. Did Cornelius take the gospel to Rome? 4. He was the means of converting an entire congregation. What a phenomenon! (*J. W. Burn.*) **Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.**—*A model congregation*:—It was—I. EARNEST, which is obvious from—1. The religious character that was given to it. It was composed of Cornelius and his family. The centurion's religion (ver. 2) was—(1) Domestic, "all his house." (2) Generous, "he gave alms to the people." (3) Habitual, "he prayed to God alway." There were no frivolous spirits among Peter's listeners. 2. The invitation they gave the

preacher, "Immediately therefore I sent to thee." II. SOLEMN, "Before God." The expression implies belief in—1. The existence of God—they were neither atheists, pantheists, nor polytheists. 2. The presence of God, not merely His influence. 3. The claim of God. He is our Maker, Proprietor, Judge, demanding the homage of our souls. 4. This belief was grounded in such a consciousness that would sweep from their minds all that was secular, sceptical and frivolous, and fill them with a profound solemnity. III. INQUIRING. "To hear all things," &c. They were assembled not as a matter of custom, not to sit passive and be acted upon by the preacher, not for a mere performance, but to inquire. In this inquiry they were—1. Profoundly religious. They were in quest of the Divine, "Commanded thee of God." They were not seekers after Peter's private speculations, but after the Divine Will. 2. Thoroughly free, "To hear all things." Their minds were untrammelled by prejudices, unbiassed by dogmas. They wanted to know the whole counsel of God. May not such a congregation be regarded as a model? Such a congregation would not have tolerated the pulpit crudities and priestly assumptions of modern times. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The model congregation*:—Is it true that it was composed of men who were neither Jews nor Christians, and that it met in the first century of the Christian era; yet there are many points in which it might be an example to nineteenth century Christian congregations. They were present— I. EVERY ONE. When was it ever said of a modern congregation, "We are all here present"? Naturally, all cannot be; but how many are absent, who might have been present, if animated by the spirit of Cornelius and his friends! II. PUNCTUALLY. When Peter arrived, Cornelius met him with the announcement, "We are all here." Want of punctuality is an evil in our services. Some are always late. They lose part of the services; they disturb the minister and congregation. In many cases it is a mere habit, that could be overcome by a little attention. III. WITH A DEFINITE PURPOSE. "To hear." How many motives influence attendance nowadays! Some are present to see, some to criticise, some from habit, some to while away the time, some from curiosity. IV. WITH PREPARED HEARTS. "Now, therefore." We are here expectantly. If the minister ought to prepare to speak, not less ought the people to prepare to hear. Our Lord solemnly warns us: "Take heed how ye hear." V. WITH REVERENT SPIRITS. "Present before God." This was an act of solemn worship. They did not come to sit at the feet of some popular preacher. "The worship of Dr. —— will be resumed next Sabbath," said an usher to some persons who were leaving the church, upon learning that their favourite minister was not to preach that day. VI. WITH ATTENTIVE EARS. How many absent-minded men there are in our congregations! They could not say, "We are all present." Wandering thoughts are servants of the devil. This congregation expected "to hear all things that were commanded of God." There were, evidently, no sleepers among them. A parishioner, upon his deathbed, confessed to his pastor that he had not heard a sermon for years—his thoughts had habitually reverted to his business as soon as the text was announced. Worshippers ought not to have their bodies in the house of God, and their hearts, with the fool's eyes, in the ends of the earth. VII. WITH ONE MIND. No divisions in this congregation. They were all, with one accord, in one place. VIII. WITH A RIGHT IDEA OF THE PREACHER. They wished to hear the things that God commanded him to speak. They cared more for the message than the messenger. If some of our congregations would think more of God's deliverance and less of man's delivery, it would tend to their spiritual edification. IX. TO HEAR THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD. They wished to hear all things that God commanded. A modern congregation must have some fortitude before it asks for the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. X. WITH A SPIRIT OF OBEDIENCE. The word which we translate "to hear" oftentimes, as in this case, means "to hear and obey." It is well to be ready to hear all of God's commands; better to be ready to obey them. Results: 1. The gospel was faithfully preached (ver. 34). Faithful hearers make faithful preachers. 2. The Holy Ghost was given (ver. 44). "Peter yet spake these words the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the Word." (*A. Henry.*) *The presence and the Word*:—I. THE GREAT FACT AND TRUTH REALISED by Cornelius: "Now, therefore, are we all here present before God." II. THE DEVOUT AND SINCERE PURPOSE OF HEART EXPRESSED: "To hear all things," &c. 1. "Now therefore," &c. Evidently spoken by a man who had before recognised and felt God's presence in his life and ways. We are of a truth alway in God's presence if we knew it: but there are times when the reality breaks forth with special power for special purposes. But there are other times and ways beside those in which we are met

together for public worship, when we may be made feel that we are "present before God." All time and place, thought and feeling, are sacred when this great and holy truth is impressed upon us, "the Lord God is there." (1) Have we never felt we were present before God, in our own soul and conscience? Have we never felt within, that there was another Presence besides our own, that penetrated and searched our inmost thoughts? (2) We may feel we are present before God in His works. (3) In the course of the Divine providence, its ways and dealings. Behind and above all these busy outward actors, scenes of engagement, there is the Divine Seer and Actor, and His hand is outstretched upon every man, woman and child. Were our eyes opened to see the greatest truth and reality of this scene of our existence and probation, we should feel no words were so true as these; "Now, then, are we all here present before God." (4) Again in the dispensation of truth and privilege vouchsafed to us, God is and comes very near to us. What in fact is Divine truth but the immediate touch, teaching, and reality of God? (5) Our parents, specially if pious parents, are they not witnesses to us of God's presence, authority and grace, seeing they are given and appointed to represent Him and lead us to Him? II. We must have regard to the SINCERE DEVOUT PURPOSE OF HEART EXPRESSED: "To hear all things that are commanded thee of God." Here are three things to be noted: the preacher; his message and its source; the receptive state of mind and heart among the hearers. 1. The preacher was Peter the apostle, who, when Cornelius would have worshipped him, on entering his house, said, "Stand up, I myself also am a man" (ver. 26). It has been well and wisely observed, not the angel but the man must preach the gospel to Cornelius. Even salvation itself came to us through the man Christ Jesus, God laying hold of us through the medium of our own nature. Peter had all the experiences of an ignorant, weak, failing, sinful man, and of a man forgiven, converted, transformed, consecrate, Divinely taught and led. Such experiences, with their vital, soul-thrilling power, could never proceed from the tongues of angels. 2. Next Peter's message and its source: "All things that are commanded thee of God." Cornelius had no idea of any self-made or man-made gospel. We now come—3. To the state of mind and heart in the hearers: "To hear all things that are," &c., that are commanded us also, through thee as the Divine organ and representative. The mind of Cornelius was not passive, but as the whole chapter shows, was in intense action and engagement; and he knew and felt by the present living testimony of God's Spirit and truth in his own spirit, that the things which Peter spake came from God and were commanded of God. It is God Himself who calls us to the obedience of His gospel. It is not man's gospel, but His, commanding us in His name, on His authority. Let man stand aside, that God may be heard and obeyed. (*Watson Smith.*) *The ideal congregation:*—I. THE IDEAL CONGREGATION WILL BE PRESENT AT THE APPOINTED PLACE BETIMES. "Now therefore we are all here." II. THE IDEAL CONGREGATION WILL NEVER FAIL TO HAVE UNANIMITY OF REPRESENTATION AS FAR AS THAT IS POSSIBLE. "We are all here." If it could be said truly, all who could be are here, we would have great reason to rejoice. III. THE IDEAL CONGREGATION WILL BE REVERENT. "We are all here before God." IV. THE IDEAL CONGREGATION WILL BE ATTENTIVE. "We are all here present before God to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." They do not come to see or be seen, but to hear; not to be gratified or entertained, but to be spiritually profited. V. THE IDEAL CONGREGATION WILL BE SYMPATHETIC. There were some communities in which the Lord Jesus Christ could not perform mighty works. There are congregations so cold and unresponsive that the preacher's thoughts are chilled in transmission. A man can't be packed in ice without freezing. The Church has a great deal to do with making the minister. Many a sermon has caught its glow and power from the sympathies of those to whom it was delivered. A genial summer is not more effective in calling forth buds and blossoms, than warm hearts are in drawing out all that is best and noblest in a preacher's soul. VI. THE IDEAL CONGREGATION WILL BE RECEPTIVE. Like nature in the spring time, with every tree and flower and grass blade open to receive the gracious ministries of heaven. VII. THE IDEAL CONGREGATION WILL BE UNPREJUDICED. "We are all here before God to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." Prejudice is the hardest thing to cope with, for it is not amenable to conviction even when the evidence is overwhelming. "Argument cannot do the work of instruction any more than blows can take the place of sunlight." Not what suited their tastes and harmonised with their preconceived notions, but all that was commanded of God. It would be well if congregations now came together with this absolute simplicity and guilelessness

of disposition. VIII. THE IDEAL CONGREGATION WILL BE OBEDIENTLY DISPOSED. "All that is commanded thee of God." Nothing can be of real value in God's sight which does not shape itself into obedience. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The reciprocal duties of a minister and of his people*:—I. Let us consider THE DUTY OF A MINISTER OF RELIGION, which, though not explicitly laid down, is nevertheless implied in the words of my text: he is to teach "all things that are commanded him of God"; not teaching for doctrines the commandments of men; not setting forth human tradition as of equal importance with the oracles of the living God, but, in humility and godly sincerity, declaring the truth as it is in Jesus. Let us now consider more particularly what the minister is commanded to teach. 1. He is commanded to remind his hearers that they are all "by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath"; that they are very far gone from original righteousness, and are of their own nature inclined to evil. 2. Having shown his hearers their state by nature, and their utter helplessness and inability to deliver themselves from this spiritual bondage as slaves of sin and Satan, he is authorised to point out to them a way of deliverance. 3. We are commanded to set before our hearers the precepts, as well as the doctrines, of our holy religion; to tell them plainly that profession without practice, that faith without works, will be of no avail to them (Matt. viii. 20). I have dwelt on the duty of a Christian minister: permit me now to invite your attention—II. To THAT OF OUR HEARERS, WHICH IS IMPLIED IN MY TEXT: "We are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." "Take heed how ye hear." 1. Receive the Word with an humble and a teachable mind. This is the disposition that was so exemplified in Mary, when she sat at the feet of Jesus, and listened to the sweet expressions that dropped from His lips. This is the disposition recommended by St. James in the following words: "Receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save your souls." It is to be feared that many of our hearers enter into the sanctuary strangers to this temper; more eager to judge than to hear; ever on the alert for an opportunity to condemn; putting every phrase to the rack, if it accords not with their notion of propriety. 2. Hear with faith. "The Word preached," says St. Paul, "did not profit the Jews, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it": it had no influence on their conduct, because they did not believe what they heard. 3. If ye would hear with profit, be constant in prayer, not only in the church, but in the closet. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." Remember "the preparation of the heart in man is from the Lord." Paul may plant, Apollos water; but it is God only that giveth the increase. 4. Be ye practical hearers. St. Paul represents some as "ever hearing, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." "Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." (*J. Hughes, M.A.*) *Congregations to be well fed with the truth*:—Dogs often fight because the supply of bones is scanty, and congregations frequently quarrel because they do not get sufficient spiritual meat to keep them happy and peaceful. The ostensible ground of dissatisfaction may be something else, but nine times out of ten deficiency in their rations is at the bottom of the mutinies which occur in our Churches. (*C. H. Spurgeon*). *The best remedy for small congregations*:—Mr. Christopher Richardson, minister of Kirk Heaton, in Yorkshire, was much followed. A neighbouring minister, whose parishioners used to go to hear him, complaining once to him that he drew away his flock, Mr. Richardson answered, "Feed them better, and they will not stray." *Punctuality in attendance at church*:—An earnest minister once had the misfortune to succeed a tardy man who had had the congregation in charge for some years. He despaired of reforming them in great matters if he could not reform them in small. He found them in the habit of meeting at twelve o'clock, though the hour appointed and agreed upon was eleven. The preacher knew his duty, and began at the minute. The first day after his settlement, his sermon was well-nigh closed before most of his congregation arrived. Some actually arrived just at the benediction. They were confounded. He made no apology. He only asked the seniors if they would prefer any other time than eleven o'clock, and he would be sure and attend. A few weeks passed and the church was regularly full, and waiting for the minute. The preacher never failed in twenty years, except in a few cases of indisposition, to commence at the hour appointed. His congregation soon became as punctual and circumspect in other matters as in their attendance at church. (*Cyclopædia of Illustrative Anecdotes.*) *A model congregation*:—This congregation may be held up as a model in three things. I. PUNCTUALITY OF ATTENDANCE, "Now therefore are we all here." 1.

All were present. No absentees. 2. All were present in proper time. They were waiting for Peter, and not Peter for them. No coming in during service, and disturbing both preacher and hearers. II. DEVOUTNESS OF SPIRIT. "Before God." Realised God's presence. This would inspire—1. Humility (Exod. iii. 2–6; 1 Sam. xvi. 7; Gen. xviii. 27; Isa. vi. 5; Job. xlii. 5, 6). 2. Sincerity. Here, if anywhere, there should be truth (Isa. lvii. 15; Psa. li. 6). Hypocrisy may walk the earth invisible to men, but not to God. 3. High expectation (Matt. xviii. 20). Here the Father is present (Rom. viii. 32). Here the Son is present (John vi. 48–53; Matt. xxviii. 26). Here the Holy Ghost is present (John vi. 63, xvi. 15). We should attend upon ordinances with diligence, preparation, and prayer. Come to God's house fresh from the company of the gay and the thoughtless, and with no real seriousness of spirit, and is it any wonder if you are not benefited. III. PRACTICALNESS OF PURPOSE. "The more part knew not wherefore they had come together" (Acts xix. 32). Not so here. Had a clear, settled, well-understood purpose. 1. To hear. Sense of God's personal interest and love (Rom. x. 17; 1 Thess. v. 21; John xiii. 17). 2. To hear what was commanded of God. Looked above the messenger to Him that had sent him. Recognised the Divine authority of the truth. Without this there can be no real good (Exod. iii. 13; Deut. v. 27; Heb. iv. 2). 3. To hear all that was commanded of God. Law and gospel. The whole counsel of God. There should be fearless honesty both in speaking and hearing. (*William Forsyth, A.M.*) *A model audience*:—I. IT WAS NOTED FOR PUNCTUALITY. 1. A sense of the importance of the service. Men generally careful to secure a front seat at theatre, entertainment, banquet. Religion paramount. 2. It secures the whole of the service. 3. It is helpful to the preacher. 4. It makes the service enjoyable. II. IT WAS NOTED FOR REVERENCE. 1. Conscious of the Divine superintendence. 2. Regard for the Divine dignity. 3. Awe of the Divine purity. 4. Engagement in Divine service. III. IT WAS NOTED FOR ATTENTION. 1. Unprejudiced attention. 2. Docile attention. 3. Practical attention. 4. Successful attention. They believed and obeyed. (*B. D. Johns.*) *Concerning audiences, preachers, sermons, and conversions*:—I. THE AUDIENCE. 1. Before the preacher began this "innovation" takes place—the audience spoke up to the preacher, the pew to the pulpit. It was a splendid audience, though not very large. How earnestly they came together! What a solidarity there was! No wandering thought or eye, but all was focussed; calm and purposeful both in body and soul; so that ere the preacher began, one man could speak for all, "Now therefore are we all here present before God." May this audience bring its contribution to the preacher, while it expects the preacher to bring his! The contribution he has a right to expect is, that the people should come united, full of expectation, led into the temple like Simeon by the Spirit of God, at the very moment when Jesus came. No chance, no haphazard in this gathering. We have not come here to spend an idle hour. When asked, "Where have you been this morning?"—it is wrong to answer "Oh, I dropped in to Regent Square." You did not drop in nor drop out. The Lord's providences for the whole of the week have been hedging up your way, and securing that you should be here. Fall in with God's arrangement. 2. I like to dwell on the word *all*. The people were invited, and they came. This morning the very hour invites us. I know there are many excuses. You can tell me about young children, sickness, waiting on the sick, fogs, east winds, long distances, wet days, &c. In many families, at ten o'clock on the Sabbath morning, attendance at church is still an open question. It is no open question on the Monday morning, "John, will you go to work to-day?" "Oh," said a farmer in Scotland, when a minister rebuked him for not attending church, and said, "You know, John, you are never absent from the market." "Oh," was the reply, "we maun gang to the market." Unconsciously it came out. To come to the house of God was not so urgent. But when we look at this audience we see the benefit of setting ourselves the task of coming with a purpose to God's house. It will need planning and self-denial. Some of you are here to-day only because you have trampled upon a hundred obstacles. And some are not here because they have given way to things which will not be allowed to stand in the way of to-morrow's engagements. 3. And then when we all come—(1) The Lord marks how we have pressed forward to meet Him. I think there is no sweeter sight to His holy eyes than to see the people wending their way to His house. "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is, and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." (2) And when you come in this expectant way, how it helps the reception of the sermon! How we have all suffered from coming to the house of God in a disorderly, hurried way,

both as regards body and soul! Then you look up to the preacher and expect him to work miracles on your higgledy-piggledy soul. 4. "We are all here present before God." (1) Try to realise God's presence; get past outward and temporal things, and call upon your soul to pass into the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High. Compel your soul to grasp the thought—"Surely God is in this place"; and instead of saying, "I knew it not," let us say, "We know it, and wait for a clearer revelation of His presence." This is holy ground. Where you are sitting God has converted men ere now. Canst thou come where God has done His mightiest work, carelessly, heedlessly, and merely as a matter of custom and routine? Thou art occupying the room of men and women who to-day are before the eternal throne. This word is true: "We are all present before God"—and therefore let there be nothing unworthy of such a Presence and such a place. (2) And how the thought of God's presence will help to focus our attention; to take our eyes off each other, and off the preacher! How it will help to prepare us to receive God's Word! How it will reduce to a minimum the over-critical spirit! Said a preacher to myself, "I notice when I give out my text, my people settle down and settle back; but, I am afraid, not so much to hear what I have to say as to watch how I get through." 5. "To hear all things that are commanded thee of God." They came to hear God's Word. You know that to-day there is a tendency to say, "Hearing has been too much magnified. What I come to God's house for is to worship. The preacher gets far too much space." There may be something in that, but it is exaggerated. What was central here, and what must always be central in a gathering of saints or sinners is the preaching of God's Word, and the attending thereto by the hearer. That is worship at its highest. All the powers of the soul get their highest use and their fullest freedom when God's Word is faithfully and lovingly proclaimed. Faith cometh by hearing. II. THE PREACHER. 1. I have been speaking straightly to you, but now your turn comes. The pew has a right to say to the preacher, "Now, give us what God has told you. There are many things that might interestingly occupy an hour; give us, however, the thing that brought us here." And this is needful, for we get so immersed in favourite lines of reading which unconsciously colour our utterances, so that we need from the audience—"Now, preacher, God's Word and truth; all things from Him to-day, and nothing else. Never mind about reconciling science and revelation; we can get that in our magazines and read it at home. Give us to-day what really concerns us, 'All things commanded thee of God.'" Peter needed that. He was a narrow, bigoted Jew, and he would never, of himself, have preached to Cornelius and his company the sermon they needed. At the best we are but men, and of narrowness and prejudice we have our share. Therefore there is tremendous need that the preacher should be in God's hand, and come from God's presence with his soul and voice attuned to a large, full, free, and glorious utterance of the gospel of the grace of God. Leave us to ourselves, and there may be some little glimmering light in our preaching, but only a little; there may be light from every quarter, to use the phrase of the day, save the Sun! The Lord blow out all our penny candles. His light has come. We need to come forth from God, He having poured into us something of the fulness of His mind and heart. 2. "Then Peter opened his mouth." Do not run over that phrase and say, "Of course." A number of us cannot open our mouths when we preach—it is the most piteous mumbling. Sabbath-school teacher, preacher, "Open your mouth, and teach the people, as your Lord did and His chief apostle." Let it be seen in the very manner of our speech that our mouth is open, for our heart is enlarged; that it comes, not feebly and faint and constricted, but glad and full and free, for the Lord is with us. Do not say, "I have no eloquence; I have a stammering tongue." Who made man's mouth? "Have not I the Lord? Open thy mouth; behold I put My words into thy mouth." What does Isaiah say? "Lift up," he says—and how much it is needed in this namby-pamby, over-refined, hypercritical age—"Lift up thy voice with strength, lift it up; be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God." "Peter opened his mouth." He lifted up his head, and let go! We put down ours, and hold on! III. THE SERMON. It was the old gospel. It was new and fresh then. That is one thing that one does sometimes envy the first preachers for; for they had seen Him and His glory. Peter preached Christ, not theology, not a creed; but Jesus, sent for a particular purpose by God; how that, carrying out that purpose, He had died on the Cross and risen again, and that through Him is preached forgiveness of sins. That is where the gospel began then, and where it begins to-day—forgiveness of sins to a devout man, and one that feared God, and made prayers, and gave alms,

People would have said to-day, "with an audience like that, what you want to do is not to take them to the Cross. Show them Christ, of course; but Christ as the great ideal and embodiment of all that is good, and a devout, God-fearing man like Cornelius will be enamoured with Him and make Him his Leader and Pattern." "No," says Peter; "We preach the Christ who died for sin to everybody." A French officer, whose ship had been taken by Nelson, was brought on board Nelson's vessel, and he walked up to the great admiral and gave him his hand. "No," said Nelson; "your sword first, if you please." That is the gospel. IV. THE RESULT. There is a new name brought in here. I have talked of Cornelius, of Peter, of Jesus, of God the Father, but here is another name. While Peter yet spake these words about Jesus, "The Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the Word." Cornelius possibly had heard of Jesus as a name of reproach and blasphemy. Now, Jesus leapt up into his heart as his Friend and Saviour, and God. That is the miracle of the Gospel. That is what the Holy Ghost does. If you know Jesus Christ, flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto you. Peter was there, as the preacher is here; and the sermon; but the Holy Ghost gives the increase and blesses the Word, and without Him fruit cannot be. (*J. McNeill.*) *Attending at ordinances enforced:*—We have here—1. A call to Peter related—"I sent." 2. Peter's compliance with the call commended, "Thou hast well done that thou art come." 3. An address made to Peter when he was come. In which take notice—(1) Of a congregation, though small, yet well convened (ver. 24). (2) An acknowledgment of God's presence in a special manner in religious assemblies, "We are all here present before God." (3) The great end of their meeting was their soul's edification, to hear, *i.e.*, to hear and obey. And here is what the minister is to preach and the people to receive: "what is commanded of God." The extent of both is "all things." Observe—1. When God discovers His mind in any particular to a person or people, it is their duty presently to comply with it without delay. The contrary was the fault of Balaam, and of the Jews in Egypt (Jer. xliv.). 2. It is a blessed thing for a people to call that minister to whom God Himself directs and inclines them. Cornelius did not so much as know Peter by name (ver. 5), but he goes to God, and God directs him. 3. It is a commendable thing in a minister of Christ to comply with the call of God and His people, though it should be offensive to some, and not very agreeable to his own inclinations. The doctrine arising from the text is—"It is the duty of a people to attend on ordinances." In discoursing from this I shall—I. GIVE REASONS WHY PEOPLE SHOULD ATTEND ON AND BE PRESENT AT ORDINANCES, WHERE GOD HAS SET THEM UP AMONG THEM. Because—1. God has commanded it (Heb. x. 15). The Lord calls His people to be present there, wherever it is. Thus there was the tabernacle in the wilderness, and afterwards the temple, and the synagogues. It was the practice of Christ Himself to attend these places (Luke iv. 16). 2. The public assemblies are for the honour of Christ in the world. They are where His honour dwells, where His people meet to profess their subjection to His laws, to receive His orders, to seek His help, to pay Him the tribute of praise. 3. These assemblies are the ordinary place where Christ makes His conquest of souls (Rom. x. 14). The gospel is Christ's net wherein souls are caught. And it is always good to be in Christ's way. 4. They are Christ's trysting-place with His people, the galleries wherein our Lord walks (Exod. xx. 24). What a disadvantage had Thomas by his absence from one meeting where Christ met with the rest of the disciples! 5. The delights of Christ and His people meet there; for ordinances are the heaven on earth. Christ delights to be there with His people (Psa. lxxxvi. 2.; Luke xxii. 15). And they delight to be there with Him, and for Him (Psa. lxxxiv. 1, 2, xxvii. 4, cxxii. 1). 6. The necessities of all that mind for heaven require it. Had the ordinances not been necessary, God would never have appointed them. Have not Christ's soldiers need of them to clear their rusty armour? do not dead souls need them to quicken them? sleepy souls, to awaken them? II. SHOW IN WHAT RESPECTS PEOPLE ARE BEFORE THE LORD AT PUBLIC ORDINANCES. The Lord is everywhere present (Psa. cxxxix. 7). But we are before Him in a special manner in the public assemblies. He holds the stars in His right hand, and walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks. Christ is in the assemblies of His people—1. Representatively. He has His agents there, His ministers, who are the Lord's proxies to court a wife for their Master's Son (2 Cor. xi. 2); His ambassadors to negotiate a peace betwixt God and sinners (2 Cor. v. 20; Matt. x. 40). 2. Efficaciously. The Word of the Lord is a powerful word. Christ is there giving life to some, strength to others, and death's wounds to others (Mic. ii. 7; Psa. xlv. 5; Hos. vi. 5). 3. As our witness. Men's eyes and the devil's eyes are upon us; but

what should affect us most is, that God's eye is on us in a special manner, and though our outward carriage be never so promising, God is witness to the heart-wanderings (Ezek. xxxiii. 31). 4. As our Judge. God has a tribunal as well as a throne in the public ordinances, to reward or punish His worshippers according to their works. A curious look into the ark cost the Bethshemites dear; and a wrong touch of it cost Uzzah his life. It is true the gospel-dispensation is more spiritual; and therefore spiritual plagues are more usual now; but these ordinances cure the worst of plagues. 5. As our Lawgiver (Isa. xxxiii. 22). He has set up the ministry to declare to people their duty (Mal. ii. 7). 6. As the Lord and Master of the family, who has provided liberally for all of His house (Isa. xxv. 6). 7. As our God, which should strike us with reverence (Psa. lxxxix. 7, xcv. 6). III. CONSIDER THE DISPOSITION OF SOUL WHEREWITH PEOPLE SHOULD COME TO THE PUBLIC ORDINANCES. It is with a spirit ready to hear all things commanded of God. It implies that—1. Ministers are to preach nothing to the people but what is the mind and will of God. Lawyers must not speak without authority of the law; and ministers must not speak but with a Thus saith the Lord. To coin new articles of faith or ceremonies is the work of Antichrist (Matt. xv. 9). 2. Ministers are to labour to know the mind of God, as to particular messages which they are to carry to their people. A word in season is very precious (Prov. xxv. 11, xv. 23). And ministers had need of the tongue of the learned. 3. Whatever message the Lord gives them to a people, they are to deliver it impartially, All things commanded them (chap. xx. 20). 4. People ought to receive these messages from ministers as from the mouth of the Lord, and comply with them. We should hear—(1) Reverentially (Psa. lxxxix. 7). (2) Diligently and attentively (Isa. lv. 2). God does not take up our time with trifles. (3) Understandingly, so as to know the mind of God (Matt. xiii. 11). (4) Believingly (John ix. 27). Ministers make the plaister, but faith of application makes it stick. (5) So as to practise what we hear (James i. 22). That hearing that fills the head with knowledge, but not the heart with holiness, will serve only to let people see the way to hell more clearly. Conclusion: This doctrine reproves—1. Those who absent themselves from ordinances. 2. Those who come to ordinances, but hear not the Word as becomes those who are to hear what is commanded of God. Such are—(1) Irreverent hearers. Many behave so as it appears there is no fear of God before their eyes. Some are sleeping, others gazing hither and thither, to whom the Word is as the seed presently picked up by the fowls. (2) Supercilious nice hearers, who sit as judges of the Word, and not as they that are to be judged by it. (3) Ignorant and stupid hearers, who hear the Word, but neither know nor endeavour to know God's mind in it. (4) Unbelieving hearers (Isa. liii. 1; Matt. xiii. 58). (5) Such as make no application of the Word to themselves, but are ready to give it away to others. 3 Those who do not set themselves to hear what God commands ministers to preach, but will command ministers to preach so and so; but every faithful minister will say as Micaiah (1 Kings xxii. 14). (*T. Boston, D.D.*)

Hearing without doing:—When the emperor himself (Constantine) was announced to preach thousands flocked to the palace. He stood erect, with his head tossed back, and poured forth a torrent of facile eloquence, and the people applauded all his points. Now he denounced the follies of paganism, now it was the unity of Providence or the scheme of redemption that formed his theme; and often he would denounce the avarice and rapacity of his own courtiers. It was then observed that they all cheered lustily, but it was also noticed that they did not mend their ways. (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*)

Careless hearers:—It is said by naturalists, that, if water and wine be poured into a vessel made of the ivy-tree, the wine will leak out, and leave the water behind. Such are all worldly, careless hearers of God's Word. (*J. Spencer.*)

Expectant hearers:—It is said that the Jogers, or pilgrim saints of Ceylon, will take their station at the foot of the cypress, and there remain night and day, watching and watchful, heedless of sunshine or of storms, impelled by the tradition that the leaves of that ancient tree, falling only at distant and uncertain intervals, can, if gathered and eaten, restore the wasting frame to all the energies of youth. A plant of nobler growth has been sown in our world; the leaves of which never fade, nor are its fruits consumed. The latter are for meat, and the former are for medicine; and out of the heavenly sanctuary issue the waters which maintain their freshness. Not at long and unknown intervals do they descend. Regularly and ever weekly are they within our reach. Shall we think it an unwelcome task to tarry a few moments beneath the consecrated shade while we await the first shaking of the blessing-laden boughs? (*Miss Henderson.*)

Impatient hearers:—A remarkable change has taken place among the people of

this country in regard to the public service of religion. Our forefathers put their clocks on the outside of their places of worship, that they might not be too late in their attendance: we have transferred them to the inside of the house of God, lest we should stay too long in the service—a sad and an ominous change. (*R. Watson.*) *Don't grumble about the fodder*:—"Now, deacon, I've just one word to say. I can't bear our preaching! I get no good. There's so much in it I don't want that I grow lean on it. I lose my time and pains." "Mr. Bunnell, come in here. There's my cow Thankful—she can teach you theology!" "A cow teach theology! What do you mean?" "Now, see, I have just thrown her a forkful of hay. Just watch her. There now! She has found a stick—you know sticks will get into the hay—and see how she tosses it to one side and goes on to eat what is good. There, again! She has found a burdock, and she throws it on one side and goes on eating. And there! She does not relish that bunch of daisies, and leaves them and goes on eating. Before morning she will have cleared the manger of all, save a few sticks and weeds, and she will give milk. There's milk in that hay, and she knows how to get it out, albeit there may be now and then a stick or weed which she leaves. But if she refused to eat, and spent the time in scolding about the fodder, she, too, would 'grow lean,' and the milk would dry up. Just so with our preaching. Let the old cow teach you. Get all the good you can out of it and leave the rest. You will find a good deal of nourishment in it." *Interested hearers*:—A gentleman once said to Rowland Hill, "It is sixty-five years since I first heard you preach; and the sermon was well worth remembering. You remarked, that some people are very squeamish about the manner of a clergyman in preaching; but you then added, 'Supposing one is hearing a will read, expecting to receive a legacy, would you employ the time in criticising the lawyer's manner while reading it? No: you would give all your interest to ascertain if anything were left to yourself, and how much. Let that, then, be the way in which you listen to the gospel." *Different kinds of hearers*:—There are four different kinds of hearers of the Word—those like a sponge, that suck up good and bad together, and let both run out immediately; those like a sand-glass, that let what enters in at one ear pass out at the other, hearing without thinking; those like a strainer, letting go the good, and retaining the bad; and those like a sieve, letting go the chaff, and retaining the good grain. (*T. Boston, D.D.*) *Various kinds of hearers*:—One is like an Athenian, and he hearkeneth after news; if the preacher say anything of our armies beyond the sea, or council at home, or matters of court, that is his lure. Another is like the Pharisee, and he watcheth if anything be said that may be wrested. Another smacks of eloquence, and he gapes for a phrase. Another is malcontent, and he never pricketh up his ears till the preacher come to gird against some whom he spiteth; and when the sermon is done he remembereth nothing which was said to him, but that which was spoken against another. Another cometh to gaze about the church; he hath an evil eye, which is still looking upon that from which Job did avert his eye. Another cometh to muse; so soon as he is set, he falleth into a brown study; sometimes his mind runs on his market, sometimes of his journey, sometimes of his suit, sometimes of his dinner, sometimes of his sport after dinner; and the sermon is done before the man thinks where he is. Another cometh to hear; but so soon as the preacher hath said his prayer, he falls fast asleep, as though he had been brought in for a corpse, and the preacher should preach at his funeral. (*H. Smith.*) *Truth liked as a sentiment, but disliked as a law of life*:—A man comes to New York on an errand of fraud. He is seeking to take an estate away from the rightful heirs, because he has some little legal advantage. He has resisted his conscience, and suppressed all his reluctances, and his purpose is fixed. On arriving here he goes to the theatre—that school of morals!—and witnesses a play, the point of which turns on the defrauding of heirs by an old rich uncle—just the same thing as he is attempting. The various parts are gone through with, and everybody cries, and he cries, and he goes away feeling, "How mean it is for a man to supplant poor orphans in that way!" He cries over and denounces the very act which he is himself performing. You know that such things take place. There are hundreds of men that love to hear about temperance, and go and get drunk. There are many men that love to hear about truth, and lie like witches afterwards. There is nothing more common than instances which go to show that we like as a sentiment things that we do not like as an ethical rule. Oftentimes, when a thing comes to us as a rule of conduct, and lays its law on us, and demands our obedience, we resist it; but when, instead of that, it comes to us as an emotion, we like to lie upon its bosom, as a duck lies on a swell of water. Wicked

men like to undulate on these moral elements. They like to go to sea on the gospel. They swing to and fro upon it with infinite pleasure. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Hearing and its proper effects*:—When a man says he received a blessing under a sermon, I beg to inquire what effect it has produced. The Roman soldiers proved the effect produced by Antony's sermon when they flew to avenge the death of Cæsar. (*J. Newton.*)

Vers. 34, 35.—**Then Peter opened his mouth and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons.** *God the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him*:—I. TO SHOW BY WHAT MARKS WE SHALL KNOW WHETHER WE OURSELVES, AND OTHERS, ARE SINCERE IN THE FEAR OF GOD. 1. The first mark of sincerity in the concerns of religion is having carefully endeavoured to find our duty. For if we take a matter of this importance upon trust, and leave custom and fashion to choose our opinions, we must confess that we are very fortunate if we are in the right. Interest and indolence are always on the side of giving in to popular systems. If loss of esteem and authority attend embracing any opinion, men examine timorously, and are afraid of evidence; and when reason begins to strike, then they ask themselves, Have any of the rulers of the people believed on Him? They creep and fix their sentiments upon others, and like the ivy, never ascend higher than that which chance has given them for a support. But the foundation of Protestantism and Christianity is another method of examination: we must throw aside the world and all the consequences that may attend it, and have our thoughts wholly on our duty. We must empty our minds of every favourite prepossession, and receive the kingdom of God like little children; have no opinion of our own, and no desire that either this or that doctrine or action should be true and our duty; but only that we may know what is truth and our duty. No person can pretend that he has not abilities, because all that is required is that they use the abilities they have. If with an honest and teachable heart they desire to do the will of God, His promise and His goodness are engaged that they shall know the truth in everything, on which their everlasting happiness depends. And if we find difficulties in performing this duty, and ourselves liable to mistakes, it ought to fill us with modesty and diligence, with mutual forbearance and charity, and then our very errors may be useful. 2. The second mark by which we may judge whether we are sincere is by working righteousness, and doing everything we know to be our duty. The end of faith is practice, and the only thing valuable in knowing our Master's will is that we may obey Him. We may therefore comfort ourselves with being sincere in our fear of the Lord, if we join a religious performance of the duties we know with our endeavouring to go on to perfection. And we religiously perform our duty if we are virtuous in secret, as well as in the eye of the world. We must perform the whole of our duty if we truly fear God, and not choose some darling folly to indulge in secret, and flatter ourselves that He hideth away His face and will not see it. We must throw aside at once all our vices, and caution most against that we are most willing to palliate and excuse, and be in every known instance obedient. It is true indeed that God has given us no commands but what is our interest and present happiness to obey; but if we perform them upon the low motives of convenience only, they are the actions of a man of prudence, but cease to be the offices of religion or Christian graces. 3. The third mark of sincerity in our fear of God is expressing our zeal for things in proportion to their real value. 4. Another mark by which we may manifest a sincere fear of God is our being charitable to those who differ from us in our sentiments. 5. The last mark I shall mention, by which we may know our sincerity in seeking for the will of God, is by the methods we use to convince others of the truth of what we ourselves embrace and believe. II. Which brings me in the second place to show WHY THIS VIRTUE ENTITLES US TO THE FAVOUR OF GOD. 1. And first, it is all that we can possibly perform. The text tells us that God is no respecter of persons, and therefore He must have put it into every man's power to please Him: but He hath given them nothing besides their whole abilities, and therefore, if these are employed with honesty and fairness, God can expect no more. The knowledge which is sufficient to recommend a poor man, obliged to take care by his industry for the subsistence of his family, may be inexcusably little in those who are raised above such low solicitudes and enjoy leisure and improvement. 2. The second reason why this is so pleasing to God is because it will improve our natures. God who created man to communicate happiness to him, must be pleased to see him advance to all the perfection and

felicity He gave him capacities to enjoy. 3. The last reason why this sincere fear of God, expressed by diligently inquiring after His will, is so pleasing to Him, is because it will always teach us those things which are most truly useful and worth knowing. This discourse may be thought liable to one objection, viz., that if sincerity is the only thing required to make us acceptable to God—and that may belong to men of every religion—therefore all religions are equal. But to answer this objection, which would have never been thought so much as plausible, had it not of late been so often, and with so much delight, repeated, if it be granted that men may support their lives by herbs and acorns, would it not be a strange conclusion to infer from thence that we esteem a country which produces that food only equal to one flowing with milk and honey? Yet the case is exactly the same and exposes the absurdity of the objection. III. THE CONCLUSION I would draw from what I have said, suitable to the design of the day, is this, that thence we may learn to soften our conduct toward all well-disposed men that differ from us. (*Thomas Rundle, LL.B.*) *God no respecter of persons*:—Here we have one of the many strong contrasts between God and man. I. WHY GOD IS NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS AS MAN IS. Because—1. Man's estimate is of very limited compass as to the number of persons taken account of—God's is universal. Men can take account of but very few persons for either respect or contempt. Look at the multitude of the inhabitants of a great city, or province, what a great majority of them we can have no individual estimate of at all! And then, think of a nation—and the whole world. There are, indeed, a few distinguished persons who have a character in the estimate of a great part of the civilised world, but what a diminutive number do these make! But God has His estimate of every person of the entire race. 2. The whole world of mere exteriors is as nothing to God. Man is the dupe and idolater of them all over the world. Nothing so mean or bad, but if a fine appearance can be thrown over it, it becomes as a god to him. But God estimates men in their intrinsic qualities. What an infinity of superficial shows part off from them under that inspection! What a different thing must man appear when all these are fled! And if men could be presented thus to one another, what would become of most of the human gods of human idolatry? The feebleness of our vision cannot do this entirely. But it is true, also, that we are far too willing to be imposed on by the delusive show of the world. 3. Men are respecters of persons from self-interest. They are looking up to certain men, and thinking what advantages they can confer. It were but trifling to show how the Divine Being can be under no such influence in His estimates. 4. Men respect persons because others do, without well knowing any other reason why. As a number of persons collected at a spectacle will quickly draw a multitude, so let an individual come to be accounted of importance by a portion of society, and the rest soon follows. God has no opinion in the universe to regard but His own. What is it to Him that one diminutive creature after another adds its slender intellect in affirmation of the judgment of a crowd? In every view, He is infinitely superior to the influence of all the causes by which men are made to be "respecters of persons." II. CONTEMPLATE THIS DIVINE SUPERIORITY IN REFERENCE TO SEVERAL OF THOSE THINGS WHICH COMMAND MEN'S HIGHEST RESPECT. We all see how men are affected towards persons of—1. Great wealth. What deference—what attention to what is said—what prompt compliance! Suppose the impression a man not known to be rich makes shall be simply that of his apparent personal qualities—his dispositions—his sense—his manners. And suppose it then to become suddenly known that he is very rich, what a difference! A very considerable degree of misconduct or vice does not put the rich down in society. They can at once defy opinion, and be sure of obsequiousness. What a state of human sentiments is this in the sight of God! He "is no respecter of persons." 2. High station in what is called birth, rank, and power. In former times (and in many parts it is so still) the multitude have regarded this class as actually being of some mysteriously higher order of human nature. Still there is quite enough "respect" to gratify their utmost pride—pompous titles of honour, a vast parade of state and ceremony. The ground is cleared for them, in society, wherever they appear; their mere will, or caprice, is considered as authority, without requiring a reason; the worship of God itself is deemed to be vastly honoured if they deign to pay it some formalities of attention. Every conceivable palliation is adduced, by force, in their behalf, to extenuate the grossness of sin; and pompous funeral celebrations are given them when they die. Now turn the thought to God. Think! If He had any partiality like this, what would become of His government? What would then have been His

dispensations in Egypt, in Babylon, in Judæa? What would then be the condition of the oppressed, when they cry and appeal to Him? He looks on all these distinctions as the mere transitory accidents of the mortal condition. He requires the same self-abasement, and repentance, from all these loftier persons, as by the meanest—or they reject them at their peril. And His great messenger, Death, makes, as it were, melancholy sport of all these robes of grandeur. 3. Great mental endowment. And this is different from the others, in being a more intrinsic quality. And from that cause, and from its being less obvious to vulgar apprehension, it has nothing like so many idolaters. Nevertheless, it has always been an object of perverted regard. Every epithet appropriate to divinity has been applied. There are, at this hour, many enthusiastic admirers of human talent, who are despisers of God! In behalf of men of great talent there has been and is a disposition to suspend or abrogate the most essential laws of morality. And short of such an extreme, respect of persons may be excessive. There are persons who have no relish for truth, but as displayed in the style of genius or eloquence; as if the grave matter were nothing, and the decorations were all. There are some who habitually indulge contempt for all who are not distinguished by mental superiority, of whatever excellence otherwise. But think of Him! What is all this in His sight? The Being whose intellect pervades all things. What is the greatest human intellect compared with the least angelic spirit? What may even that spirit be, compared to the most elevated created mind? What is that—what are all minds together, as compared with the mind of God? (*J. Foster.*) *God no respecter of persons:*—Here we note—First, Peter's acknowledgment of his former mistake, in which are three things. 1. The preface. "Then Peter opened his mouth"—a Hebraism indicating that he is about to speak something weighty on mature deliberation (Matt. v. 2; Psa. viii. 2, lxxviii. 2.) 2. The means of his conviction. "Of a truth I perceive"—a phrase used of those who are persuaded to change their opinion on full conviction. 3. The error that God was such a respecter of persons that He would not reveal Himself to any but Jews. Here we see—(1) That God's people may err. Peter had read the prophecies about the calling of the Gentiles, and had received Christ's commission to disciple all nations. So we often hear the truth expounded and yet perceive it not. Therefore we had need to be careful lest we be ignorant of an obvious truth. (2) That the godly, when convinced, confess their errors. Controversies would soon end if we could learn Peter's modesty. Second. Peter's positive assertion of the truth now learned. I. WHAT IS RESPECT OF PERSONS? Regard for that outward condition whereby one differs from another. 1. Gifts of the body. It is not the strong or the beautiful that are accepted of God, but the good and holy. (1) He is strong in a spiritual sense, not that overcometh another man, but that taméth his own flesh (Prov. xvi. 32) and vanquishes temptation (1 John ii. 14). (2) So not beauty but grace makes us amiable in the sight of God (1 Peter iii. 3, 4). 2. Gifts of mind. Learning, &c., may make us more serviceable in the world, but do not commend us to God (Gen. iii. 1; 1 Cor. iii. 18). 3. Gifts of estate, rank, quality. The blood of the poor is of the same colour as of the rich (chap. xvii. 26). Social distinctions have no weight with God (1 Cor. i. 26; Job xxxiv. 19; Rev. xx. 12). So with bond and free (1 Cor. vii. 22; Eph. vi. 9; Col. iii. 25). 4. Nationality. Some peoples lie nearer the sun than others, but they are all alike near the Sun of Righteousness (Gal. iii. 28). 5. Religious profession and privileges. Cornelius was a good man, but wanted circumcision, and was accepted, while many a carnal Jew was rejected (Rom. ii. 9–11). If by outward profession there be a people nearer God than others, they have the privilege to be first rewarded if they do good, but to be first punished if they do evil. II. IN WHAT SENSE IS THIS DENIED OF GOD? 1. He is no respecter of persons in His government. This is forbidden to man (Lev. xix, 15); and so denied of God (1 Peter i. 17). God may be considered as a righteous Governor and as a free Lord. In the latter capacity He may do as He seeth meet. Hence of His free mercy He called the Gentiles, and gives the grace of His gospel to one and not to another (Matt. xx. 15). We can plead no right either by merit or purchase. On the other hand God governs man by a law, and judges according to that law (*Cf.* Rom. ix. 16 and 1 Cor. ix. 24). 2. He is no respecter of persons in His gifts of grace (Matt. xi. 27). III. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS QUALIFICATION? "That feareth God and worketh righteousness." 1. Fear is the principle of obedience. Not that this excludes faith in Christ (John xv. 5; Heb. xi. 6; Hosea iii. 5). (1) Holy fear is of two kinds. (*a*) The fear of reverence, which is necessary that we may not offend God (Jer. x.

7; Rev. xv. 4). (*b*) The fear of caution, which is necessary to make us watchful against temptations (Heb. iv. 1; 2 Cor. x. 12; 1 Pet. v. 8). (2) Why is this frame of heart pitched upon? (*a*) That we may carefully abstain from what displeases God (Gen. xxxix. 9; Phil. ii. 12). (*b*) Because it produces a diligent endeavour to approve ourselves to Him. 2. Working righteousness is the fruit of this sense of God upon our hearts. This is required—(1) In respect of God that we may honour Him in the world: for our obedience makes our esteem of Him visible (2 Thess. 11, 12; Acts x. 2). (2) It is for our own comfort. When we obey God it leaves an evidence in our consciences (1 John iii. 19; 2 Cor. i. 12; Prov. iii. 17). Comforts are the rewards of obedient children (Psa. xi. 6). IV. THE MEANING OF THE PRIVILEGE. "Is accepted of Him." He that feareth God, &c.—1. Is sure of God's favour and protection (Phil. i. 6). 2. God will increase this, for He delighteth to crown His own gifts (Prov. iv. 18, x. 29). 3. God will perfect it and reward it (Psa. xv. 2, cvi. 3). (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *God no respecter of persons*:—I. A POINT NEWLY PERCEIVED. "Now." That so great an apostle should confess this shows that his Roman chain was not yet made, and that his brother apostles (chap. xi.) had no idea of his infallibility. Job in scorn said to some in his time, "You are the only men, you perceive all"; but Moses did not (Numb. xv. 34), nor Elijah (2 Kings iv. 27). But Caiaphas perceived all (John xi. 49); not so Peter here, and Paul (1 Cor. xiii. 9). Of a truth we perceive Peter comes not near his successor, who perceives all that is to be perceived at once, and gets Caiaphas' knowledge by sitting in Peter's chair. But it is not only this they differ in. For Peter took Cornelius up (ver. 26); his successor lets Cornelius's lord lie. The Samaritan woman said, "The Messiah when He is come will tell us all." Yet when He came He said even to Peter, "What thou knowest not now" (John xiii. 7). I speak this for some who are far enough from Rome but think they perceive all God's secret decrees. Luther well said that every one has by nature a Pope within. Even they that believe it not of Rome are easily brought to believe it of themselves. "Of a truth I perceive" will bear two senses—"I perceive that I did not before," or "I perceive that the contrary whereof I conceived before." Not to perceive is only to be ignorant, but Peter had held quite contrary. Ignorance is but privative, this positive, and so an error—an error in the great mystery of godliness (1 Tim. iii. 16), a part whereof was preached to the Gentiles. And this error he held in common with his brethren. This only we are to look to, that with Peter we be not wilful, but ready to repent, when shown our error. Then we may conclude that if we be otherwise minded God will show it unto us (Phil. iii. 15). II. WHAT THAT POINT IS. 1. Privative—that "God is no respecter of persons"—*i.e.*, in Greek and Hebrew "faces" which show themselves first (1 Sam. xvi. 6). Under the face we understand the facing; under the person everything that personates and makes personable—country, condition, birth, riches, &c. Men respect all this, but it is nothing to God. Was Peter, then, ignorant of this? No, for Moses had said it (Deut. x. 17), and Elihu saw it by the light of nature (Job xxxiv. 19). And so Samuel (1 Sam. xvi. 7) and Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. xix. 7). The answer is that Peter knew it before, but not as now. We know many things by book and speculation, which, when we come to an experience of it, we say, "Yea, I know it indeed," as if we had never known it before. Experimental knowledge is knowledge in truth. Was this Peter's knowledge? No; for he, as we, have experience of it daily. God deals His gifts of nature—outward: beauty, strength, &c.—inward: wit, memory, judgment—without respect of persons. He bestows them on the child of the mean as soon as of the mighty. So it is in wealth and worldly preferment (Psa. cxiii. 7), and in God's judgments. And no man had better experience of it than Peter, who, a poor fisherman, was accepted to be an apostle (Gal. ii. 6). What shall we say then? Though he could not but know this general truth, yet he thought that there were exceptions, not of persons, but of nations, and that of all nations the Jews alone were accepted of God (Amos iii. 2; Psa. cxlvii. 20). This had run in Peter's head, but he perceives he was wrong, and that by Cornelius' vision compared with his own. 2. Positive. "In every nation," &c. Solomon in effect said as much long before (Eccles. xii. 13). (1) "Feareth" and "worketh" jointly. Not the one without the other—neither fear which works not, nor works which do not come from God's fear in our hearts. Pharisaic personations, Paul's "mask of godliness" (2 Tim. iii. 5), Peter's "cloke" (1 Pet. ii. 16) God cannot accept. God Himself told Samuel (1 Sam. xvi. 7) that He "looks not as man looks." Man looks upon the outside, God looks within. The inwards were God's part in every sacrifice. He looks first at the heart, and in the heart to the

affections; of all affections that of fear; of all fears that of God. How comes God to be feared? We fear evil, but there is no evil in God. Ans.: Not for any evil in Him, but for some evil we may expect from Him, if we fear not to offend Him, by doing that which is evil, which punishment is not evil but just. Paul, knowing the terror of this, persuades men (2 Cor. v. 11). This fear to suffer evil for sin makes men fear to do the evil of sin or to forsake it (Job i. 1; Jonah iii. 5). (2) Separately. (*a*) First, fear—because it is first; "the beginning of wisdom" (Psa. cxi. 10). It was the first passion that was raised in Adam (Gen. iii. 10). Then he began to play the wise man and forethink of the folly he had committed. Fear is a bridle to hold us in or turn us from evil (Prov. iii. 7). Another reason is, fear is most general. It goes through all—heathens, as is shown in the case of Nineveh; beasts, as in the case of Balaam's ass. And this fear, if it have its full work to make us depart from evil, is wisdom complete (Job xxviii. 28; Eccles. viii. 12); for of the seven spirits which are the divisions of one and the same Spirit, the last and chief is "the Spirit of the fear of the Lord" (Isa. xi. 2). Regard not them who say that this is no New Testament doctrine, for even there it abideth. There it is the dawning of the day (Mal. iv. 2). It is as the court is to the temple, as the needle that first enters and draws after it the thread that sews all together. Not to fear is the next way to fear. The work of fear is to make us cease from sin; ceasing from sin brings with it a good life; a good life carries with it a good conscience; and a good conscience casts out fear. This for the introduction, and ever after, when faith is entered it is a sovereign means to preserve (Phil. ii. 12; 1 Pet. i. 17; Matt. x. 28). So, then, this fear is not Moses' song only (Rev. xv. 3, 4). (*b*) But works also. Is God all for within? Accepts He of nothing without? He accepts a good righteous work too if it proceed from His fear in the heart. God would have us begin with "fear," but not end there. For neither fear alone nor faith alone is accepted of Him. If it be true fear such as God will accept, it is not a dull, lazy fear, his fear that "went and digged his talent in the ground." God will have his talent turned above ground, and not have religion invisible within. And observe that it is not "that doeth," but "worketh righteousness," *i.e.*, that makes it a trade. "Learn it," says Isaiah (i. 17), as one would learn a handicraft to live by; learn it and make an occupation of it, after Christ's example (ver. 38). This "righteousness" is described in ver. 2. III. GOD'S ACCEPTATION. 1. He will take them—(1) Where they be to take; but where they are not He cannot take. Our "alms," alas! are shrunk up pitifully; "prayer" swallowed up with hearing, and feasting substituted for "fasting." (2) But it is said that there is no faith here, without which it is impossible to please God. But would Cornelius have spent his words and chastened his body without some faith? Would he have called upon a God in whom he did not believe? (Rom. x. 14). Nay, he must have believed that God is, that He may be sought, and that He will not fail them that seek Him (Psa. ix. 10; 2 Cor. viii. 12). The flax did but smoke, but Christ quenched it not, &c. He took him as He found him, and that in order to bring him nearer the ways of His salvation. (3) But now, lest one error beget another, take this—that he was, and we shall be, accepted, gives us some heart; and that he was but accepted takes away all self-conceit. It is neither our fear nor our works, but God's gracious acceptation. God counts them worthy and so makes them worthy. His taking our works of righteousness well in work is their worth. There was another centurion whom the elders of the Jews dignified highly; but he indignified himself as lowly (Luke vii. 4–6). So with Job (i. 8, ix. 15, x. 15). See Eph. i. 6. Our work is to get men to do well, but not to ween of their well-doing. 2. To what end accepted. The profession of religion by baptism. (*Bp. Andrewes.*) *God no respecter of persons*:—"Oh," you say, "I am such a little plant; I do not grow well; I do not put forth as much leafage, nor are there so many flowers on me, as many round about me." It is quite right that you should think little of yourself; perhaps to droop your head is part of your beauty. Many flowers had not been half so lovely if they had not practised the art of hanging their heads. But "supposing Him to be the gardener," then He is as much a gardener to you as He is to the most lordly palm in the whole domain. In the Mentone garden grows the orange and the aloe, and others of the finer and more noticeable plants; but on the wall to my left grow common wall flowers and saxifrages and tiny herbs such as we find on our own rocky places. Now the gardener has cared for all of them, little as well as great. In fact, there were hundreds of specimens of the most insignificant growths all duly labelled and described. The smallest saxifage will say, "He is my gardener just as surely as he is the gardener of the Gloire de Dijon or the Marechal Neil."

Prejudice:—Prejudice is one of the greatest enemies to human welfare. Of all the train of mental ills with which we are affected it is one of the most difficult to be eradicated. 1. Prejudice has given protracted vitality to countless social abuses. One of the best remedies for this evil is to inspect closely the grounds of our cherished prepossessions, and to ask, Why do I do this? Why do I feel so? 2. The strongest prejudices are religious. What is given to us by tradition from our forefathers, familiarised to our earliest associations, we can hardly bring ourselves to question or examine, and we often hold as enemies those who differ from us even in minor points. As we generally feel more earnestly about religion, to our prejudices here we may trace all those religious feuds and bitter persecutions which have disgraced the page of history. 3. In the context we have a memorable instance of relinquishment of the strongest possible prejudice, so strong even in a good and noble man that direct Divine interposition was necessary for its removal. Notice—I. SPIRITUAL EXCELLENCE, AND NOT THE ACCIDENTS OF EXTERNAL CONDITION, ALONE AVAILS WITH GOD. Take some illustrations confirmatory of this from—1. The Scriptures: *e.g.*, the choice of Abraham, Moses, &c. 2. The dispensations of Providence. (1) Wealth and power are administered impartially. (2) Health is equally shared by rich and poor. (3) Genius: our poets, legislators, inventors, orators, and divines have more frequently emerged from the cottage than from the mansion. (4) So with the blessings of happiness, life, and age. Death which spares not the hovel spares not the palace, just as the wind fades the cottage flowers as well as the productions of the conservatory. 3. The administration of the benefits of redemption. Not many mighty are called, yet there are some—Wilberforce and Bunyan. Only one door of mercy to all. "Whosoever will," &c. 4. The day of judgment and its results. "We shall all stand before," &c. II. WHY HAS GOD NO RESPECT OF PERSONS EXCEPT IN RELATION TO MORAL GOODNESS? 1. Accidents in condition seemingly great to us bear no such relation to Him. This world is like a grain in the balance of His mighty creation. Its revolving centuries are but "as yesterday when it is past." He surveys all toils, plans, &c, serenely as the stars look with undisturbed light on mortal things. 2. They are not the essential elements of our being. They spring from birth, &c. They are not the man, and pass away with time. III. WHY DOES GOD SUPREMELY VALUE SPIRITUAL EXCELLENCE? 1. It is the true basis of worth in every intelligent creature. It is so of angels, and of man as man. "In every nation," &c. 2. It is God's own spiritual reflection, and therefore the true basis of friendship with Him. God's moral nature must take cognizance of its kindred elements. Here, then, is consolation for all. None are too lowly or poor to be the accepted friends of the Lord of the universe. (*J. Foster, B.A.*) *On the reception of new truth*:—1. The main purpose of the Acts is to unfold the broadening spirit and form of the Church of God. It is a history of transition. On its first page the Christ ascends. As the heavens, into which He rises, overarch the whole world, so His gospel spreads its wings for its world-wide flight. Soon the Spirit breathes upon the apostles, and they begin to act under an inspiration as free and wide as the wind that typifies it. On every page some barrier gives way; with every line the horizon broadens. One feels as if sailing in a great ship, under a bounding breeze, out of a narrow harbour into the wide sea. 2. With this change of scene there is corresponding change of personal attitude; conversions not only in character, but in opinion; it is a record not only of repenting and turning, but of broadening. Valuable as this book is as a record of events, it is more valuable as introducing the life of the Spirit, and as showing how the faith of ages develops into liberty and the full life and thought of humanity. 3. The incident before us is a happy illustration of this in its assurance of possible sainthood outside of the Church, yet showing its hard conditions, telling us how the centurion's devout aspirations carried him into the realm of vision, and brought upon him an inspiration greater than any that came upon his blind yearnings after righteousness. Here also is a somewhat similar experience of Peter. Sleep is not vacant of spiritual impression. Into that mystery the Spirit may come as unto its own, and say what it could not when the man is hedged about with wakeful and watchful powers. Shakespeare puts the deepest moral experiences of men into their dreams. 4. Notice how God not only enlarges and broadens the views of these men, but does this in the direction of Himself. For there is an enlargement of view that is mere breadth without height; it grows wise over matter and force, creeps but never soars, deeming the heights above to be empty. In preceding centuries the mind shot upward, but within narrow limits. There was no look abroad; nature was simply to be used as

found, not studied for further uses. Hence, there was great familiarity with the lore of religion, but dense ignorance of the laws of matter and of human society. To-day the reverse is true. It is interesting to note how this tendency pervades classes that apparently do not influence one another: thus the scientific class, and the lighter literary class; neither reads the works of the other, yet in each we find the same study of matter and man, and the same ignoring of God and the spiritual nature. Or, compare the man of universal culture with the average man of the world, who reads the newspaper, and keeps his eyes open on the street: the latter knows little of the former, yet we find them holding nearly the same opinions about God and the faith, vague and indifferent; but both are very observant of what is about them. And all this is for some wise end. It had become necessary that man should have a better knowledge of the world, and of his relations to it and to society. Hence his attention is directed thither by a Divine and guiding inspiration, and no thinking man can be exempt from it. The only danger is lest the tendency become excessive, and we forget to look upward in our eagerness to see what is about us. It is the office of Christian thought to temper and restrain these monopolising tendencies and secure a proper balance between them. "God fulfils Himself in many ways, lest one good custom should corrupt the world." 5. I have fallen into this train of thought by reflecting how God led Peter away from his small notions of religion, and brought him into a higher and larger conception of Himself. As we read the story we wonder at the readiness and ease with which Peter gave up old habits of thought and entered into new ones. What is the explanation? I. IT IS IN THE NATURE OF RELIGIOUS CHANGES THAT THEY SHALL OCCUR SUDDENLY. There may be, there must be, long seasons of preparation, but the transition is instantaneous. Saul goes a-persecuting, and a light above the sun's dazzles him into instant submission. 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, 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. Character is of slow and steady growth, but the revelations of truth that inspire character are sudden. A new outlook is gained, and the man is changed, as, in climbing a mountain, it is some sharp turn in the path that reveals the new prospect which inspires the onward march. Some can affirm that it was in a moment that the charm of poetry, the pleasurable consciousness of thought, the passion of love, the dignity of manhood, the obligation of service, the sense of the Divine goodness, came upon them. II. PETER GOT SIGHT OF LARGER AND MORE SPIRITUAL TRUTHS THAN HE HAD BEEN HOLDING. When what claim to be truths are of equal proportion, we balance them, or try one and then the other; but as soon as one asserts itself as larger and finer we accept it instantly. Peter had been used to believing that God was a respecter of persons, but when he caught sight of the fact that God has no partialities, his true-loving nature rushed at once toward the greater truth. 1. We have an appetence for new spiritual truth, and take to it readily. This does not imply that we are to go about peering into the corners of the universe to find new truths, nor that we are to sit down and manufacture them. Truth already exists; there is now all there ever will be. All we have to do is to take it; to hold ourselves open to it; to do God's will, and we shall know it. The fundamental Christian idea is God seeking man, not man seeking God. We make but a poor figure when we attempt to think out a religion. It is not a search after God, but a revelation of God. We ourselves can find nothing. The main thing for us to do is to get out of the caves of sin and self-conceit into the open air, where the sun shines and the Spirit breathes. 2. There is also in such truth a self-attesting power that tends to secure instant reception. When one comes to me with a new machine, or a new theory of government, or of matter, or life, I hesitate; but when I see a new disclosure of the Divine love, or a fresh exhibition of humility and patience, or of some new adaptation of Christianity to human society, I at once believe. It is simply another candle brought into a lighted room. 3. This self-attesting quality goes farther and becomes commanding. Peter says, "God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean." It is one of the subtle workings of all high truth that it vests itself, as

by some instinct, with the Divine attributes. 4. I have had in mind thus far not any new truths, but rather a fresh and expanding vision of other sides of many-sided truth. Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as new truth; but there is such a thing as fresh sight of the truth. We can hardly do anything worse for our moral growth than to hold it in such a way that it may not change its form. Not that one is to hold his faith as in a constant flux, or suffer himself to be blown about by every new wind of doctrine, but rather that he should attain the twofold attitude of alertness and passivity: passive to the Spirit that is ever breathing upon us, and alert to note and follow the unfolding revelation of God in the world. III. HAVING SPOKEN GENERALLY, I SHALL NOW SPEAK MORE PARTICULARLY OF SOME OF THESE TRUTHS. To call attention to this intermingling of permanent and changing qualities. 1. Take that of the Trinity. It has another look to-day from that it wore a hundred years ago. It is the characteristic thought of God at present that He is immanent in all created things, yet personal, the life of all lives, the soul of the universe. With such a conception of God, it becomes easy to see how there should be a Son of man who is also the Son of God, and a Spirit everywhere present and acting—a paternal heart and will at the centre, a Sonship that stands for humanity, a spiritual Energy that is the life of men, and through which they come into freedom and righteousness. This conception of God may be brought into the category of science, and even be required by it. 2. So of the atonement: it has always been putting on new forms and yielding a richer life. It is the most elastic of the doctrines, and we are getting to understand it as containing the law and method of life for every man: "He that loseth his life for My sake shall find it." 3. So also of regeneration. It has been held simply as a moral necessity, having its basis in sin; but we are beginning to see that Christ taught it also as a psychological necessity. We must be born again, not merely because we are wicked, but because we are flesh and need to be carried forward and lifted up into the realm of the spirit,—a constructive rather than a reconstructive process. 4. In the same way the doctrine of Divine sovereignty is resolving into the universality of law. Science, with its doctrine of an original, ultimate force, advances more than half way towards this assaulted truth. 5. Or take the doctrine of sin, its inheritance and its relation to the personal will. The doctrine of heredity as found in the pages of science, the doctrine of freedom as found in the pages of philosophy and the observation of life, yield nearly all we care to claim. 6. So, too, of the miracles. Modern intelligence has grown so wide that it embraces both law and miracle in one harmony. No one now defines one as the violation of the other. An assertion of "the reign of law" does not disturb us so long as we are conscious of the hourly miracles wrought by personality. 7. Take next retribution. It will never be denied so long as men have eyes to trace cause and effect. Just now we are finding out that it is not a matter of future time, but of all time; an eternally acting principle. The true preacher of retribution makes it clear that the wages of sin is death, and emphasises the two features of retribution that alone are effective, its nearness and its certainty. 8. Take the inspiration of the Bible. There is not now, and probably never will be, any generally accepted theory, simply because inspiration cannot be so compassed; as Christ said, "Thou canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth." It is the breathing of God upon the soul. We are getting to speak less of the inspired book, and more of the inspired men who wrote it. The revelation, therefore, will have a twofold character: it will be Divine and human, the one conditioning the other; not an imperfection, but rather the only kind of revelation that could serve our needs, for the line of revelation from God to man must run through the human heart. But without a theory, we are reading the Bible with fuller faith than ever before. The more light we bring to it from nature and study and experience, the clearer its truths stand out; in such light it is becoming its own evidence, and no more needs an apologetic theory than a candle needs an argument for illumination. IV. BUT A THOUGHTFUL MIND WILL ASK, HOW HAPPENS IT THAT CHRISTIANITY HAS THIS TWOFOLD FEATURE of a permanent essence and a shifting form? The answer will take him into that world of thought recently opened, the main feature of which is the law of development. The timid may linger on the threshold, but once in, the atmosphere is found friendly. It is not something to be quelled, but an ally to be pressed into service. What it does for every other department of thought it may do for the faith—open another door between the mystery of the external order and the human reason. Recognising this principle, we can read the Old Testament, and need no other explanation or apology than it affords. The sayings of the

Christ become principles and revelations of eternal truth. The mustard seed, the leaven, &c., not only fall in with the principle, but attest Christ's absolute knowledge of it. It will be noticed that the reception of new truth has been spoken of in two ways that are apparently contradictory: one as quick and as by instant revelation; the other gradual, a growth or development. They are not inconsistent, but represent the twofold nature of truth as having a Divine source and element and a human ground and element, and the twofold nature of man as spirit and mind. These methods play into each other. One prepares the way for the other. One is slow, and keeps pace with the gradual advance of society and a like development of the individual. The other is quick, is allied to the mysterious action of the Spirit, which knows not time nor space, and accords with the loftiest action of our nature. I gain knowledge slowly; I gain the meaning of knowledge instantly. (*T. T. Munger.*) *The outside saints:*—When we assume the certain exclusion from God of all born subjects of false religions, is not Peter's vision as truly for us as for him? The Old Testament denounces idolatry, it is true, but these denunciations were not made to the idolaters, but to God's own people dwelling in a clearer light. So when we say, "There is none other Name," &c., do we not fall into the mistake of not observing that it is those who have heard of the name of Christ that are put under this ban, and not Pagan people who have never heard of Him? If in every nation he that feareth God, &c., is accepted of Him, how many may there be who never heard of Christ, to whom God is an unknown God, who yet are so far right with God as to be fitly joined with us in the common hope! They compose a Church beyond the Church who, without a gospel, have learned to walk in God's private light. A glance at certain great first principles would induce the hope that many more than one commonly suspects are harvested for the kingdom. (1) That God loves all men impartially, having the desire to be loved by all. (2) That He is never afar off from any, but is putting in them a desire to seek and to find Him. (3) That the Spirit of God is going through all minds, drawing their inclinings towards the inborn grace that will be in turn His finding of them. My present object is to show how God finds access to outsiders, and engages them in a felt devotion to His friendship, by an examination of Bible examples. 1. Take Enoch. There was no Scripture or Church in his day. He lived a solitary life of walking with God. He was probably derided by his contemporaries, which made it his necessary comfort to live "in the testimony that he pleased God." And this was not audible, but was the witness of the Spirit who came in the door of nature set open wider by his faith till finally he became so leavened by the Divine affinities that he was translated. 2. Noah was a preacher of righteousness without a Bible, and there was no person out of his own family who had any care for religion. And the oracle that found him so verified itself as to put him on building the ark; for God, by a process which he could only trust, and not understand, was preparing him to be the father of a better age. 3. With Abraham the Church begins, and yet he is prepared by an outside training. He had no written revelation or organised religion. But he came out a profoundly religious character, from amidst idolaters, so that he could receive a life call at first hand, and take the necessary guidance in that call. 4. Moses was brought up as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, separated from his race, and trained in all the learning of the Egyptians, a training which shows itself in all his politics. Then in Midian Jethro, an outside, but grandly religious man, comes to help him in his religious development. So Moses was a virtual outsider till his call in the burning bush. 5. Then take Balaam, the beauty and evangelical richness of whose oracles are inimitable. He was a soothsayer, but while divination had been forbidden to the Jews, it had not been forbidden to the Mesopotamians. And therefore it was only natural that he should mix enchantments with his oracles—just as our astrologers and alchemists sought religious light with mixtures of incantation. He was certainly faithful to his convictions, against the blandishments employed to win his consent. 6. Job is not a Jew, and his book not a Jewish book. Its piety is real, but out of all connection with Bible history. And thus you have one of its most remarkable books of Scripture, a theodicy for after ages, the work of an outsider. 7. Cyrus is one of the best characters of ancient history, and the reason of his conduct towards God and His people is given by Isaiah, who declares that God unseen has holden his right hand, and raised him up in righteousness. 8. At the very opening of the New Testament we encounter the Magi, religiously related to Cyrus, priests of the Medo-Persian religion, watching the stars to spell God's oracle, and becoming so spiritualised in habit as to be not unfitly honoured by the guidance of a star to Christ. 9. The

Syrophœnician woman, whose faith was so heartily commended, was Pagan born, but by some heavenly guidance went to Christ for help. 10. The case of the centurion was like that of Cornelius, about whom Christ says, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." And He did not stop there, "I say unto you, that many shall come from the east," &c. 11. I might turn off here to such as Numa, Marcus Aurelius, Plotinus, Plato, and Socrates, and look directly into the workings of the religious nature in many thoughtful men outside revelation, and see their notions of God, their expressed longings for a revelation, their gropings, and almost findings. Their yearnings sometimes put them in a state in which they lay hold of Christ at the very first discovery, even as a starving man of bread. 12. And if we go apart still further—among the savage tribes, we find many traditions that seem almost to have the sanctity of a revelation, and now and then a character assuming the distinctions of genuine piety. So we see that God has had His witnesses in every age of the world apart from His covenant and the institutions of His grace. From all this we may learn the following lessons: I. WE ARE NOT TO JUDGE THAT THE MERE POSSIBILITY OF A REVELATION OUTSIDE THE BIBLE SUPERSEDES THE WANT OF IT. That was not the opinion of God when He sent His angel to Cornelius to put him in the way of one who should teach him Christ. The souls most enlightened have sighed for a veritable revelation. Having gleams, almost visions of God, they wanted it the more. Christ, the Bible not wanted! Just as well to be without a revelation! What could show the unsupportable destitution of such a state better than the gropings and only casual findings of hungry millions? II. LET NO ONE TURN THE BLAME UPON GOD THAT WHAT IS SO MUCH WANTED EVERYWHERE IS NOT EVERYWHERE GIVEN. Doubtless God might rain Bibles, but He must also rain written languages, and the power to read them. And then the readers would want to know how the book grew to be a book, the revelation how revealed. If a Bible could be got up mechanically as showers in the sky it might justly be concluded that all men ought to have it. But it has first to be incarnated, and so revealed through humanity; for truths must be enunciated in persons. Bibles could not be made faster than men are good enough to have revelations made through them. III. WE ARE NOT TO PUSH THE DISSEMINATION OF THIS GOSPEL BY ANY FALSE ARGUMENT THAT DISHONOURS GOD. Tell us not that every man ignorant of Christ must perish. Why should we push ourselves to this work of gospelling the world, by putting it on that He has given no possibility of life to millions? Rather let us tell what God is doing for them, what possibilities He opens for them, and how certainly He sometimes gains them to His love. Then as we are so gloriously privileged let us give them our privilege. IV. LET US HAVE IT AS ONE OF OUR MOST SACRED DUTIES TO THE BIBLE, NOT TO USE IT SO AS TO SHUT OURSELVES AND ALL THAT HAVE IT AWAY FROM GOD'S IMMEDIATE REVELATION BY IT. The external revelation is not given to be a substitute for the internal, but a guide into it. We are to find God after all by an immediate knowledge like all the outside saints, only with the help of the Bible which they had not. The Bible is received only when spiritually discerned: *i.e.*, when it brings us in where God is, to know Him by our faith and love, and have Him in a first-hand knowledge, even as Abraham had, or Job, or Cornelius. If we desire to know Boston, the map of the way will not show it, but will only take us thither, and let us get the knowledge for ourselves. The Bible in like manner tells us how others found God, that we may find Him also. Conclusion: Let us cast a glance into that future life, in which all righteous souls are gathered. Many of them will belong to the class of inside saints, some to the class of outside; the former will have known Christ all their lives and been fashioned by His Gospel and character; the latter will now meet Him perhaps for the first time, and will salute Him as the unknown Friend they had always with them. To meet with these outside saints—outside no longer—how blessed it will be! And what a beautiful variety they will give to the general brotherhood! "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold," &c. (*H. Bushnell, D.D.*) *The law of Christian enlargement*:—I. IT HAS BEEN MADE AN OBJECTION TO CHRISTIANITY THAT IT INVOLVES A SYSTEM OF RELIGIOUS PRIVILEGES LIMITED, FOR SOME TWO THOUSAND YEARS, TO A SINGLE NATION: and although the New Testament proposes a more catholic plan, still it makes itself responsible for the Old. How is this consistent with the benevolence of a God whose love is wider than the world? 1. Long before this separation of Israel, God declared that it was not a permanent law. At the very moment when the selection began, an explicit prediction was carefully annexed to it that it would be expanded into a grand brotherhood of the world. Abraham, in whom the special calling

began, was the very man to whom the Lord said, that among his descendants there should be a "seed," a certain wonderful Son, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed. That mysterious Shepherd-king of the whole human flock was to have a Hebrew mother (Gal. iv. 4), so as to connect the special preparation with the universal blessing: but that He might be free of every possible human restriction, His Father was to be the Father of all that live. The promise in Genesis is as broad and as catholic as the preaching in the Acts. 2. Is there anything in this selection that justifies it? Why does a missionary gather in a score or two of children, out of hundreds, into a school, leaving the rest for the time untaught? When a Christian merchant wants to benefit paganism, why does he choose out one or two native youths of bright parts and send them to England for an education, instead of scattering spelling-books among the heathen houses? When you want to introduce into a manufacturing interest an improved machinery, why do you send a single student to the best engineering school instead of exhorting the agents and masters of the mills to improve themselves in that department of science? The principle is that of selection and concentration, for the sake of a general benefit, and such is the nature of the human mind and of human society that practically this is the better and shorter way. Now, when Moses was lying all unconscious of it in the little rush-basket in the Nile, the great problem was how to stop the race from going any further wrong, and how to turn it about, and get it ready for the setting up of a Divine order. And this was to be done not by thrusting in of an arbitrary revolution which would simply set the outward works all right, but would leave the springs of spiritual life—love, choice, energy, faith—all untouched. The thing wanted was to bring in and set up these grand interior holy forces in the soul. God took, therefore, the practical way. He chose out one nation, and sent it to school to learn the prophetic rudiments of Christianity and to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. This is the key to the scheme. Was not the plan magnificent? Can the best critic or the shrewdest objector suggest a wiser? And when we take a view of the whole Old Testament history, with all its strange incidents, its erring heroes, and faulty saints, intermingled with its splendid virtues, its sublime loyalty, its eloquence and poetry, and its supernatural prophecies, is it not a very poor thing indeed to carp at an unexplained passage here and there, or to sneer and cavil at some half-veiled feature in the majestic working out of the design? And all this while the original intention was never forgotten. When the Jew should have been drilled and taught, the Gentiles would be gathered in. No sidereal motion in astronomy, no regularity in celestial cycles and orbits will be more sure than the rising, in the due time, of the Epiphany star—"A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of My people Israel." 3. Another explanation to relieve the alleged narrowness of the Jewish religion is its constant progress as it goes on. We have only to study the Hebrew prophets with this clue in hand, to find ample demonstrations that the Divine tuition they were under was doing its work. With the intensest hostility to everything foreign; with an intolerance and superciliousness all the more tenacious because bound up with their religious scruples, there was ever a mighty hope of the breaking down of all international walls, and the gathering in of all to an equal share with themselves in the peace and glory of the Messiah's dominion. The strain grows louder and more confident all along: till, in Malachi, we have it resounding in that sentence, to which the famous saying of the great orator, where the morning drum-beat of the British Empire circles the earth, is but a feeble figure: "From the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, My name shall be great among the Gentiles," &c. II. GIVE A FEW MOMENTS TO A USE OF ST. PETER'S WORDS WHICH WILL BRING THEM DOWN TO OURSELVES. "In every nation he that feareth God," &c. 1. The sense here is not theological, but popular; so that they are wide of the mark who suppose that the apostle means to take back all that he preached of every man's need of repentance and faith. He means this:—In every nation, now that Jesus Christ has come, there is an equal access to the open door for every tongue and tribe and people. The Pentecostal signs mean nothing less. There are no external disqualifications, and no internal incapabilities for being saved. "Fearing God and working righteousness" is the ground of acceptance, not meritoriously, into heaven, but into the privileges and helps of the Church as the school for heaven. Christ died for all. The Church is Catholic. And while St. Peter spoke, "on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost." 2. So the Word and Spirit of Christ go on constantly filling out our small measures of charity and hope—breaking up our petty judgments, enlarging our sympathies for all classes. We have a great many

personal and private limitations. (1) The circle of our own purely personal interests. Christ, by the Cross of His sacrifice, makes a constant remonstrance against these; and unless we catch His spirit, and give up self for service, we can be none of His. (2) The circle of the family. This is a little wider, but often only a little. We may only see ourselves, and love ourselves, in our children. But our doctrine requires us to see whether our absorption in our own domestic pleasures restricts our sympathies for strangers. (3) The circle of our own social set—a very dangerous as well as subtle enemy to true spirituality and nobleness. All the mutually admiring and complacent members just reflect each other's prejudices, study to please each other's whims, and so, of course, must stop growing in all that constitutes greatness of heart. Then there is the circle of business engagements, where the slave of mercantile ambition, or routine, sacrifices home, church, and his higher life for the poverty that is starving him. (4) The circle of patriotic attachments. Scarcely yet—Christian as we claim to be—has the idea of the brotherhood of nations entered into the statesmanship, much less into the politics and legislation, of even civilised man. 3. We are not to suppose that Epiphany signifies to us a mere sending out of a few missionaries to foreign countries. Done earnestly and heartily, that is worth doing, and, the more we do it, the more Christianlike we become. Men may say they prefer to give their missionary money nearer home, where they see what becomes of it. But remember that it is by setting up standards and beacons, Christianising a few here and there, even when results look small, that a great testimony to Christ is finally given. (*Bp. Huntington.*)

He that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him.—*Piety and virtue both required by the gospel*:—Religion consists of two constituent branches—faith and practice. 1. The fear of God, in the most extensive sense of it, denotes the whole of piety; all those devout affections of soul, reverence, love, gratitude, and truth; and all those external acts of worship, prayer, and praise, which we are bound to pay to the Supreme Being. 2. Righteousness, in its most general meaning, signifies the whole of moral virtue; and to do works of this kind is not barely to abstain from acts of injustice and oppression, but to abound in offices of kindness and humanity. I. PIETY WITHOUT VIRTUE, FAITH WITHOUT MORALITY, FALLS SHORT OF THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER, AND WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED BY THE SUPREME BEING. There is no part of religion more binding upon mankind than justice and beneficence. From our situation in society, in the midst of our fellow creatures, dependent on one another, we are taught to cultivate humanity as the most useful virtue in life. From our Christian obligations we are bound to practise universal benevolence, not merely as an ordinary virtue, but as the distinguishing quality of a true Christian. What, then, shall we think of the immoral devotee, the man of prayers without good works? He wants the most godlike disposition of heart, and the most substantial virtues in life. He wants the distinguishing character of a Christian, and an indispensable qualification for eternal glory. His devotion is either a hypocritical appearance assumed to impose upon the world, and to serve his own ends; or it is only a transient glow of devotion raised occasionally in the mind, which, like the morning cloud and the early dew, soon passeth away; or, which is oftener the case, it is the superstitious observance of a mistaken and corrupted mind, which would substitute a form of godliness in place of virtue. True piety is a principle which regenerates the heart and reforms the life. II. MORALITY WITHOUT PIETY, GOOD WORKS WITHOUT FAITH, A REGARD TO SOCIETY WITHOUT THE FEAR OF GOD, IS EQUALLY INSUFFICIENT TO SALVATION. There is no sentiment of mind which is more deeply founded in nature and reason than a sense of God and of religion. Devotion is no enthusiastic rapture. It is only the exercise of affections which form a part of our constitution, and are essential to the human mind. We are formed by nature to admire what is great, and to love what is good. You treat great men with marks of respect. And is no reverence due to the greatest of all beings, to the King of kings, and the Lord of lords? You profess esteem for worthy characters, and have you no regard to the infinite perfections of the Divine nature? To remain unmoved at the view of infinite goodness implies the utmost degree of corruption. Such a person must, indeed, be far from the kingdom of God. Depravity of heart, however, is not the only crime of the mere moralist, the man of good works, without faith. His discharge of the moral duties, upon which he values himself, must be exceedingly defective. A sense of what is right, a regard to honour, and the instinct of benevolence, may work upon men's minds, and engage them to do many good actions. But those natural principles are too weak to resist the force of corrupt

passions. Such is our propensity to vice, and so numerous the temptations to sin, that far stronger restraints are necessary. Accordingly, the man of mere morality is always inconsistent in character. If it be fair on one side it is strained on the other. Though he practise some virtues which deserve to be applauded, he is guilty, at the same time, of vices which tarnish his reputation; and thus, while he is confessedly devoid of piety to God, he is defective in justice and charity to men. III. THE SUFFICIENCY WHEN UNITED. The union of these amiable qualities forms the character, not only of the respectable man, but of the true Christian. Fear God, and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. The true Christian, the man who fears God, and works righteousness, is not merely entitled to acceptance through Christ. He is also qualified for the enjoyment of future glory. His charity joins him to man; his piety unites him to God. (*A. Donnan.*) *Acceptance of God:*—There is no argument here in favour of heathenism—it is rather an argument in favour of Judaism. Cornelius's character was not the result of classic culture, but of classic culture supplemented by Divine revelation. Seeing, then, that he was accepted of God before his conversion, why not let him and others like him alone? Simply because they cannot let themselves alone. They are still conscious of a painful void in the heart, which only God in Christ can fill. To be "accepted of God" is not the only desire of the heart; man wants to be perfected. Judaism would enable a man to be accepted; but it could not "make the comers thereto perfect." "For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did." This, then, is the reason why Cornelius needed the gospel—the gospel alone could fill the desires of his heart and perfect him in goodness. And what aspect of the gospel did Peter present to him? First, that God in Christ came to seek man, to do him good. In this Christianity differed from all the heathen religions. The latter always represent man seeking God but never finding. One of their own writers was at last obliged to exclaim—"Man cannot find God, God must therefore find man." Read the Bible and you discern in every page, not man seeking God, but God seeking man. But Peter not only spoke of the Saviour's life, he dwelt also upon His death. Other religions declared what man ought to do for God; this religion declares what God has done for man. The preaching of the gospel thus tended to revolutionise the world. The world, so to speak, is thrown off its centre. In ancient astronomy the sun revolved around the earth: in modern astronomy the earth revolves around the sun. We see a corresponding change in the science of religion. Compare the end of the chapter with the beginning. The beginning tells us what Cornelius did for God—he prayed, he fasted, he gave alms:—that is the groundwork of all ancient religions. The end tells us what God did for Cornelius—He sent His Son Jesus to live and die, "that through His name whosoever believeth in Him should receive remission of sins": that is the groundwork of the Christian faith. (*J. Cynddylan Jones, D.D.*) *The glorious doctrines:*—I. THE ABSOLUTE IMPARTIALITY OF GOD. The words "God is no respecter of persons"—1. Do not teach—(1) That God pays no regard to men. The deist would have us believe this; reason, consciousness, analogy, and the Bible, however, refute it. (2) That God looks upon men indiscriminately—regards them merely in the mass. No; He looks on each individually. (3) "That God bestows blessings on some which He denies to others; although this is true, for He has given to each some distinguishing blessing of mind, body, or estate. 2. They do teach that God does not respect persons—(1) In the same sense that man does. Man's respect for persons is—(*a*) Very limited. How little man knows of his race. God knows the millions. (*b*) Very superficial, whereas God looks at the heart. (*c*) Selfish, whereas God's is beneficent. (*d*) Popular. Man respects those whom the multitudes applaud. (*e*) Adventitious. It is because of what man has rather than what he is. (2) In the sense of disturbing for any the settled conditions of happiness. The conditions of physical, mental, and moral health are the same to all. (3) In the sense of limiting His salvation to any particular class. This is what the apostle means here. God's provisions of mercy are for the world. (*a*) The merits of the atonement are sufficient for all. (*b*) The force of moral motive is adapted to all. (*c*) The agency of the Spirit is available to all. II. THE NECESSARY ELEMENT OF MORAL GOODNESS. "He that feareth God," &c. 1. The fear here, of course, is not the servile, but the filial; it is the fear of a love which casts out all slavish feeling. The word stands here, as elsewhere, to represent that state of mind which God requires from every man. It is a fear that worketh righteousness. It must be of such a character as inspires and secures right conduct in relation to God, man, and the universe. There is a fear toward God that worketh nothing. It just touches the soul occasionally and

goes off in a sigh. There is a fear that worketh wrong—a superstitious feeling that leads to an unnatural and intolerant life. The fear that worketh right is alone the genuine thing; it is the essence of moral goodness. 2. This is that in a man which God respects and accepts wherever found. He does not accept a man because of his birth, country, or particular form of worship, or because of his Judaism, Gentilism, or Christianity. He that is right, whether he be a Socrates or a Paul, a Cornelius or a Peter, is accepted of Him. The Bible is full of this truth (2 Kings xxii. 19; Psa. xxxiv. 18, lii. 15–19; Deut. x. 12; 1 Sam. xv. 22; Hos. vi. 6; Micah vi. 8; Matt. v. 8). III. THE MEDIATORSHIP OF CHRIST (ver. 36). The Word, *i.e.*, gospel, is God's instrument to generate this rectitude of soul. Peter shows that Christ's mission—1. Was Divine in its origin. 2. Was redemptive in its purpose. 3. Was universal in its aspect. 4. Involved His death on the Cross, and His resurrection from the dead. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *God's plan, and our part in it*:—To study the unfolding of the Divine plan is one of the greatest occupations that can engage the mind of man. It engages the student of nature. It is the pursuit of the devout historian, to whom the track of human history appears spread out as a river from its source to its mouth. It is above all the study of the Christian, who, Bible in hand, loves to muse on that wonderful development of the Divine plan which, through page on page of psalm, and prophecy, and history, has wrought out the wealth of meaning that lay enshrined in that earliest promise given to man between his fall and his expulsion from the gate of Paradise. The chapter from which our text is taken possesses extreme interest because it records a marked stage in the development of the Divine plan. I. THE DIVINE PLAN IS COINCIDENT WITH HUMAN NEED. "While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee, arise, get thee down, and go with them." The point to notice is that these three men were representatives of the great heathen world—*i.e.*, they were not acquainted with what is known as revealed religion. One was a devout soldier, the other two were household servants of a Roman officer, who commanded one of the choicest regiments in the Roman army. We are thus confronted with the whole question of the heathen needs. There are men whose goodness is unquestionable who reason thus, "The gospel is the ordained means of salvation and the only means; now it is clear that the heathen, having never heard the gospel, cannot believe it, therefore they cannot be saved." Now, this line of reasoning cannot be true. Even if it were argued as consistent with God's justice, it could not be shown to be consistent with His pitiful goodness, to condemn them to suffer for the ages of the ages, if there were no way of salvation for them but the holding of definite convictions about the person and work of One who had never been revealed to them. 1. Nationality is of no account to God. The Jew thought that salvation was for him alone. 2. It is also clear that God deals with men according to their light. Our Lord drew a clear distinction between the servants that knew and those that knew not their Lord's will. 3. It is also clear that God can give credit for the quality of man's moral attitude. After, on one occasion, upbraiding the cities in which His mighty works had been done, our Lord went on to say, "If the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." He here tells us what would have been. Now, this intimate knowledge of the moral condition of man, of the quality of the soul, and of the way in which it would act, is an essential qualification of the Judge of all men. It enables Him to deal not with the results or manifestation of character, but with its essence. I go into the market, and on a barrow I see some spring flowers. An experienced friend says, "Buy them." On inquiring I find the price enormous. "What!" I whisper to my friend, "Are they worth so much?" "Yes," he replies, "if you plant them in your hothouse, or beneath a sunny wall, they will bloom and fruit thus and thus." His knowledge of what they may do under certain conditions justifies me in buying the unsightly bulbs at an extravagant figure. Now, it is so that our Lord deals with men. He thinks, not so much of their creed, or even of their actions, but of their moral nature, and of what they may or might become, if favoured by certain soil, and sun, and rain. And if in the twilight of heathenism the soul has yet attained but a sickly growth, the Lord will still set a high value on it, and if He sees that in the full light of the gospel it would have equalled the moral nature of the best, He will put it on a level with them. We cannot too much insist on this, that our Master knows the moral nature of each, and what it would do under more favourable circumstances, and He judges us not by what we say or do, but by what we are. He knows how much of our failure to put to the credit of ignorance, and how much to the essential stupidity

and stubbornness of our hearts. 4. It is also clear that God has not left Himself or His truth without witness in the heathen world. 5. It is also clear that no man is saved apart from the death of Christ. 6. It is clear also that the acceptance of men, whether Jew or Gentile, is only possible to faith. 7. But if this be the case with the heathen, why send them the gospel? For two reasons. First, because what they have cannot satisfy the noblest spirits. Cornelius is said to have prayed to God alway. For what did he pray? Evidently for what he had not got, for light and grace and power, for the fulness of God's salvation. Outside of Christ there is no certain knowledge of the love of God, of forgiveness of sin, or of eternal life; the heathen can only guess at the best; he longs to know that God is love, that sin may be forgiven, and that there is a future life. And for further light and teaching on these momentous subjects, the heathen world sends its representatives to knock at the door of the Christian Church. But there is a yet more imperious demand which sends them there, referred to in the expression, "Words by which thou shalt be saved." Great as is the yearning to know, there is a still stronger one to be. The one demand of the noblest souls was for power—power to salvation, power to resist sin, power to fulfil the noblest yearnings of the soul. And this is the burden of our message to the heathen to-day. We do not deny to them visions of God, intuitions of truth, lofty unselfishness, morality, prayer; but we affirm that they lack power, power unto salvation. But, secondly, the heathen for the most part are not represented by Cornelius. They have not faith. They do not live up to their light. They fail to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. They do not fear God and work righteousness. They are sunk in sin, from which they show no inclination to arouse themselves. In this case they have to be saved from the results of their own evil choice. They must be awakened, convicted of sin, led to repentance. There is no doubt, therefore, as to the need of man, and we adore the grace of God that His plan has been coincident with it. It is always so. Nature and Providence work as a double hinge. The fish do not seek insects in the summer afternoon, which do not flutter over the silver surface of the pool. Birds do not seek for fruits and berries which are not strewn through the woodlands. II. THE DIVINE PLAN CAN ONLY BE WROUGHT OUT THROUGH HUMAN CO-OPERATION. In each stage of its unfolding it has been so. When from amid the recreant race of man God was desirous to select one family to become the depository of the sacred trust, He called Abraham from kindred and country, and prepared him by special trials for his high commission. When the progress of the Divine purpose seemed to be arrested by the captivity in Egypt, He took up the broken thread in Moses, the faithful servant. And at each successive crisis there was a David or a Hezekiah, an Ezra or a Nehemiah to carry it forward; as in the torch-bearing of the old Greek games. And thus it has been in all subsequent ages, as the plan of God has taken some new phase there has ever been a Paul, an Augustine, a Luther, a Wesley, a Carey, through whom it has wrought. By men the will of God has been done on earth, as it is in heaven. This is the one passionate yearning of all true hearts, to know whether they are carrying out God's plan. There is plenty of work which is being done in the world which is abortive. Great beginnings, poor endings. This line of thought suggests some very serious reflections. It is clear that God's plan is not as yet realised. And what sort of men are they through whom He will work? Ah, Peter shall furnish the illustration. There was plenty of human nature about him. But with all the peculiar idiosyncrasies that marked this foundation-stone from all the rest in the foundations of the New Jerusalem, there was that devotion to the Lord and Saviour, that love for prayer, that openness of heart to the Divine Spirit, that willingness to obey, that absence of assumption, which lifted the prostrate soldier to his feet with the words, "Stand up, I also am a man"; which are the prime notes of any soul to whom God will reveal His purpose, and by whom He will effect it. Is this thy state of heart? Then wait at Joppa, however obscure the place, and tiresome the delay. Nourish thy heart with prayer and meditation. Dare to wait though all men bid thee begone. If the vision tarry, wait for it. III. THE EVOLUTION OF THE DIVINE PLAN IS ALWAYS ACCOMPANIED BY THE OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY GHOST. Plan and power always go together. "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word." There is no need to expatiate on our need of the Holy Ghost, and that need is twofold, first as respects His influence on the worker, then as respects His co-operation in the work. There is a mysterious something in the worker who is endued with the Holy Ghost, which you can neither define nor imitate. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *The individual not overlooked in the mass*:—This is not an answer to the question, Are there few that

be saved? It only states the conditions of being acceptable to God. This is not a saying which the profane and prayerless may take comfort in, for it speaks of the acceptance only of those who are reverent toward God. It is not a message of peace to any who are selfish, unjust, or immoral, but to those only who work righteousness toward their fellow-men. It does not say there is no difference between religions; that Christianity and the worship of heathen temples are just alike in the sight of God. It simply says that God is indifferent to national lines, and accepts an obedient heart and life in one nation as readily as in another. It does not follow that men are just as likely to be devout and righteous in one land as in another. Race, training, associations, occupation, do influence character. God never overlooks the individual in the mass of which he is a part. God regards biography more than history. If your son or daughter has gone to some new region or strange city, you are more concerned in your child's welfare than in the history of the place. General and individual forces appear everywhere interworking in human life, yet can be broadly distinguished everywhere. History occupies itself with general movements under the impulse of physical conditions, or tides of public feeling. Biography is concerned with the development of individual character in the midst of these general forces. History is vaster than biography. Social life makes individuals part of an organisation. History is more and other than the sum of the lives of its actors, as a twisted rope has more strength than the sum of its strands. History is vaster than biography. Yet on the other hand we cannot explain the character and lives of individual men and women by the social and physical conditions into which they are born and among which they develop. In the later centuries, at least, race has been a stronger element than climate in determining the course and development of history, the English stock showing its superior vigour in all the zones, though not, it must be confessed, in all the arts. The superiority of race to physical conditions is not, however, the highest point of man's dignity. Peter saw a more glorious sunlit summit of truth when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the family of the Gentile Cornelius. He saw that the individual is more even than race and environment, more than the fated development of inherited characteristics under the influence of these or those external conditions. Each soul is a living unit, responsible to God and under God's particular regard. Race, climate, and the movements of surrounding life affect every individual. Yet is the individual supreme. Shall Joseph because he is in Egypt say, It avails nothing to worship the God of my fathers in this strange land? If Joseph had taken the colour of his surroundings, where had been his honour as the deliverer of his people, and who had saved Egypt from the famine? If Moses had become a courtier in Pharaoh's court, or a hermit in Arabia, who had led Israel out of Egypt? That God is thus a Father and never overlooks the individual in the mass, is a truth of the greatest practical importance to us. God never uses men as a chess player does his pawns—to win a victory for himself without regard to the pieces used. The chess player moves his pieces here or there for the sake of the game. God rules and overrules the affairs of history for the sake of individuals. The earth was made for man. Institutions, as the family government, and the like, have been established of God, not for their own sake but for their share in promoting the welfare of individuals. No individual need ever be in despair because the drift of life about him is toward evil and the multitudes are swept on by the current toward ruin. Fear God and work righteousness, and you shall be acceptable to God. The evil drift of life about us is never a sufficient excuse for evil living or neglect of Christian duty on our part. We may not be responsible for the general tendency of life in our time or community, but we are responsible for the way we individually behave in the current. The ship-master must sail for his port whichever way the currents run. The more adverse the currents, the more resolutely must he hold the helm. The chance for a Cornelius to be acceptable to God, while in the brutal army of Rome, lay in the individual power to be different from his surroundings. It does not signify much in respect to individual character to be swept along in general movements, whether of religious fervour, of temperance enthusiasm, or of patriotic zeal. What most signifies both in manifesting and developing character, is the individual movement apart from that which is general. We are of such high estate in God's image that every individual can be more than his surroundings. It is just in such times that righteousness most shines out in contrast with evil-doing, and the strength of reverent faith grows stronger by the very lack of anything short of God to cling to. The hope of religion in the world, the hope of every reform and of all progress, lies in the superiority of the individual

soul to its surroundings, in the vital power of individual character. If men must be formed by their surroundings, no generation could ever break away from the corruptions of the past. But men are individual centres of power. So you and I are called to fear God and work righteousness, whether others hear the Divine call or forbear. We may make our own calling and election sure, and we may by God's blessing turn the current of the time to piety and righteousness. (*W. E. C. Wright.*)

Vers. 36, 37. **The Word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ.**—*St. Peter at Cæsarea to a Gentile company*:—1. Christ gave to Peter "the keys of the kingdom of heaven"—not keys of heaven, not keys of the Church, militant or triumphant, but keys of the kingdom of heaven on earth. St. Peter used one at Jerusalem to open the kingdom of heaven to the Jews; a second at Samaria, to open it to the Samaritans; a third at Cæsarea, to open it to the Gentiles. We know that the Lord designed Saul to be His apostle to the Gentiles, but there was obvious advantage in the employment of Peter to open the door. He was known to all as a strict Jew; and if he was satisfied of the extension of God's grace to the Gentiles, that would go far to abate the prejudice of the Hebrew Christians. 2. At Cæsarea Peter did not make the occasion for his speech. It was made for him by Jesus, who was now directing from heaven the activities of His servants in the foundation and extension of the Church. 3. At Jerusalem the apostle began by removing a misconception from the minds of those whom he addressed; at Cæsarea he acknowledged the removal of a misconception from his own mind. The definiteness and decision which marked his address were admirably suited to a military audience. He also showed both tact and fairness in putting his statements on ground which was common to all. At Jerusalem he had spoken to Jews, and therefore rested on the ground of the Old Testament. But at Cæsarea, though Cornelius was doubtless acquainted with the Septuagint, the ancient Scriptures were not to Gentiles what they were to Jews. Such adaptation is in harmony with common sense, and must be practised if justice is to be done to religious truth. To missionaries it is indispensable. A missionary to the Jews must reason from Moses and the prophets. But to the Gentiles it is not of much consequence to learn how the gospel is related to "Moses' law." What they need is to hear of One who has come "to destroy the works of the devil," and to transfer men "from darkness into marvellous light." This principle of adaptation shows itself clearly in Peter's train of thought. His speech was—I. A REHEARSAL OF FACTS OF WHICH THE AUDIENCE WAS ALREADY COGNISANT (vers. 36–39). Though Jesus had never visited Cæsarea, its inhabitants could not be unaware of the facts of His life and death. The fact that He had been accused before Pilate of high treason, and had been crucified as King of the Jews, must have attracted the notice of military men. St. Peter affirmed that this Jesus was no revolutionary agitator, but a preacher of good tidings of peace; though, as the apostle happily observed in a parenthesis, He was Lord, not of Israel only, but of all mankind. He did not touch the imperial rights of Cæsar, and yet at the same time He was far above all the Cæsars. The word and authority of Jesus had been attested by good deeds and works of healing; and these again were accounted for on this ground—that God, who had sent Him, was with Him, and anointed Him with the Holy Ghost and with power. If there was any hesitation to believe this, Simon Peter and his companions were ready with personal testimony; and although the speech was not interrupted by any question, we can well suppose that in the "certain days" which he spent at Cæsarea, St. Peter told many an incident which his own eyes had seen in his Master's career. Such a Prophet, such a Healer, the Jews had slain. The fact was already known, but the apostle saw fit to lay emphasis on the entire innocence of Jesus. He did so in order to remove any impression which may have lurked in the minds of an Italian officer that One whom the Roman governor had sentenced must have in some measure deserved His fate. II. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF A NEW FACT, WHICH CHANGED THE WHOLE ASPECT OF THE CASE (vers. 40, 41). God had raised up Jesus from the dead on the third day. No allusion to the 16th or 118th Psalm meets us here. Quotations from these were for a Jewish, not a Gentile, audience. What they cared for was sufficient proof; and the apostle adduced the proof with an exactness admirably suited to the occasion. He said, not that his Master was seen to rise, but that He was seen after He had risen; not that He was seen by as many as saw Him crucified—for the Christ-rejecting Jews were to see Him no more—but that He was seen by duly qualified witnesses, chosen

by God. And in what way can any historical fact of an unusual nature be more sufficiently proved? If any allege that not even God can raise the dead, we have no argument with them here. But grant that the thing is possible with God, and then say what conditions of evidence would satisfy the mind. All mankind could not be present, so that it is a question of sufficient evidence. Now, in regard to Christ's resurrection, note that—1. The witnesses were sufficiently numerous—men and women, apostles and less prominent disciples; one at a time, then two, then eleven, then seven, then "five hundred brethren at once." 2. They were of unblemished character. The rulers despised them as unlearned, but could never prove deceit. One of them, James, was honoured of all classes in Jerusalem as "the Just." 3. They were Christ's close companions, and could not have mistaken any other for Him. 4. They had ample opportunity to identify Him; for they not only saw and heard Him, but "did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead." 5. They told the story from the beginning, and at the greatest possible risk to themselves. They laid on it at once the whole weight of the cause which they maintained; if it was a lie or an illusion, the Church would fail. 6. They adhered to it till their last breath; and not one of them could be induced to modify the statement that the Lord had risen. III. A STATEMENT OF THE POWER AND GLORY OF THE RISEN JESUS (vers. 42, 43). 1. "This is He who is ordained of God to be Judge of the living and the dead." St. Peter had touched on this at Jerusalem, when he spoke of the "time of restitution of all things," addressing Jews, and confining himself to the sphere of Jewish expectation. But now he stated it in the way most suited to impress Gentiles. There was a special fitness in the first announcement of this to Gentiles being made to a Roman officer. The Romans were men of the sword, the sceptre, and the judgment-seat. The Emperor was looked up to by the world as lord of all. And he, too, was judge of all, for appeals went up from all regions of the known world to the supreme throne of judgment at Rome. The apostle Peter had a startling statement to make to those men, which involved no treason against Cæsar, and yet made the Emperor's glory pale. 2. "Through His name every one that believeth on Him shall receive remission of sins." This came in well after the previous announcement. He who will be the Judge is now the Saviour. To this truth St. Peter said that all the prophets were bearing witness. Not the prophets of the Old Testament, which would have no significance for Roman soldiers, but prophets of the new age, as foretold in the ancient oracle of Joel (see chap. xi. 27, xiii. 1). As in music one does well to end on a full clear note, so the apostle did well to close with this abundant testimony to the blessing of forgiveness through Jesus Christ. Good news to the Gentiles! It was such an assurance as none of their prophets, priests, or philosophers could give. And then this blessing was to be obtained on so simple a plan as faith in His name. He had not time to call on them to believe, for he was gloriously interrupted in his address. Soon as the good tidings of pardon fell from his lips, the audience was suffused with spiritual tenderness—"The Holy Ghost fell on all of them." Mark what power resides in one short, clear sermon on Jesus Christ, when God has prepared both preacher and congregation. A hearty, straightforward preacher, brethren with him who are in prayerful sympathy, and an audience penetrated by the feeling that they are all assembled "before God"—what may not such a combination secure! That day was the Pentecost of the Gentiles. It is inaccurate to pray for another Pentecost, because the dispensation of the Spirit cannot begin again. But it is a constant duty to pray that the Spirit may continue to demonstrate to the hearts of men that word of salvation which is preached. (*D. Fraser, D.D.*) *The Messiahship of Jesus*:—Peter places foremost—I. The PROPHETIC office of Christ. God has proclaimed peace by Him; hence the message of peace, the Word, the doctrine of Christ, comes into the foreground. Next come the works of Christ (ver. 38)—the deeds harmonised with the Word. The Word proclaimed, the deeds effected, peace and salvation. The deeds corroborated the Word; and if Christ were now to cease to bestow salvation, freedom, peace on enslaved souls, His Word of the gospel would find no more belief. II. The PRIESTLY office of Christ. 1. In His death (ver. 39). 2. In His resurrection, by which the atonement was completed and accepted. 3. In His bestowment of the virtues of His atonement—remission of sins through faith. III. The KINGLY office of Christ. 1. He is Lord of all (ver. 36). 2. He is Judge of quick and dead (ver. 42). He is highly exalted, the Lord of all men, Jews and Gentiles, so that all are bound to honour and obey Him. The climax of this glory is that Christ is appointed Judge of the world, even of the dead; so that His kingly power embraces

even the lower regions, and generations long since dead, as well as those who are still unborn. (*G. V. Lechler, D.D.*) *Peace*:—I. THIS PEACE, which was not only preached to the Jews by Christ, but was procured for all by His life and death, was—1. Peace with God, through the blood of Christ offering atonement for guilt and removing the ground of enmity. 2. Peace within—the ceasing of the conflict of earthly passion through the subjugation of the will. 3. Peace between man and man, between Jew and Gentile, through the breaking down of the middle wall of partition. II. As the gift was peace, so are THE MEANS by which this is assured to mankind. 1. The ministers of the gospel are messengers of peace. They were neither Roman centurions nor Roman legions, but Peter and Christian disciples. 2. The weapons by which this peace is procured are weapons of peace (Gal. v. 22, 23)—gentleness, goodness, meekness. In this the mildness of the gospel is contrasted with the stern punitive character of the Mosaic law. III. THIS PREACHER OF PEACE IS LORD OF ALL. His sceptre is one of peace, for those who yield obedience to His law will not fear man (1 Pet. iii. 13). His sceptre is an almighty sceptre, so that where He bears rule no enemies can hurt (Rom. viii. 31). (*W. Denton, M.A.*) *Negotiations for peace*:—I. REASONS WHY THOSE WHO ARE NOT RECONCILED TO GOD SHOULD DESIRE PEACE WITH HIM. 1. It is not commendable to be at enmity with any of the wise and good; but when it comes to opposition to God, who in his right mind can do other than bewail it, and desire to see it ended by a gracious peace? Strife against evil, injustice, and tyranny is honourable, but no possible benefit can arise from a conflict in which we are on the wrong side. "Acquaint thyself," then, "with God, and be at peace, for thereby good shall come unto thee." 2. The war in which you are engaged is an unjust one. It never ought to have been begun; and what ought never to have been begun had better be dropped as soon as possible. Sin is war against right, love, happiness. To love evil is dishonourable, wrong, unfair, and the conscience of man tells him it is so. What evil hath our Creator done us that we should go to war against Him? Doth He not command His sun to rise upon the evil as well as the good? If He were a cruel tyrant, I could understand your warfare; but the Lord is full of mercy, and His name is love. 3. He who began it has been terribly defeated. Our first parents were the dupe of an older rebel. Apollyon, once an angel, would fain have become equal with his Maker, but he was banished from heaven, and then resorting to this lower region, seduced our race. Little has he gained by this stratagem, overwhelming has been his defeat. Jesus has led captivity captive. He whose heel was bitten by the old dragon has broken the serpent's head. Revolt, then, against him. What right has the devil to reign over you? He neither made, preserved, or blessed you; evil only, and that continually, will he do unto you. Strike for your freedom at once, and shake off his galling yoke. The wages of sin will be death; why continue in so unprofitable a service? 4. The force which is brought against you it is utterly impossible for you effectually to resist. It is well when we contemplate warfare to see whether we are equal to the combat. Who with one thousand can meet him that cometh with twenty thousand? Consider ye this, ye that forget God. Can your puny arm hope to rival the right hand of Jehovah? As well might you seek to dry up the Atlantic, or bid Niagara leap up the rock instead of down! Let not the wax contend with the fire, nor the stubble with the flame. A man stands in the way of a steam engine rushing on at express speed; he knows that according to the laws of nature its weight and velocity effectually prevent his staying its course. Do you call it courageous on his part that he stands on the track and defies the iron horse? It is madness, suicide. God will not alter His laws for you. They are just and right; wherefore should He change them? Fire will burn, and if a drunken madcap persists in thrusting his arm between the bars of a furnace, shall fire cease from its nature to secure him immunity from his folly? If a man expose himself to the rush of an avalanche, can he expect the rolling mass to suspend itself in mid air for him? If a mariner will go to sea in a vessel worm-eaten and unseaworthy, will the waves pity the barque? If a man will act contrary to natural laws, he must suffer for it; and it is just so with moral laws—certain results follow from sinful courses of action. Yield, then, to the Divine wisdom which has rightly ordained the consequences of sin. Do not necessitate your own destruction. 5. Any resistance which you may be able to offer will be carried on at a very fearful price. You will have to bear the expenses of the war which you foolishly prolong. Even if you should yield ultimately, you will regret rebellion as long as you live. Even when they are forgiven, your iniquities will be a source of danger; for though God heals

the wounds, we shall carry the scars to our graves. And if you should not receive God's saving mercy, these rebellions are noted against you; and when the Great Judge comes, you shall be made to feel the weight of His terrible hand. 6. Your total defeat is absolutely certain sooner or later. No man ever did set himself against God and prosper for long. Look at Pharaoh. O sinner, thy fate may not be to be drowned in the Red Sea, but worse than that—thou will be shut in for ever where hope is shut out. 7. It will be altogether to thine advantage to be at peace with God. It will be for thy present happiness, and thy eternal welfare. Were there no hereafter, it is profitable to have God for our Friend; but when we think of the eternal future, the most superficial consideration suffices to convince us of the necessity of being reconciled to God. II. THE TERMS ON WHICH PEACE MAY BE NEGOTIATED. Wouldst thou have peace? Then learn—1. The great *sine quâ non* is, that peace be made through an Ambassador nominated of God—namely, His Son. "Preaching peace by Jesus Christ." There will be no peace between God and any man who despises Christ. Reject that name, and there is no other whereby you can be saved. This Jesus Christ is God, knowing the mind of God, and able to negotiate with Divine authority. But He is also man, and therefore fitted to deal graciously with man. He is fit to be a daysman, and arbitrator, since He has sympathy with thee and equality with God. 2. The great difficulty is put away which might have prevented peace, for the justice of God which thou hast provoked has been satisfied by Jesus Christ. The sacrifice of Jesus has made recompense for the injury done by human sin. God asks no price of thee. If thou hadst the wealth of the Indies, the Lord would despise such a bribe. He asks no suffering from thee. It would be no satisfaction to Him to see thee suffer, for He delights in happiness. Neither does He ask thee to achieve merits. Thou couldst not if He should demand it. God, therefore, graciously tells thee that He is full of mercy, delighting to forgive; and all He asks of thee is to trust unfeignedly in His only-begotten Son. Then down with thy weapons of rebellion; confess that thou hast erred. Now, is this hard? Nay, man, look to the Cross, and hate thy sin; for sin nailed the Well-beloved to the tree. III. THE CLAIM WHICH OUGHT TO BE URGED WHEREVER THE GOSPEL IS PREACHED. "He is Lord of all." This means—1. That Jesus Christ, who died on Calvary, is Lord of all mankind. Because Christ has "power over all flesh," we preach the gospel to all flesh. You are not ruled so much by the iron sceptre of an absolute God as by the silver sceptre of the Mediator. "Kiss the Son lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little." 2. If Christ be Lord of all, then I may with safety rely upon Him. Oh, then, trust Him, for all power is His. He is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins. 3. Because Jesus is Lord, I pray you to yield Him reverence and serve Him. He is your liege Lord and sovereign. History tells us that the Welsh could not bear the yoke of an English king, but wanted a native prince; and therefore their English conqueror brought before them his own son, born in their own principality, and they accepted him as Prince of Wales. God reigneth over us, but that we may love His reign He has anointed His own Son our own Elder Brother, King of kings and Lord of lords. 4. Be it also known that Jesus the Saviour must be received as Lord in the souls of those whom He redeems. You must obey Him, or your trust is hypocrisy. If we trust a physician we follow his prescriptions; if we trust a guide we follow his directions; and if we fully rely on Jesus, we obey His gracious commands. The faith which saves is a faith which produces a change of life, and subdues the soul to obedience to the Lord. 5. I do not put this to you as a matter of choice; I demand of you that you obey Him, and receive Him as the Christ of God. Do you refuse the summons that I give you now as His officer to-night? Then take heed what you do, for as the Lord liveth you shall answer for this in the great day of His appearing. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Peace through Christ*:—When the Romans by conquest might have given law to the Grecians at Corinth, in the solemn time of the Isthmian games, their general by a herald unexpectedly proclaimed freedom to all the cities of Greece. The proclamation at first did so amaze the Grecians that they did not believe it to be true; but when it was proclaimed the second time they gave such a shout that the very birds flying in the air were astonished therewith, and fell dead to the ground. But if you will have a better story, take that of the Jews, who, when at first they heard of Cyrus's proclamation, and that the Lord thereby had turned the captivity of Sion, they confess that, at the first hearing of it, they were like men that dreamed; but afterwards, their mouths were filled with laughter, and their tongues with singing. Now, the peace that the

Grecians and the Jews had was but the peace of a people, or a nation, and a great blessing of God, too; but how much more reason is there that our affections should be strained to the highest pitch of joy and thanks, when we hear of the proclamation of the peace of conscience—that peace which is not of our bodies, but of our souls? (*J. Spencer.*) **He is Lord of all.**—*Lord of all:*—I. BY RIGHT, as the Creator. II. BY MERIT, as the Redeemer. III. BY GIFT, as the only-begotten of the Father. (*St. Bernard.*) *Lord of all:*—I. THE CLAIM HERE MADE. 1. This claim is made by the whole Bible; notably by Paul (Eph. i. 21), by Peter (1 Pet. iii. 21), by John (Rev. i. 17, 18; xix. 16). 2. Christ is Lord of all, and the telescope has not revealed a star, nor the microscope an atom, that is not subject to Him. The spirits of darkness cannot elude His Lordship, and the spirits of light glory in it. We too are subject to it, whether we will or no. But Christ wills to connect us with Himself by other ties than that of His irresistible control. He wants us to choose to be bound to Him by ties of faith and love, and then we shall delight to follow Him, and find the most perfect union with Him. 3. If you reject this claim, whom will you serve? Self? You cannot make a worse choice. (1) Put the reins in the hands of your senses, and you know whither they will drive you. (2) You will fare no better, though more respectably, if you bow your neck to covetousness—the ambition to be rich. (3) The love of applause and honour is only less injurious; it may inspire in soldiers heroism, but it substitutes man's judgment for God's law and conscience. (4) The love of power is just as bad a master. See what it made of Alexander and Napoleon! II. WHAT YIELDING TO THIS CLAIM WILL DO IN AND FOR YOU. 1. It will bring you to your knees in humble acknowledgment of your guilt, and in grateful recognition of God's love in offering reconciliation. Christ does not come suing your heart and service as blameless. You are "His own," but you have not acted as His own. He finds you in a state of rebellion, and the first word He speaks to you is "Repent." It was by the way of the Cross that Jesus went to the throne, and you must go the same way. 2. It will place you under a law the most beneficent and pure; one which will make your heart and life unselfish. It will not make a man in any sense effeminate, but will inspire manliness with grace. 3. It will bring you aids and influences without which you will find yourselves unable to overcome the evil or attain the good. The road is a difficult and perilous one, and you have neither the wisdom nor the strength to avoid the dangers or to overcome the hardships. It should be good news that Christ gives both. III. WHAT HAVE YOU TO OBJECT TO THIS CLAIM? 1. You want to be left alone and not be troubled. Is this manly? Happily for you, you don't act on this principle elsewhere. When you are in want of a situation, you search for one till you find it. You go to work at the set hour, and keep at it till it is finished. How, then, can you suppose that it will be well with you in the higher concerns of your soul, if you fold your arms and commit yourselves to the care of chance? The ship, if left to itself, will founder; the soul, how can it escape destruction if left to drift where it may? 2. The rule of Christ is too exacting and too wide. But what would you think of a law which would make purity, truth, and honesty contingent on circumstances? Christ demands the whole of your being, that He may bless body and soul to all eternity, and prohibits all compromise with sin because sin is everlasting ruin. (*J. Kennedy, D.D.*) *Jesus Lord of all:*—I. WHAT? "Lord." 1. Jehovah, demanding our worship. Jesus claims Divine honours, and His servants gladly render them. 2. Sovereign, demanding our homage, loyalty to His throne, pride in His name; zeal, valour, and activity in the extension of His realm. 3. Master, demanding our service. A good subject has not only to defend his sovereign's dominions in war, but to build up their prosperity by persevering industry. Our work is to grow in grace and to promote that growth in our fellow Christians. II. WHAT OF? "All." 1. In the widest sense, of all creation, from the most colossal world down to the minutest molecule. All matter, and all the laws by which He permits matter to be influenced, are His, and He does with them according to the pleasure of His will. 2. In a narrower sense, of all created intelligences. He is Lord of angels, who obey Him willingly; of devils, who obey Him unwillingly; of men, who are divided into two classes—(1) Those who disobey Him, but whose disobedience is overruled to serve His purposes. (2) Those who gladly obey Him, and find in their obedience an exceeding great reward. III. BY WHAT RIGHT? 1. An original right, as God. "All souls are mine." 2. A filial right, as Son of God. "Heir of all things." "All power is given unto Me." 3. A redemptive right, as Saviour. "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price." 4. A victorious right, as Conqueror.

5. A donative right, by the glad surrender of the will of those constrained by His love. (*J. W. Burn.*)

Ver. 38. **How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth.**—*The ministry of Jesus:*—I. ITS NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS. It was—1. Active—"went." He did not sit passively and receive applicants: like many nowadays, who are either indolent, or think it sufficient to satisfy a claim when made, or else are afraid of encountering too many claims. 2. Incessant—"about." Not to one place, but everywhere; not in the straight line of duty or circumstances, but in, out, and around. Much of modern charity is partial, and confines itself to "deserving" cases, or those who have superior claims on the ground of kindred, neighbourhood, nationality, &c. 3. Inquiring—"went about." Jesus "sought" that He might save. Many of the objects of His compassion were those who lay outside the beaten track and had to be found. 4. Practical—"doing," not simply "speaking," although sympathetic words are helpful: but a little assistance is worth a good deal of pity. 5. Really beneficent—"good." It is to be feared that much of so-called charity does more harm than good. 6. Victorious—"healing all that were oppressed of the devil." Destruction has often to precede construction. The devil has to be vanquished before good can be done. II. ITS SANCTION. "God anointed Him with the Holy Ghost." 1. This was fore-announced (Isa. lxi. 1–3); and when the prophecy was so abundantly fulfilled nothing but the blindness of criminal unbelief could refuse to see it. 2. This was abundantly given to Christ and claimed by Him. 3. This demonstrated His Messiahship. He was the anointed—(1) Prophet—to declare man's need. All need is not conscious. Men have to be convinced of the existence of their deepest requirements. How many are bound by the fetters of sin, and yet are senseless to their slavery. (2) Priest—to provide for man's need. Through His mediatorial work Christ becomes the grand storehouse of God's riches. (3) King—to supply man's need. "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." "He is able to do exceeding abundantly." He received gifts for the rebellious. III. ITS POWER. Christ was anointed with "power." 1. He was equal to every emergency. When the wine failed He turned the water into wine. Those whom physicians gave up as incurable He healed with a touch. When the disciples were in danger of perishing in the storm He rebuked the winds and the waves. When Lazarus was dead He recalled him to life. And all this without delay and without exertion. 2. His power was acknowledged by all: nature, men, devils. IV. ITS REWARD. "God was with Him." 1. Encouraging. 2. Approving. 3. Rendering effectual. (*Ibid.*) **Who went about doing good.**—*The first philanthropist.*—Here, then, it is necessary to consider to whom St. Peter was addressing himself. Before him stood the centurion Cornelius, probably a few comrades, and certainly some Jews, who on an occasion like this would not have had the largest place in the apostle's thought. The persons of whom St. Peter was chiefly thinking were Cornelius and the other soldiers present, above all Cornelius. The band to which Cornelius belonged consisted of Italian levies, and Cornelius, as his name shows, belonged to an old Roman family, and when St. Peter says that our Lord, during His earthly life, went about doing good, he knew perfectly well that such an account of that life would have appeared anything but tame, commonplace, inadequate, to those whom he was especially anxious to influence, because it was so sharply contrasted with anything that they had left behind them at home. For that great world in which Cornelius and his comrades had been reared must indeed have made the men and affairs of Palestine, generally speaking, seem by comparison petty enough—as we would say, provincial. Everything outward at Rome, the world's centre, was on a splendid scale. The public buildings, the temples, the baths, the public shows, everything connected with the army, everything connected with the machinery and the apparatus of government, was calculated to impress, and even to awe the imagination. But there was one overshadowing defect in that great world which would have come home with especial force to the minds of the class from which the rank and file of the Roman forces were chiefly recruited. It was a world without love. It was a world full of want and suffering, and the whole of the great social and political machine went round and round without taking any account of this. Commenting on this fact nearly three centuries later, Lactantius, after describing the salient features of heathen life, adds: "Compassion and humanity are peculiar to the Christians." Now, isolated efforts to relieve suffering, gifts to the needy, liberality of the orators and the inscriptions, these largesses to the

people, these public works, these costly entertainments, as Cornelius and his friends knew well, were not the outcome of love. They were forms of an expenditure which was essentially selfish. The main object of such expenditure was to secure that sort of popularity which means political power. It was repaid, if not in kind, yet substantially. The Roman people, under the system of imperial largesses and entertainments, increasingly hated work. It cared only for such ease and enjoyment as it could wring out of its rulers. It became utterly indifferent to everything in its rulers except their capacity and willingness to gratify itself. In order to do real good, the eye must rest not on what is prudent in, or on what is expected of the giver, but on what is needed in the recipient. And thus mere liberality, if active, is blindfold, while charity seeks out its objects with discrimination and sympathy; liberality has no eye for the really sore places in the suffering and destitute world. Nothing was done systematically in that world with which Cornelius and his friends were familiar for classes or for individuals who could make no return. There was no sort of care for widows or for orphans. And if here and there there were schools, like those under Severus, their main object, when we come to examine them closely, appears to have been to provide recruits for the Roman army. And all this was in harmony with principles laid down by the great teachers of the ancient world, such as Plato and Aristotle. In Plato's ideal state the poor have no place, beggars are expelled or left to die, as injuring the common prosperity. In Aristotle's account of the virtues, the most promising, from a Christian point of view, is generosity; but on examination, generosity turns out to be a prudential mean between avarice and extravagance. The generous man, we are told, gives because it is a fine thing to give, not from a sense of duty, still less at the dictates of love for his fellow-creatures. It is no wonder that, when these were governing principles, there were few efforts in that old world, to which Cornelius had belonged, that deserved the name of doing good. When, then, Cornelius heard from St. Peter of such a life as that of our Lord, and had further, in all probability, asked and received answers to the questions which St. Peter's description suggested, he would have listened to a narrative which had all the charm, all the freshness of a great surprise. Those poor lepers, and paralytics, and fever-stricken peasants, could make no return to their Benefactor, and He did not ask for any. And this, Cornelius would have observed, implied nothing short of a new ideal of life and work. The highest and greatest good which He did was done for the souls of men. To have done everything for man's bodily frame and leave his spiritual being untouched would have been a poor and worthless kind of doing good in the estimation of Jesus Christ. The lessons by which our Lord brought men to know and to love the Father and Himself, the pardon which He won for them on the Cross, the grace which He promised them after His Ascension, were His chiefest benefactions. But besides this He did abundant good in the physical, material, social sense. It has been said that Christ our Lord was the first Social Reformer. If by social reform be meant the doing away with all the inequalities between classes, or even the removal from human life of the permanent cause of a great deal of physical suffering, it cannot be said that this description of Him is accurate. He showed no wish whatever in any sort of way to interfere with the existing structure of society. He insisted on Cæsar's claims to tribute, He prescribed obedience to the Scribes and Pharisees who sat in Moses' seat. His real work was to point to truths and to a life which made the endurance of poverty and distress for a short time here so easy, as to be in the estimate of real disciples comparatively unimportant, but at the same time He relieved so much of it as would enable human beings to make a real step forward towards the true end of their existence. If our Lord was not, in the restricted modern sense, the first social reformer, He was undoubtedly, in the true and ample sense of the word, the first philanthropist. He loved man as man, He loved not one part but the whole of man, He loved man as none had ever loved him before or since, He died for the being whom He loved so well. And when our Lord had left the earth the spirit of His work became that of a Christian Church. It, too, after its measure, went about the world doing good. The New Testament guides us through the first stage of the subject. The wealthier Churches of Greece were directed to lay by small offerings every Sunday, so that when the apostle came by to fetch the collection the money might be ready for the poor Churches in Palestine. The poorer members of the Church were regularly supplied with food at the Agape or love-feast. Widows were especially provided for. It would be impossible here and now to notice the various activities of Christian work in the primitive times which followed the Apostolic age. Early

in the third century, if not in the second, there were houses for the reception of poor widows; orphans were brought up at the expense of the Church by the bishop, or by some private person. Thus, for instance, after the martyrdom of Leonidas at Alexandria, his boy, who became the celebrated Origen, was brought up by a pious woman who lived in the city, and an excellent man, Severus, is named as having devoted himself in Palestine to the education of all children—they were a considerable number—whose parents were martyrs. In the middle of the third century the Roman empire was afflicted by a pestilence which, according to the historian Gibbon, destroyed not less than half the population. It broke out at Carthage while St. Cyprian was still alive. There was a general panic, all the heathen that could do so fled; they avoided contact with infected persons, they left their own relations to die alone. Corpses were lying unburied about the streets, and there were rogues who seized the opportunity of making horrible profits. Cyprian summoned the Christians to aid him in doing all that could be done. He was everywhere encouraging, advising, organising, helping the sick and dying with his own hands, and each man under him had, and knew that he had, his appointed task. Some of the Christians were anxious to confine their aid to their fellow-believers, their feelings against the heathen had been irritated by a recent persecution, and they knew that another persecution was impending, but they received no countenance from their bishop. "If," exclaimed St. Cyprian, in a sermon preached at this crisis, "if we only do good to those who do good to us, what do we more than the heathen and the publicans? If we are the children of God, who makes His sun to shine upon the good and the bad, and sends His rain on the just and on the unjust, let us now prove it by our own acts, let us bless those who curse us." One class of persons who were especial objects of primitive Christian charity were those who were sent to work in the mines. They were almost naked; they had the scantiest supply of food; they were often treated with great cruelty by the inspectors of public works. We find from the letters of St. Cyprian these poor people were special objects of his attention; he regularly sent them supplies by the hands of a trusted sub-deacon; and he wrote to them continually, assuring them of his sympathy and his prayers. And another work of mercy in which the primitive Church especially interested itself was the improvement of the condition of the prisoners. The prisons in old Rome were crowded with persons of all descriptions—prisoners of war, especially after the barbarian inroads; prisoners for the non-payment of taxes and for debt—subjects on which the Roman law was very severe; prisoners for the various kinds of felony; and, when a persecution was going on, prisoners for the crime of being Christians. These unhappy people were huddled together, it is little to say, with no attention to the laws of health or to the decencies of life, and one of the earliest forms of Christian charity was to raise funds for the redemption of prisoners by payment as a specially Christian form of mercy. Cyprian raised large sums from his flock to purchase freedom for prisoners of war. It would be impossible within our limits to do any sort of justice to this vast subject—the manner in which the ancient Church of Christ carried on, both in the higher and the lower senses of the term, her Master's work of doing good. The most unshowing and unromantic methods of doing good may be the most acceptable. To work at a night-school, to keep the accounts of a charity, to get up Sunday breakfasts for poor people, may mean more in the eyes of the Infinite Mercy than to dispose of immense charitable resources, or even to be a great teacher or ruler in the Church. The vital condition of doing good, whether it be spiritual or physical good, is that simple unity of purpose which springs from disinterestedness, and this can best be learned at His blessed feet, who remains the first and the greatest of philanthropists, since in life and in death He gave Himself for us, that whether we wake or sleep we might live together with Him. (*Canon Liddon.*) *The model life*:—He "went about doing good"—I. BECAUSE HE WAS GOD MANIFEST IN THE FLESH. II. AS THE ONE GREAT AIM OF HIS LIFE. The painter or sculptor gives himself up to days and nights of arduous, patient labour, it may be for years, over some favourite piece of art; his soul is inspired, cheered, sustained by the motives which his own genius and the art which he worships supply. The philanthropist pursues his scheme for the amelioration of human misery with an intensity that brooks no delay, with an absorbing interest which robs him of his sleep by night, and fills all his waking thoughts by day. But what is all this devotion to an earthly object compared with the Divine intensity of Christ in the prosecution of His life-work, and that in the midst of perishing multitudes? His

life-work was not that of delineating the human form on the glowing canvas, or the breathing marble, but the work of bringing back a lost world to peace, of reproducing the Divine life and the Divine image in the soul of man—not a mere work of fancy, but of faith, not a mere display of genius, but of goodness, not the redressing of a wrong, or the lessening of human suffering, but nothing short of a new creation in the soul that was dark and dead, sunk in trespasses and sins. III. WITH A CONSTANCY AND DEVOTION THAT NEVER FAILED. Notwithstanding all the hostility that met Him, He continued with unabated ardour. IV. TO ALL WITHOUT EXCEPTION. Like the stream that loves to linger amid its village homes, nestled amid the shadows of mountains, and the embowering foliage of ancestral trees, where there is little to disturb the even tenor of daily life, it was the special delight of our Lord to move amongst the homes of the poor and the lowly, and pour the riches of His grace around their humble dwellings. But like the rill that will not rest from the moment it bursts on its way, but travels onwards to the sea in ever widening course, and passes on through quiet villages and sweet homesteads till it becomes a great river, bearing on its bosom the mart of nations, the blessings of commerce, and making everything glad and beautiful where it flows, the stream of Divine goodness in the life of Jesus, beginning first in the mountain home at Nazareth, amid the village retreats of Galilee, went forth from that seclusion to carry its rich dower of blessings to villages, towns, and cities, and to pour its treasures at the feet of all classes and conditions of men. He was free to all, as the light of the sun, the air of heaven, the waters of the deep, broad river. His sympathies for man and all his concerns were strong, pure, enduring. V. BY HIS INSTRUCTIONS, AS WELL AS BY HIS WORKS OF HEALING. These miracles live in history as great, godlike facts, His words live in the heart, and by sanctifying the inner, bless and dignify the outer life. VI. AS AN EXAMPLE TO HIS FOLLOWERS IN ALL TIME COMING. (*Alex. Wallace, D.D.*) *The Christian's encouragement to seek and do good*:—I. ILLUSTRATE THE VIEW OF CHRIST'S CHARACTER GIVEN IN THE TEXT. 1. The kind of good which He dispensed. 2. The extent of good which He thus dispensed. 3. The great diligence which He exercised in doing good. 4. The spirit of compassion with which He did all this good. 5. The unwearied patience and perseverance with which He continued to do good. II. APPLICATION: 1. You are thus instructed and encouraged to seek good from Christ. 2. You are thus instructed and engaged to do good as Christ did. The shortest description and the surest mark of every true Christian is this, to be a doer of good. (*Jas. Brewster.*) *The life beneficent*:—There is in this Scripture furnished for life a test, an enterprise, a habit. I. A TEST. Christ went about doing good. By precisely this question, whether your life is beneficent, are you to test your life. 1. Test your speech by it. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying. 2. Test your amusements by it. Do they do you good in the way of recreating you for better toil; do they exert no harmful influence upon others? 3. Test your business by it. Is the general outcome of your business beneficent; and do you carry it on in beneficent fashion? 4. Test your use of time by this question. Are you putting your time to high and holy uses? 5. Test your position and culture thus: Are you the readier to serve the higher you get up? II. There is here suggested an ENTERPRISE for life. Christ went about doing good. He personally did it—did not content Himself with doing good by proxy. Christ went after the chance of doing good; did not simply wait for the chance to come to Him. III. There is suggested also here a HABIT for life. Christ was not intermittent in this matter. It was the habit of His life to go about doing good. Oh for Christians of such pithy pluck that they will habitually keep hold of duty! (*W. Hoyt, D.D.*) *The benevolent conduct of Jesus*:—1. THE CONDUCT OF JESUS. He "went about doing good." 1. Jesus did good to the bodies of men. He opened the eyes of the blind; He gave hearing to the deaf; and He raised the dead (Matt. xi. 5). 2. He did good to the souls of men. The ignorant were instructed by Him in the essential doctrines and duties of religion (Matt. v. 1, 2; Luke xix. 47; John viii. 2). He strengthened the weak and wavering, and comforted mourning penitents (Matt. v. 4; xi. 28). 3. Our Lord went about doing good. He was an itinerant preacher. And to accomplish His merciful designs, He frequently visited large and populous places, and places of public resort. 4. The motives of our Lord in doing good were pure and perfect. He was moved by the transcendent goodness of His nature to acts of kindness. 5. Jesus persevered in doing good. It was His constant employment, and He was never weary of it. 6. In

all the works, and in all the ways of our Saviour, His lovely temper and amiable conduct shone with resplendent glory. How unlike the renowned conquerors and tyrants of the world, whose glory has been acquired by blood and slaughter! II. WE SHOULD ENDEAVOUR TO IMITATE THE CONDUCT OF JESUS. 1. That we may do so, let us study the character and conduct of our great Exemplar. To this end we should carefully read His public and private discourses, examine His temper, and weigh His conduct. 2. But those who copy after His blessed example, must have the mind which was in Him (Phil. ii. 5). 3. Having acquired the mind of Jesus, let us endeavour to imitate His conduct. We cannot imitate His miracles; the attempt would be presumption; but we should endeavour to copy His benevolent actions. 4. Let us proceed in these works of love, as the Lord may enable us. More than this is not required; and less than this will not be accepted. 5. This conduct will please the Lord, who is good to all, and whose tender mercies are over all His works (Psa. cxlv. 9). He blesses us that we may be a blessing (Gen. xii. 2). 1. In the world, and in the visible Church, we have many bad examples; but we must not follow a multitude to do evil (Exod. xxiii. 2). 2. There are a few in the Church who may be followed in some things; but whatever their excellencies are, we cannot safely follow them in all their ways. 3. But we have a perfect example in the conduct of our Saviour; and we are bound by the most sacred ties to walk in His steps (1 Pet. ii. 21). (*Theological Sketch-book.*) *Going about doing good*:—We have all heard of the celebrated Cook, the circumnavigator who went round the globe. Wherever Cook landed he was noticed by the boatmen to go up away from them a bit, and he was seen to take little packets out of his pockets and keep on going round, throwing them out of his hand and circulating them. He belted the whole world with English flowers. He took packets of our seeds, and at those places where he landed he took care to walk a little bit away and sow some of the seed where most likely it would grow. Hence other navigators have been surprised to find that English flowers were growing where they never could have dreamt of seeing them. That is how we ought to do—get some of the precious seed into your own soul, and carry it with you wherever you go. Have it with you on the trip to the seaside, or even to Switzerland, or have it when you stay at home. Always sow the seed of kindness and true happiness, above all the gospel of Jesus Christ, for in this you will be following Christ, of whom it is written, "He went about doing good." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The ways of doing good* (children's sermon):—When we hear of any great man we always want to know how he lived, and what he used to do—General Washington, *e.g.*, Benjamin Franklin, Christopher Columbus, Alfred the Great, &c. But you may put all great men together, and, compared with Jesus, they are only like stars compared with the sun. "Jesus went about doing good" because He was so able to do it. He hadn't much money; for though He made the world, when He was here, He said, "The foxes have holes," &c. But though He had no money to give away, He could do good in hundreds of other ways. Then, again, He went about doing good to show us how to live (1 Pet. ii. 21). And this is what I wish to talk to you about, viz., four ways in which we should all try to do good. I. BY BECOMING CHRISTIANS OURSELVES. True Christians are the most useful people in the world. Many of our houses have iron-rods running from above the top of the chimney down into the ground. Those lightning-rods carry the lightning off and prevent it from doing any harm. And true Christians are like lightning-rods. When God is angry with the wicked, He is often kept from punishing them on account of the good Christians who live among them. You see this in Abraham's prayer for Sodom and Gomorrha. You know how useful the light is. Well, Jesus said to His disciples, "Ye are the light of the world." If we were travelling along a dangerous road, the light would show us the road, and how we might keep out of the pits. Now, this world is a road full of dangers. But true Christians see them and know how to avoid them. And if we would be lights in the world, showing people their danger and how they may escape, we must become true Christians. Here is a watch, a very useful thing. The inside is full of works, and in the midst is the mainspring: that makes the watch go and keep good time. But suppose the mainspring is broken, will it keep time? No. So I must take it to the watchmaker, and get a new mainspring. Now, our hearts are like a broken mainspring, and we must take our heart to Jesus, and ask Him to change it; to put a new mainspring in the broken watch of your soul. Then it will be ready to keep time, to do good. II. BY TRYING TO MAKE OTHERS CHRISTIANS. Suppose you were travelling through a desert with a company of friends. You have no water, and

are almost perishing from thirst. You separate and go in different directions searching for water. Presently you find a spring. You kneel down and take a nice long drink. And then of course at the top of your voice you would cry out—"Come this way;—here is water!" And this is just the way we should feel when we become Christians. A little heathen girl was taken from New Zealand to England to be educated. She became a Christian. Before this she was so pleased with England that she didn't care about going back. But as soon as she learned to love Jesus, she said: "Do you think I can keep the good news to myself? No; I want to go home and tell my friends there about Jesus." Some time ago an old man became a Christian, and asked himself how he could be doing good. He made out a list of his old associates, which contained one hundred and sixteen names. Some of these were the worst men in the town. He began to pray for these. He talked to them, and gave them good books to read. Some refused to listen, and others made fun; but still he went on praying and working for them. And what was the result? Why, within two years, one hundred of them had become Christians too! That was doing good indeed! A Christian gentleman while travelling on a steamboat, distributed some tracts. Many read them carefully. But one gentleman took one of the tracks and doubled it up, and then cut it into little pieces and scattered them over the side of the boat. But one of the pieces stuck to his coat. He looked at it a moment before throwing it away, and found on one side only the word "God," on the other the word "Eternity." He threw it away; but these two solemn words—"God" and "Eternity"—he could not get rid of. They haunted him wherever he went, and he never had any comfort till he became a Christian. III. BY HELPING THE SICK AND POOR. Jesus was always especially ready to help the poor. He told His disciples that whenever they did a kindness to one of His poor He would consider it as done to Himself. And James tells us that true religion consists in "visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction." We find poor people everywhere, and children can do good in this way as well as grown-up people. Mary Parsons was a bright, happy little girl, because she was always trying to do good. One day a lady called in to see her mother. This lady had just been visiting a poor old woman eighty-six years old, who lived by herself in a dark, damp cellar. Mary listened with great interest while the lady was speaking, and then she said, "Oh, mother, please let me carry her over some breakfast and dinner every day: we have so much left." Mary was so earnest about it that her mother said she might do it. No matter how anxious her little sisters were for Mary to play with them; no matter whether it was hot or cold, wet or dry, Mary never got tired. Sometimes she would read the Bible and sometimes take her doll's frocks and sit down by her side, and chat away merrily to amuse her. And the poor old woman speaking about her one day, her eyes filled with tears, said, "Oh, she brings a ray of sunshine with her every time she comes, and it seems to brighten my dark room long after she is gone. God bless her! She is one of the dear lambs of Jesus, I am sure." Now Mary was only eight years old when she began to do this. Is there no poor old woman, or sick and hungry child, in your neighbourhood to whom you can take food from your table that would not be missed? IV. BY BEING KIND TO ALL. Jesus was all the time speaking kind words and doing kind things. Read what He said to the widow of Nain, and what He did for her. Two ragged barefooted boys were going along one of the streets of New York. One was perfectly happy over a half-withered bunch of flowers which he had just picked up. "I say, Billy," said he, "wasn't somebody real good to drop these 'ere posies just where I could find them—and they're so pooty and nice? Look sharp, Billy, mebby you'll find something bimeby." Presently the boy exclaimed, "Oh jolly, Billy, if here ain't 'most half a peach, and 'tain't mush dirty neither. 'Cause you hain't found nothin' you may bite first." Billy was just going to take a very little taste of it, when his companion said, "Bite bigger, Billy, mebby we'll find another 'fore long." What a noble heart that poor boy had in spite of his rags and dirt! He was "doing good" in the fourth way that we are speaking of. (*R. Newton, D.D.*) *The example of Jesus in doing good:*—I. HIS GREAT WORK AND BUSINESS IN THE WORLD WAS TO DO GOOD. What He did, and we in imitation of Him ought to do, I shall reduce to two heads. 1. Doing good to the souls of men, and endeavouring to promote their spiritual and eternal happiness. (1) By good instruction. And under instruction I comprehend all the means of bringing men to the knowledge of their duty, and exciting them to the practice of it; by instructing their ignorance, and removing their prejudices, and rectifying their mistakes, by persuasion and by

reproof; and by making lasting provision for the promoting of these ends. (2) By good example. And this our blessed Saviour was in the utmost perfection. And this we should endeavour to be. For good example hath a secret influence upon those with whom we converse, to form them into the same disposition and manners. It is a living rule that teacheth men without trouble, and lets them see their faults without open reproof. Besides that, it adds great weight to a man's persuasion, when we see that he advises nothing but what he does, nor exacts anything from which he himself desires to be excused. As, on the contrary, nothing is more insignificant than good counsel from one that does not follow the advice which he is so forward to give to others. 2. Procuring their temporal good, and contributing to their happiness in this present life. And this was a great part of Christ's business in this world. And though we cannot be beneficial to men in the miraculous manner that He was, yet we may be so in the use of ordinary means; we may comfort the afflicted, and vindicate the oppressed, and do a great many acts of charity which our Saviour, by reason of His poverty, could not do without a miracle; we may take a poor child and bring him up in the knowledge and fear of God, and put him into a way wherein, by his industry, he may make a fortune, and be able to relieve hundreds of others. Men glory in raising magnificent structures, and find a secret pleasure to see sets of their own planting to grow up and flourish; but surely it is a greater and more glorious work to build up a man, to see a youth of our own planting take root in the world, and to shoot up and spread his branches so that we, who first planted him, may ourselves find comfort under his shadow. And those who are in the lowest condition may do great good to others by their prayers. For "the fervent prayer of righteous man availeth much." II. HIS DILIGENCE IN THIS WORK. This will fully appear if we consider—1. How unwearied He was. He was not only ready to do good to those that gave Him opportunity, and besought Him to do it, but went Himself to seek out objects. 2. How self-denying He was. He neglected the ordinary refreshments of nature, that He might attend this work. He was at everybody's beck and disposal. Nay, He was willing to deny Himself in one of the dearest things in the world—His reputation and good name. 3. Consider the malicious opposition and sinister construction that His good deeds met with. For His casting out of devils, He was called a magician; for His endeavour to reclaim men from their vices, "a friend of publicans and sinners"; for His free and obliging conversation, "a wine-bibber and a glutton." 4. How cheerfully, notwithstanding all this, He persevered! It was not only His business, but His delight; "I delight (says He) to do Thy will, O My God." Conclusion: The subject will be of excellent use. 1. To show us our defects. How does this blessed example upbraid those who, instead of "going about doing good," are perpetually intent upon doing mischief? And those likewise who, though they are far from being so bad, yet wholly neglect this blessed work of doing good? And this too under a pretence of being employed about other duties. They are so taken up with prayer, and reading and hearing sermons, and sacraments, that they have scarce any leisure to mind the doing of charitable offices. Others spend all their zeal about some controversies in religion; and therefore think it but reasonable that they should be excused from those meaner kind of duties, as those who serve the king in his wars used to be exempted from taxes. But "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction." 2. To persuade us to the imitation of this blessed example. Let us "go and do likewise." The work itself is such that men should not need to be courted nor urged to it. But dwell upon these considerations. (1) It shows an inclination and desire to have others happy as well as ourselves. Those who are of a mean and sordid disposition love to contract themselves within themselves, and like the hedgehog, to shoot out their quills at every one who comes near them. But the noblest and most heavenly dispositions think themselves happiest when others share with them in their happiness. (2) It is the most pleasant employment in the world. This Cato boasts of, as the great comfort of his old age—"that nothing was more pleasant than the conscience of a well-spent life, and the remembrance of many kindnesses done to others." Sensual pleasures are not lasting, and leave a sting behind them. But the pleasure of doing good remains, and the reflection upon it afterwards does for ever minister joy. (3) It is to imitate the highest excellency and perfection; it is to be like God, who is good and doth good, and to be like Him in that which He esteems His greatest glory, and that is, His goodness. (4) It is one of the greatest and most substantial duties of religion; and, next to the love and honour which we pay to God Himself, the most acceptable service that

we can perform to Him. It is one half of the law, and next to the first and great command, and very like unto it: in the excellency of its nature, and in the necessity of its obligation. (5) It will give us the greatest comfort when we come to die. (6) It is attended with the greatest consideration I shall offer to you—which is reward both in this world and the other. (*Abp. Tillotson.*) *The example of Christ*:—I. Look at THE LIFE OF OUR LORD as here described. 1. That life was very short, three and a half years at most; but it was long in point of action; it was filled up with works which will stand for ever. No one ever made such a mark on the earth as our Lord. 2. Here is one of the great "notes" that no infidel can explain—Who Christ was, whence Christ came, why Christ did what He did, and left the mark upon the world that He certainly left. Had He money wherewith to bribe the world and make men follow Him? He was poor in every way. Had He power to turn men to follow Him as Mahomet had? His followers were a few publicans and fishermen. Whence, then, the power that Christ had? How account for the effect that He produced on the world? There is no accounting for it all, but on the Christian theory that Christ was God manifest in the flesh. 3. When we look on the life of our Lord, how unlike it is to the conquerors who have shaken the world! Run your mind over the long list—Cæsar, Alexander, Napoleon, &c. What mark their victories? Death, wounds, poverty, sorrow, ruin. Then turn to the life of that King of kings, and Lord of lords. See the amazing contrast. He brought life and immortality to light; He opened up to men hopes for the present and for the future; the way of peace between God and men. He did good—(1) To bodies. No disease was too loathsome for Him to show kindness to. (2) By His words. Think how they have travelled through the world for eighteen hundred years, and wherever they have gone, they have been the comfort and peace of those who have received them. Think how a text, dormant it may be for many long years, has revived when the time of trial and sickness comes. (3) Continually. Wherever He went He brought blessing with Him. (4) By His witness against sins and superstitions of the generation among which He lived. (5) By His patience. "When He was reviled, He reviled not again, when He suffered, He threatened not." 4. Learn here—(1) The wickedness of human nature. Think for a moment how this wonderful Person was treated. (2) What constitutes greatness in the sight of God. He is the good man, not who had the highest title and greatest position, and the largest amount to pay for income tax, but he who does the greatest amount of good. Our Lord says, "He that will be great among you, let him be as your minister." II. THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS TO FOLLOW HIS EXAMPLE. 1. I doubt whether that is as much looked at as it should be. We seldom look at more than one thing at a time, for men are so occupied. When they first feel their sins they think only of Christ as a Saviour, and they are apt to forget that He is our Pattern and Example. Yet Christ and the apostles ever insisted upon it. We ought to ask ourselves continually, "Is there anything of Christ ever seen in my tempers, efforts, conduct, home, business?" Am I walking in Jesus Christ's steps? Am I, like Him, endeavouring to do good? 2. You and I were never meant to be idle, nor to be always trying to get good for ourselves. Many, however, run from place to place; hear sermon after sermon, are always thinking of getting; but we are not meant to be always receiving; we are meant to be doing for Christ and for Christ's cause. 3. Men may say, "What can I do?" There is always something that every one can do. There is no one who has not some influence upon some one or other. If you have a single grain of influence throw it into the scale of good, and not into the scale of evil. Parents can do good to their children; masters and mistresses to their servants. 4. To labour for this does ourselves good. Little by little we find graces grow in proportion as we try to exercise them. And it helps forward the cause of Christ in the world. The eyes of many are upon you, and if the watching, envious world sees you a mere idle Christian, thinking only of your own enjoyment, but never trying to do good, the world will think little of your religion. But when they see you walk in the steps of the Saviour, striving to make all around you happy, it sets the world thinking. There is no book or set of lectures, which ever does so much good to sceptics as a Christ-like life. 5. This was the way of the old Christians; their ways and manners made the heathen think. This was the conduct of the followers of old John Wesley. It was part of that wonderful man's first principle to impress the necessity of doing good. "Now, then, what are you going to do? We do not want any drones in our hive; we want every one that becomes a member of our body to do something for the glory of God, for the benefit of man." (*Bp. Ryle.*) *Christ our Example*:—We ought to follow Christ in taking all oppor-

tunities of doing good. I. WHAT ARE THE GOOD WORKS WE SHOULD DO IN IMITATION OF CHRIST? 1. Works of piety. (1) Internal (John iv. 24). (*a*) Love (Matt. xxii. 37). (*b*) Fear (Prov. xxiii. 17). (*c*) Faith. (*d*) Trust (Prov. iii. 5). (*e*) Submission (Luke xxii. 42). (2) External; as praying, hearing, &c. 2. Works of equity (Micah vi. 8). (1) Distributive (Rom. xiii. 7; Matt. xvii. 27). (2) Communicative (Prov. iii. 27, 28; 1 Thess. iv. 6). 3. Works of charity (1 Tim. vi. 17, 18). (1) To pity others in misery (Matt. xv. 32; xx. 34). (2) To pray for their felicity (Luke xxiii. 34). (3) To supply their necessities (Matt. xx. 34). Consider—(*a*) Without this there is no true religion (James i. 27). (*b*) By it we imitate God (Luke vi. 36). (*c*) Whatsoever we have more than is necessary is given for this end. (*d*) God, notwithstanding, will repay it (Prov. xix. 17). II. WHAT THINGS ARE NECESSARY FOR OUR IMITATION OF CHRIST IN DOING GOOD? 1. Exerting the utmost of our power in doing it (Eccles. ix. 10). 2. Managing all the circumstances aright. 3. Doing it constantly (Luke i. 74, 75). (1) Negative. (*a*) Not for the applause of men (Matt. vi. 1). (*b*) Nor to merit anything from God (Luke xviii. 10). (2) Positive. (*a*) Subordinately for our own safety (1 Cor. ix. 24, 27). (*b*) Ultimately for God's glory (1 Cor. x. 31). III. IN WHAT SENSE ARE WE ALWAYS TO BE DOING GOOD? 1. So as never to do evil (1 Pet. ii. 22; 1 John iii. 5). 2. So as always to be designing good. 3. So as to embrace all opportunities for doing good (John iv. 7, 8; vi. 25). IV. WHY SHOULD WE BE ALWAYS DOING GOOD? 1. We are commanded (Luke i. 74, 75; Psa. xxxiv. 13). 2. We are always receiving good. 3. Our beings were first given, and are now continued to us, that we might always be doing good (Isa. i. 2–4). 4. When we are not doing good we are doing evil (Psa. xxxvii. 27). (*Bp. Beveridge.*) *Our great example*:—"Who went about doing good." 1. Such was the recollection of one who was amongst the nearest and dearest companions of Jesus. Peter had in recollection the aims and habit not of one day, but of every day. 2. We are living in times when "many run to and fro, and knowledge is increased." All classes are restless; the facilities of travelling are inducements to that restlessness. We do not grudge what science has done to annihilate distance and make moving to and fro easy. 3. But here, as elsewhere, are dangers. Facilities for evil may be made out of what God intended only to be facilities for good. "Some people," says Pascal, "wish to move about the more, only that they may just talk the more. For the mere pleasure of seeing, without the pleasure of telling, would have little force upon many." Let us remember, in these days, when so many of us are about to part company for awhile in the excursions of the summer, that we have a Christian rule to walk by in all our journey—a rule which has its example in Jesus, "who went about doing good." 4. The text describes what was the very law of the Redeemer's nature. He was shown to be the Son of the living God in the active, unwearied beneficence of His life. God's providence over this world is active. It is not beneath the dignity of the Almighty to regulate particular events. And the history of Divine interference and legislation is told in these words—"He went about doing good." The active beneficence of the Divine Being is concealed from our eyes behind the curtain of matter; but is exhibited to us in the person of Jesus. And I may go a step further. If active benevolence was a necessary feature in the perfect character of Jesus, because of His relationship to His Father, so active beneficence should be a necessary feature in the real Christian, because of his relationship with Christ. And now think a little of His sphere of active benevolence. It took in the whole range of human distress. And His ministrations of mercy were equally to the evil and the good. And the labour was incessant too. His very rest was devoted to the relief of spiritual and bodily want. And yet the humanity of Jesus wanted calm recreations, still retirement, just as yours and mine does. Note, too, another circumstance. We are all ready to be beneficent when we are sustained by large sights, and great occasions; but how was it with our Divine Master? The isolated case, which no eye saw but His own, His mind and heart were as much absorbed in it as if the appeal of a multitude was before Him. Amongst the poorer sort He was always found comforting, healing, feeding, teaching. 5. That we may be Christlike in active beneficence, we must seek more of that faith which works by love, and is careful to maintain good works. This is the only principle of Christian obedience. Having faith in Him, let us adopt Him as our example. Let each one, then, ask himself, "Am I living for myself or for my Saviour? Does my faith show itself in works of active beneficence?" All have some talent. Only one thing is wanted—unselfish love. If you are converted, you can go and tell others what conversion is. If you pray, you can go and tell others what prayer is. If you have a sick neighbour, you can visit him. You could take a class

in the Sunday-school; or fill up one of the many chasms in the District Visiting Society. And, my poorer brethren, because you are no scholars, do not think that you cannot imitate your Master, and go about doing good. You may speak a word in season to your poor neighbours, and you may shine as a light in the world. (*C. J. P. Eyre, M.A.*) *The Saviour's active benevolence:*—He went about doing good—I. By His MIRACLES, which not only compelled attention to His instructions, and demanded assent to His claim of being Divinely sent, but were all deeds of mercy. Not one of them was a useless or vengeful display of power. His first miracle contributed to the social enjoyment of a festive occasion; and His last was the healing of a man whom one of His own disciples had wounded. Objection has, indeed, been made to two of our Lord's miracles on the ground that they were not of a merciful and useful character. One is that by which the demons were sent into the herd of swine. Here, it is said, an injury was inflicted on the owners. But it may be answered that the first and main object was merciful—the restoration of the lunatics to their right mind. Secondly, the injury inflicted was not done revengefully, but punitively. To keep swine was contrary to the Jewish law. The other miracle is the withering of the barren fig-tree. But the tree probably stood in the highway, and was therefore no one's property; and on the other hand, the occurrence, was one of great profit to the disciples. II. By His INSTRUCTIONS. In an age when the art of printing was unknown, and when manuscripts could come into the hands of but few, the oral mode of communicating knowledge was the only way in which instruction could reach the multitude. How indefatigably Jesus went about, "teaching in the synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom." That His teaching was altogether good His recorded precepts are abundant proof. If He stirred up the people, it was with admiring wonder to hear the words of grace and truth which He spake; it was to repentance and holiness, to faith and obedience, to love and piety. III. By His EXAMPLE. His conduct was a clear and holy commentary on His words. His life transcended, if possible, His instructions; because it is so much more difficult and rare to live unexceptionably than to instruct wisely. His character was tried in many scenes and under diverse circumstances; and in all appeared pure, like gold tried seven times in the fire. And they who know the power of example, and the efficacy which practice gives to preaching, and the great part which being good is of doing good, will perceive that our Saviour's example is an inseparable portion of His benevolence. Conclusion: If the benevolence of His miracles did not make its due impression on the Jews, let us not be likewise insensible to that mark of their truth and divinity. If but few of them were converted by His doctrine, let not us also blindly refuse the proffered light and salvation. If they were not affected by the bright consistency of His example, let us give it more attentive heed ourselves, and transfer it with more exactness to our own conduct. (*F. W. P. Greenwood.*) *The life of Christ:*—Here is the life of our Lord comprehended in a single sentence. Note—I. The business which our Lord followed. As all ordinary men have their callings, so our Lord had His. It was none of those occupations by which the gains of this world are acquired; it was the holy business of "doing good." One part of this was the "doing good"—1. To men's bodies. And what a list might be enumerated of His benefactions! How many blind eyes were opened, &c. None applied to Him in vain. None were sent from Him unrelieved. 2. To men's souls. (1) By His holy ministrations. What a preacher of righteousness was He, and in what a variety of ways did He address the hearts of men! (2) By His death. Our case was such as all the preaching in the world could not have rectified. We were dying sinners. We wanted a salvation to be wrought for us; and the only way of doing us effectual good was to provide us one. So Christ crowned all His other acts of goodness by the goodness of His Cross. II. The way in which He carried on His business. "He went about." Just as the trader goes about with his wares, and is unwearied in pursuit of gain, so Jesus "went about" upon the business of blessing man. The great enemy "goeth about seeking whom he may devour," and the Great Friend went about seeking whom He might do good to; and literally, for whithersoever the blessed Jesus travelled, He was a traveller on foot. I know not a more striking illustration of our text than is contained in Matt. ix., which contains the story of a day spent by Him. III. What improvement can we make of the text? Let me ask you—1. Do you want to have good done to you? If so, behold your Benefactor! He that "went about doing good" when upon earth, is now as ready to do good to you from heaven. 2. Are you copying His character? Jesus is set forth not as the Saviour only of His people, but their Pattern. We may do good—(1) By

our examples. (2) By our exertions; watching for opportunities of usefulness, and endeavouring to be a help and a comfort, both in spirituals and temporals, to all about us and around us. (*A. Roberts, M.A.*) *The matchless life*:—Christ went about, not like a Pharisee, to make a show; not like the Romans, to parade military prowess; not like the Greeks, to display worldly wit and wisdom; but to do good to the bodies and souls of men. During the great work of creation, God, in each step, pronounced it "very good"; and when God entered upon the work of human redemption He did good, and at its close He exclaimed, with perfect satisfaction, "It is finished." He did not go about getting good, or becoming good, but dispensing good. He did good because He was good. By laying emphasis upon each of the five words before us, we shall see their beauty and feel their power. I. The life of Christ was full of BENEVOLENT EFFORT—who went about doing "good." How different this from what it might have been! He might have performed miracles of vengeance, as Moses did; He might have come as a judge, to condemn. He remembered mercy, He dealt not with men after their sins. He did good to all, at all times and under all circumstances. His goodness was pure, unmerited, and free. He went about, not to get to Himself a name, not to climb to positions of worldly influence and power, nor to serve His own ends, but to show by His own example the beauty and blessedness of His precept, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." The benevolent acts He performed for the bodies of men were symbols and types of what He would do for their souls. In His gospel Jesus still goes about doing good, for Christianity is philanthropic in its spirit. II. PRACTICAL EFFORT—"doing." He was no dreamy, sentimental philanthropist, imagining Utopian plans, nor did He spend His life in pronouncing eulogiums upon goodness, and in endeavouring to stimulate others in that direction. He became, not the president or secretary of a society to do good, but He went about doing the good Himself. Societies are good, but they must never supersede individual effort. Christ did good with His own hands—earnestly, heartily, personally, perpetually; not by proxy, but enjoyed the luxury of being His own almoner. What an example for us to go and do likewise! III. EXTENSIVE EFFORT—"about." Not only in Jerusalem, but throughout Galilee. His miracles were not performed among a select company, but out and about among all sorts and conditions of men, in secular as well as in sacred places. What an example for the Christian Church; His followers are to begin at Jerusalem, but they are to go out also into all the world. The blessings of Christianity are not to be kept within select limits, or enjoyed by one class. The catholicity of the benevolence of Christ should lead us to regard every living man as our neighbour. IV. WILLING EFFORT—"went." God sent His Son, but it is equally true that Jesus Christ came. It was from no compulsion, but from choice. It is interesting to notice how many of the benevolent acts He performed for men were done unsolicited. He went to those who could not and to those who would not come to Him, that they might be blessed. V. PERSONAL EFFORT—"who." When we remember the Deity of Christ, we see that it was the great Creator going about and doing good to His creatures; the Lord of life and glory condescending to attend personally to the wants and woes of fallen men. He might have sent angels, who would gladly have gone about upon so merciful a mission; but He came Himself. (*F. W. Brown.*) *The model home mission and the model home missionary*:—Our Lord's ministry was a home mission. "I am not sent save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Afterwards there sprang out of His home work the foreign mission, when they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the gospel. And herein we see His wisdom, for it will be of little avail to attempt much abroad unless there be a solid basis at home, in an earnest sanctified Church, affording a fulcrum for our lever. When England is converted, then shall she become the great herald of Christ's gospel to other lands. We have before us—I. A MODEL HOME MISSION. 1. Christ selected as His great instrument the preaching of the gospel. He would have His followers depend upon the same agency. Other godly efforts are not to be neglected; but first and foremost it pleases God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. 2. In connection with His preaching we find the Master forming a seminary for the training of ministers. After He had called Peter and John, and others, He at first admitted them, as it were, into His evening classes; for they pursued their ordinary business, and came to Him at fitting seasons for instruction. But after awhile they separated themselves from all the pursuits of business, and were continually with their great Teacher. They learned how to preach as they marked how He preached. He even taught them to pray. Now this has been too much forgotten. When

Calvin and Luther exerted an influence over Europe, it was not only through their preaching or writings, but through the young men who swarmed at Wirtemburg and Geneva to listen to the great Reformers' teaching, and then afterwards went forth to tell abroad what they had learned. 3. The Master also connected with His preaching and His college the invaluable agency of Bible classes; indeed, the whole machinery of a Church can be found in embryo in the doings of Christ. He "expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." If any home mission would see its work established, the converts must be trained in the knowledge of the Word. 4. Our Lord's mission work did not overlook the children. Our Sunday-school work is not only justified, but even enforced, by "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven"; and also by His saying to Peter, "Feed My lambs." 5. Of late there has been frequently used by evangelists the plan of free teas, breakfasts, and dinners, at which the poorest persons are affectionately exhorted to seek salvation. It is remarkable that this method has been so long disused, because it is, with a small difference, a plan adopted by our Lord. Though many, no doubt, followed Him because they did eat of the loaves and fishes, yet I do not doubt that some who were first attracted by the earthly food remained to eat of the bread of heaven. 6. A mission would also find great strength in imitating Jesus by combining medical aid with religious teaching. Our Lord was a medical missionary. True, we cannot work miracles, but we may do what is within human reach in the way of healing, and so we may follow our Lord, not with equal footsteps, but in the same track. I pray for a closer connection between the surgeon and the Saviour. May there be many who, like Luke, are both physicians and evangelists. 7. Our Lord also associated with His mission work the distribution of alms. A poor man was found in the street one Sunday morning as he was about to commit suicide. Two of our brethren met him, and led him to this Tabernacle, but first they took him to a coffee-shop. I had a far more likely hearer in the man whose hunger was relieved than I could have had in the poor famishing sinner. Then, after the sermon, they gave him a good dinner, and so detained him till they brought him here again in the evening, and God was pleased to bless the Word to him. 8. Our Master's mission was carried on very largely through open-air preaching. All over England there are tens of thousands who never will hear the gospel while open-air preaching is neglected. It is altogether a mischievous thing that we should confine our preaching within walls. 9. Our Lord also set an example to home missionaries, in that He had pity on the villages. Small villages are often thought to be too insignificant for the founding of churches in them. But the villages help to make the large towns, and the character of London depends upon the character of village homes. 10. At the same time the Master also gave much attention to the towns.

II. THE MODEL HOME MISSIONARY. The success of a work depends very little upon the system; almost everything rests, under God, upon the man. There have been men who, with systems unwise and imperfect, have accomplished noble results, while others with admirable organisations have done nothing. 1. The man who is to serve God as a leading missionary must be a man of teaching power and of personal influence. It is of no use to send out a man who cannot speak. If you want a man to spread the gospel he must be one who can preach. Our Lord had this grand capacity in the highest degree. 2. Our Lord as a missionary fraternised with the people. How many of us, if we had seen a poor harlot coming to the well, would have remained purposely to converse with her? He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, but He was the friend of publicans and sinners. And we must be one with those whom we would bless; we must not be ashamed to call them brethren. 3. Our Lord was a man who could toil. He never preached a sermon without weaving His soul into it. His life was a scene of unrivalled labour. Now, if the Church would see souls saved, the work will never be achieved by agents who are half asleep. 4. For a home missionary we want a man who can pray as the Master prayed. He was as great with God in prayer as He was with man in preaching. If we prevail with God for men, we shall prevail with men for God. 5. And if we are to secure useful men and women we must choose those who can weep. I do not covet that moistness of the eye which is the result of effeminacy, but manly weeping is a mighty thing. Our Lord, when He beheld the city, could not restrain the waterfloods, His great soul ran over at His eyes. If He had not been a man who could weep Himself, He could not have made others weep. 6. To crown all, our Lord knew how to die! Love of life must yield to love of souls. Christ revealed the great secret when it was said of Him, "He saved

others, Himself He cannot save." In proportion as a man saves himself he cannot save others. III. LET US HEAR HIS CALL AND IMITATE HIM. 1. It is your privilege to be a worker together with God, therefore keep close to the footsteps of the great Master worker. 2. Remember that before He went to work He was Himself personally obedient to that gospel which He had to preach. He did not bid others believe and be baptized, and neglect to be baptized Himself. 3. This being done, let me say to you, Is there not some department of mission work at home that you could undertake? Most probably you could not do all those things which I have mentioned as having been done by Christ, but you know that young artists will often be instructed by their masters to sketch, not the whole of a great statue, but one single limb, an arm, a hand, or a foot. Just so it shall be enough to teach you service if, being unable to attempt the whole of the great scheme, you will undertake zealously to labour in one department of it. 4. But whatever you do, do it thoroughly, do it heartily. 5. Take one word which is often used by Mark as a motto for yourselves. Mark is always saying of Christ that "straightway" He did so and so. Now, if you have work for Christ before your eye, straightway hasten to do it. Do something to-night before you go to bed, if it be only the giving away of a tract. 6. There is an all-sufficient power which you may obtain for this service. Our Lord is declared in this very verse to be one who was anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power. That same Holy Ghost is given to the Church, and that same power lingers in the assemblies of the faithful. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

The great Itinerant:—The text is an exquisite miniature of Christ. There are not many touches, but they are the strokes of a master's pencil. The portrait cannot be mistaken for any one else. Alexander, Cæsar, Napoleon went about destroying. Prophets who professed to have been sent of God have compassed sea and land to make proselytes, but the good which they accomplished none could see. What Peter here draws in words, God's grace drew, in some measure, in lines of real life in the case of Howard and some other followers of Jesus; still, in the highest and fullest sense, these words are applicable to none but the Master. His is the model, and theirs the humble copy. He did good, and good only: but the best of men, being men at the best, sow mingled seed. I. CONSIDER HIM. 1. His object. "He went about," but His travel was no listless motion, no purposeless wandering. O man of God, have a purpose, and devote thy whole life to it! Be not an arrow shot at random, but choose thy target. Christ's object was "doing good." This was —(1) His eternal purpose. Long before man was formed Jesus was set upon doing good. He did good among the angels, for the heavenly harps owe all their music to His presence. Among the devils there was no room for positive good; but even there restraining goodness bound them down in iron bands, lest their mischief should grow too rampant. On earth, however, was the widest scope for goodness in its largest sense; for that goodness which descends to sin-stricken mortals, to set them upon the throne of glory. (2) His practical object. His presence in the manger did good, as it cheered both rich magi and poor shepherd with the knowledge that God had come down to men. His childhood did good, for it has become the mirror of childhood's obedience to this day. Ye know how His after life was one practical carrying out of this solitary object. (3) His official prerogative. He received the name of Jesus, "For He shall save His people from their sins." He was named "Christ," because the Spirit of the Lord was upon Him, &c. Mention any name you please, and you will see that it is incumbent upon Him, *ex officio*, to go about doing good. Shepherd, Husband, Friend, Lion, Lamb. (4) His actual performance. He did good in all senses—physically and spiritually. 2. His mode. (1) He went about. Personally. He might have sent out His apostles to do good in His stead; but when He sent them out, it was not as proxies, but as heralds, "whither He Himself would come." The evangelists constantly tell us that He touched the leper with His own finger, that He visited the bedside of the sick, &c. I would that much more of benevolence were performed by men themselves. Why should you not go and give away your guinea lovingly and tenderly? It will be better than letting somebody else pare it down to fifteen shillings, and giving it away coldly and officially. So much depends upon the way of doing good. The look, the word, the prayer, the tear, will often be more valuable to the widow than that half-crown which you have given her. The Saviour's very presence did good, apart from the blessings which He bestowed. (2) He went about with incessant activity. He did not only the good which was round about Him, which was brought to Him, but He "went about." He could not be satisfied to be still. Scarcely a village or a hamlet which had not been gladdened by the sight of Him. Oh! the creeping, crawling

manner in which some people serve the Lord! (3) He went out of His way to do good. You must not be content to do good in the regular circle of your movements. Break through the bounds of propriety every now and then, and do an odd thing. That was a quaint expedient of those who brake up the roof to let down a palsied man that Jesus might heal him. (4) He went far in doing good. The district of Palestine was not very large, but He went to the limit of it. He was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But He went to the verge of it. And I admire the Lord's going about not simply for the miles He travelled, but for the space of character over which He passed. It is nothing wonderful that He went as far as Tyre and Sidon, but it is much that He went as far as publicans and sinners. A minister once announced to his congregation, "I am going on a mission to the heathen." The good people thought their minister was going to leave them, and felt sad at the bare idea of losing him. "But," he added, "I shall not be out of town." If you want men who have gone far in sin, great foreigners in that respect, you need not leave London. (5) No doubt Christ's perseverance is intended, for when rejected in one place, He goes to another. (6) The unity of His purpose is also hinted at. He does not go about with two aims. (7) And the success is here intended. He went about, and not only tried to do good, but He did it. 3. His motive. (1) He did good partly because He could not help it. It was His nature to do good. All the good things which God has made are diffusive. There is light; the clouds; air; fire. (2) His grand motive no doubt is the display of the Divine attributes. He is the manifestation of Godhead. Poor troubled sinner, cannot He glorify God in you? You need pardon: you will be an illustrious instance of God's grace if He should ever save you. II. CONSIDER OURSELVES. 1. As to the past. There are some in all callings who either do positive harm, or at any rate cannot imagine that they are doing any good. Let them repent themselves. But you who are saved, have you done all the good you could? 2. As to the future. The old question comes up, if any man says to-day, "I am resolved to go about doing good"—is he able to do it? And again, the reply comes, we must first be good, or else we cannot do good. The only way to be good is to seek to the good Master. Then whatsoever our hand findeth to do, let us do it. Let us not ask for greater abilities. If we can get them let us do so; but meanwhile let us use what we have. Go, thou housewife, to thy house, and from the lowest chamber to the top go thou about doing good. Go, thou teacher, to thy little school, and let thine example tell, and there is range enough for thee. You domestic servants, the kitchen is sphere enough for you. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Seeking to do good in little ways*:—Mr. Harvey was riding slowly along the dusty road, looking in all directions for a stream, or even a house where he might refresh his tired and thirsty horse with a good draught of water. While he was thinking and wondering, he turned an abrupt bend in the road, and saw before him a comfortable-looking farmhouse, and at the same time a boy ten or twelve years old came out into the road with a small pail, and stood directly before him. "What do you wish, my boy?" said Mr. Harvey, stopping his horse. "Would your horse like a drink?" said the boy, respectfully. "Indeed he would, and I was wondering where I could obtain it." Mr. Harvey thought little of it, supposing, of course, the boy earned a few pennies in this manner, and therefore he offered him a bit of silver, and was astonished to see him refuse it. "I would like you to take it," he said, looking earnestly at the child, and observing for the first time that he limped slightly. "Indeed, sir, I don't want it. It is little enough I can do for myself or any one; I am lame, and my back is bad, sir, and mother says, no matter how small a favour may seem, if it is all we are capable of, God loves it as much as He does any favour; and this is the most I can do for others. You see, sir, the distance from Painesville is eight miles to this spot, and I happen to know there is no stream crossing the road that distance, and the houses are all some distance from the road, and so, sir, almost every one passing here from that place is sure to have a thirsty horse." Mr. Harvey looked down into the grey eyes that were kindling and glowing with the thought of doing good to others, and a moisture gathered in his own, as a moment later he jogged off, pondering deeply upon the quaint little sermon that had been delivered so innocently and unexpectedly. (*Christian Age.*) *The blessedness of doing good*:—A Piedmontese nobleman, whom I met at Turin, had not long before experienced its efficacy; and his story, which he told me without reserve, was as follows: "I was weary of life, and, after a day such as few have known, and none would wish to remember, was hurrying along the street to the river, when I felt a sudden check. I turned and beheld a little boy, who had

caught the skirt of my cloak in his anxiety to solicit my notice. His look and manner were irresistible; not less so was the lesson he had learned. 'There are six of us, and we are dying for want of food.' 'Why should I not,' said I to myself, 'relieve this wretched family? I have the means, and it will not delay me many minutes. But what if it does?' The scene of misery he conducted me to I cannot describe. I threw them my purse, and their burst of gratitude overcame me; it filled my eyes—it went as a cordial to my heart. 'I will call again to-morrow!' I cried. Fool that I was to think of leaving a world where such pleasure was to be had, and so cheaply!" May many a reader of these lines find in the true romance of London a relief for all hypochondriacal and dyspeptic sorrows. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Doing good as a remedy for soul depression*:—Richard Cecil went to preach at Bedford Road Chapel, London, and one day a person came up to him about a certain lady, a great professor of religion. He represented that she was quite out of spirits, unhappy and miserable, and that Mr. Cecil ought to go and try and do her some good. He went to the lady and found her sitting by the fire, with her feet on the fender and looking very miserable, with a great shawl on her back, while the sun was shining in at the window. She asked Mr. Cecil to sit down; but he said, "I will not sit down; I know what is the matter. Get up, put on your bonnet, and go out and try and do some good. Within a few hundred yards of this very house there are people dying, and persons that want help. Go out and do something, and try and do good in the world." She took his advice, and went out and tried to do some good, and when he called on her two or three weeks after, he found her quite an altered person. Her voice was altered, she looked cheerful and happy, and her low spirits were all gone. She said, "Oh, Mr. Cecil, you could not have done me a greater favour than ask me to try and do some good." (*Bp. Ryle.*) *Doing good*:—It is said of a certain New England Congregational minister that when he was young, "in the college and at the seminary he loved to spend his strength in doing that kind of good which other men neglected—and that remained his characteristic through life." In his parish work he was sure to be after the "one sheep" which had been given up as lost. Norman M'Leod, the great friend of the Scotch poor, was industriously maligned in all quarters, although on the day when he was carried out to his burial a workman stood, and, looking at the funeral procession, said: "If he had done nothing for anybody more than he has done for me, he should shine as the stars for ever and ever." *Doing good within our sphere*:—Christ spent His life in doing good within the sphere in which He lived, and to the objects within His reach. Thus He has taught us irresistibly that, instead of consuming our time in wishes to do good where we cannot, the true dictate of universal goodwill is to do it where we can. (*T. Dwight.*) *Good not to be done by deputy*:—Not one of the least remarkable features of the present age is, the system of doing those things by deputy which our forefathers did for themselves. Provided a man has plenty of ready money, he may recline on the sofa, or loll in the easy chair the greater part of the day, and still be a most active Christian by deputy. Does his heart yearn to provide for the orphan, or to comfort the widow, to clothe the naked and to feed the hungry? He has no longer to seek them out as of old; he is not compelled to visit the scenes of destitution and misery; he has but to subscribe a few guineas to some half-dozen institutions to qualify himself as a "life-governor"; and for the remainder of his days he is freed from the obligations of Christian benevolence, by discharging the mere peppercorn rent of signatures to tickets and proxy papers. *Benevolence peripatetic*:—Genuine benevolence is not stationary, but peripatetic; it goeth about doing good. (*Dr. Nevins.*) *A long life of benevolence*:—Eighty-seven years have I sojourned on this earth, endeavouring to do good. (*John Wesley.*)

Vers. 39-43. **And we are witnesses of all things which He did.**—*The apostolic testimony*:—I. ITS SUBSTANCE. 1. Christ's miracles. "All things which He did." These miracles were—(1) Declarative of His Divine power, and thus credentials of His Messiahship. (2) Symbols of His saving influence. As there was a miracle in every parable, so there was a parable in every miracle. Thus, when Christ opened blind eyes, it typified the restoration of spiritual sight; when He healed disease, it showed His power over the paralysis and leprosy of sin; when He raised people from the dead, it proclaimed His ability to raise from the death of trespasses and sins. 2. Christ's crucifixion. "Whom they slew." This was the central fact of all apostolic testimony. It was the burden of Peter's earliest message and latest epistle, and the ruling theme of all Paul's ministry. This was not only (1) Martyr-

dom for truth, or (2) An example of self-sacrifice, but also (3) Atonement for sin. As the preacher afterwards testified, "He bore our sins," "He died the Just for the unjust," and redeemed us with His "precious blood." 3. Christ's resurrection (ver. 40). This was declarative of—(1) His Divine Sonship. (2) His victory over death and the grave. (3) The acceptance of His atonement. (4) Our resurrection, of which His was a pledge and type. 4. His second coming (ver. 42). This was a matter of revelation, not of eye-witnessing, but it was the inevitable outcome of all they saw. Christ was to come—(1) As Judge, and assert openly His universal Lordship. (2) As Raiser of the dead. 5. Remission of sins through faith in Christ (ver. 43). Thus we have in the first sermon to the Gentiles the whole gospel in substance, and the main articles of the Christian creed. II. ITS AUTHORITY. 1. The testimony of their senses. They were trustworthy men. They could see, and actually saw, and had no inclination or inducement to make a false report; and their clear knowledge and full conviction gave body and strength to their testimony. 2. The Divine choice and command. They were selected because they had seen, and were commanded to tell what they saw. Hence they were not lecturers on history, which they would have been without a Divine call, but missionaries of a gospel. 3. Their own sanctified impulse. They could not but, out of the love of Him who had died for them and rose again, declare the things they had seen and heard. III. ITS METHOD. 1. It was not simple declaration. Merely to say that they saw Jesus, &c., would have excited interest, stimulated inquiry, imparted information, and perhaps have founded a school, but would never have converted a soul or established a Church. 2. It was persuasive preaching. Their aim was not merely to secure belief in certain truths, but to save souls; and so "it has pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe." How faithful, earnest, telling, and successful this preaching was these early sermons testify. IV. ITS BEARING ON OURSELVES. 1. We are not eye-witnesses, but we may be heart-witnesses. We have not seen Christ's physical miracles, but we may be the subjects of His spiritual miracles. We have not seen the crucifixion, but we may receive the atonement. We are not witnesses of Christ's resurrection, but we may feel its power. 2. Being heart-witnesses, we are bound to testify what we feel. (*J. W. Burn.*) *St. Peter's boldness, delicacy, and candour:*—1. We look for boldness in St. Peter; and we find it in those words, "We are witnesses," &c. He takes upon himself and his colleagues all the responsibility; they are prepared to stand by the truth of the facts which they allege. We feel the value of this emphatic announcement; miracles, to be believed at all, must be believed on testimony which is beyond suspicion and which cannot be shaken. 2. Then, for his delicacy, we find it in the suppression of all reference to the part which Romans took in the crucifixion of our Lord; no word of Pontius Pilate, or Roman soldiers, or sentinels over the tomb. Any one who read the account for the first time would conclude that none but Jews and dwellers in Jerusalem had a hand in His death; especially as the nailing to the Cross, which was essentially a Roman punishment, is softened down to the expression, "hanged on a tree," which was as essentially a Jewish. He might well spare the feelings of such men as he saw before him; men in spirit, as well as in fact, utterly guiltless of the blood of Jesus. 3. And for the apostle's candour, we trace it in his assertion that God had shown the risen Saviour "not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us." "An announcement," as Paley remarks, "which no impostor would ever have made." (*E. T. Marshall, M.A.*) **Him God raised up the third day, and shewed Him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses.**—*The privacy of Christ's resurrection no argument against the truth of it:*—There is no article of the Christian faith more necessary to be embraced, more undeniably to be proved than that of Christ's resurrection. But our modern unbelievers have been at the woeful pains to furnish the world with arguments against this fundamental article of the Christian faith, the overturning of which they too well know would be no less than the entire extirpation of all religion. Happy had it been, say they, for the Christian cause in general if the proof of Christ's resurrection had been made a little more public. For whatever may be said in apology for St. Thomas's incredulity, it cannot be doubted but that, had our Lord appeared personally to the high priests and rulers after He was risen, made an open entry into Jerusalem, and frequented the temple and other places of public concourse, that every eye might see Him, He would have given the world fuller satisfaction than in remitting us to the testimony of His apostles, who were all His own creatures, and consequently

evidences against whom we may make a just exception. But let us answer this vain objection, and see whether the privacy of Christ's resurrection was not more agreeable to the majesty of the Almighty, and also no less convincing to those who were in any tolerable disposition to be satisfied. 1. And there is no one will deny but upon the certainty of Christ's resurrection lies all the stress of the Christian religion, and likewise that all necessary means of convincing the world of the truth, and confirming them in the reality of it, were highly expedient; but then it should be remembered that Christ now, after His resurrection, was not to condescend to any action beneath the majesty of His Divine nature, which He had then more fully assumed. And, besides, of all men living, none ever had, or could render themselves more unworthy of this extraordinary, I had almost said unnecessary, way of conviction than the unbelieving Jews and chief priests. Another thing let me observe to you. They had long rejected all the evidence our Saviour had given them, and when they could not directly deny the truth of any of the miracles He wrought, they rather chose to impute them to the assistance of darkness; and can it with any justice be urged that such men should again be favoured with such a visitation, especially after His summoning Lazarus from the grave, which was so far from removing their prejudice that they after even waxed more inveterate against Him. 2. Again, let us suppose that our Lord had made His personal appearance before the high priests and rulers after He was risen, yet, if you remember, how little they were moved and affected with the relation of the centurion at His death, and with that of the soldiers at His resurrection, with the shock the whole frame of nature felt, and when everything else was moved, except themselves, can you imagine they would immediately have been convinced, and worshipped what they so lately had scoffed and crucified. 3. Suppose, then, He had made this public entrance, and they had been convinced of His Divinity, what sort of creatures must we conceive them to have been, able to sustain themselves under this shock? Something more inhuman than we can imagine them. Could flesh and blood behold the glorified Son of the Most High, whom just before it had arraigned, condemned, and executed, and live? The more of majesty and terror He had appeared in, the greater, and more insupportable, must have been their dread, and the more of love and compassion the greater and more abundant their confusion. 4. Now the method which our Saviour took, and the account the Scriptures give us of it, was neither attended with any of these inconveniencies, which would otherwise have happened, nor any ways defective to procure our assent. He neither exposed Himself to fresh insults nor laid the Jews under a necessity on the one hand of adding still to their sin by denying Him in His glorified Person, nor endangered their lives on the other by exhibiting to their view the reproach that a late crucified, but then eternally crowned Jesus, would have been to them. As to that expression used by our modern unbeliever, wherein he calls the apostles creatures of our Saviour, and consequently evidences against whom exception might justly be taken, I say it is unfair and ungenerous. Every circumstance proves they actually were as St. Peter, in the words of my text, styles them, "Witnesses chosen before of God," and they not only called themselves so, but likewise were enabled to confirm the same by undeniable demonstrations of such power as could only be given them by Him whose witnesses they were. (*S. Eccles, M.A.*) *Witnesses of the resurrection*:—Why did not our Saviour show Himself after His resurrection to all the people? Why only to witnesses chosen before of God? Because this was the most effectual means of propagating His religion through the world. I. Consider what would have been the PROBABLE EFFECT OF A PUBLIC EXHIBITION OF HIS RESURRECTION. Suppose our Saviour had shown Himself as openly as before He suffered crucifixion, preaching in the temple, talking to His disciples, &c., the people would perhaps have shouted hosannas once more, but the impression would soon have passed away; and then only a few of the multitude would have had an opportunity of testing the reality of the fact that He had risen. In all probability they would have denied the miracle. II. He showed Himself to a few, BECAUSE, HUMANLY SPEAKING, ONLY A FEW COULD BE MADE INSTRUMENTS. No one could become witnesses of the fact of His resurrection who did not know Him intimately before His death. The apostles alone had this knowledge. III. Every great change is EFFECTED BY THE FEW, AND NOT BY THE MANY. By satisfying the few, the many would be influenced. The few, thoroughly convinced, become convincers of the many. This is always the case. The twelve apostles overturned the powers of darkness, and established the kingdom of righteousness. (*J. H. Newman, D.D.*) It is

He which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.—*The Mediator—Judge and Saviour*:—I. OUR DIVINE MEDIATOR'S POSITION INVOLVES TWO OFFICES. We are not now living under the immediate government of God, but under the reign of the Mediator. Jesus as Mediator has become—1. Our Judge. "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." "To this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living, for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." In this capacity Christ has judicial authority over all men, and He will try all of us at the last, as He is even now sitting in judgment upon all our acts and thoughts and intents. We shall each one appear before His great white throne, and if any are condemned, His lips shall say, "Depart, ye cursed"; if any are glorified, from His lips shall proceed the sentence, "Come, ye blessed." That judgment will be authoritative and final. 2. A Saviour. "That through His name whosoever believeth in Him should receive remission of sins." He has the sovereign right of condemnation or justification. He has authority to pass by transgression. His atonement has made it possible for Him to do this in perfect consistency with His character as Judge. And the same universality which pervades the Mediator's dignified proceedings as Judge is to be seen in His condescending operations as Saviour. He is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him. Let the two offices dwell together: "He is a just God and a Saviour." II. BOTH THESE OFFICES REGARD MEN AS SINNERS. I am sick to the death of hearing men talk about the goodness which is latent in human nature. The case of Cornelius makes it evident that the best natural religion needs to be illuminated by revelation, and instructed by the doctrine of the Cross. 1. Christ comes to judge because there are sinners to be judged. If you find me a nation which has no tribunals, no punishments, it must either be the scene of utter anarchy, or else a nation where all obey the law, and such a thing as a criminal is unknown. The setting up of the last great assize, and the making of that assize to have reference to all men, and the appointment of the supremest Person in existence to conduct that assize—all these facts imply guilt somewhere, and abundance of it. 2. Christ comes to save because there are sinners to be saved. He comes to remit sin; but there can be no remission of sins to those who have never transgressed. However wide the "whosoever" is, so wide is the guilt: the remedy measures the disease. 3. Putting the two things together, the very fact that there is a Mediator at all regards man as fallen. God could have dealt with us immediately, without an Intercessor, had we been as the first Adam was before his fall. It is by reason of sin's influence upon the race that it became necessary that there should be a "Daysman that might lay His hand upon both," and deal with God in His Divine Person, and yet deal with fallen man in His humanity. III. THE QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED BY OUR LORD AS JUDGE MATERIALLY COMFORT US IN LOOKING AT HIM AS SAVIOUR. 1. As Judge, Jesus—(1) Has full authority: He is fully commissioned of God to acquit or to condemn. Oh, then, if He gives me pardon through His blood, it is a free pardon under the King's own hand and seal. (2) Possesses the amplest knowledge. A judge should be the most instructed, or he is not fitted to decide in matters of difficulty and importance. Jesus Christ as Judge is incomparably fit to judge men, for—(*a*) He knows men thoroughly. He is Himself a Man, and knows all about us by experience as well as by observation. (*b*) He knows the law. Hath He not said, "Yea, Thy law is within My heart"? No one knows the law of God as Jesus did, for He kept it in every point. (*c*) He knows what sin is. He has lived among sinners as a Physician, making a specialty of the disease of sin. Though He had no sin of His own, yet all sin was laid on Him. (*d*) He knows the punishment of sin. A judge must know what penalties to award. Jesus knows this well enough, for He Himself also hath once suffered for sin, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God. 2. Inasmuch as Christ is qualified to be Judge, it equally qualifies Him to pardon. For—(1) He knows thee thoroughly, and can cleanse thee thoroughly. He knows the law, and therefore He knows how legally to acquit, so that no further question can be raised. Since He knows the penalty, because He has borne it all, He will take care that none of it shall ever fall on us. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect since God hath justified? (2) All the personal qualifications of our Lord as Judge remarkably tend to make the pardon of His people the more blessedly clear, for as a Judge He is very just. "Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness." Well, then, when He forgives it must be just to forgive. IV. OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE FIRST OFFICE OF THE MEDIATOR IS NECESSARY TO OUR ACCEPTANCE OF HIM IN HIS SECOND CAPACITY.

This was why Peter preached it; this was why Paul before Felix reasoned concerning righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. This is why the Holy Spirit Himself convinces the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. If you do not believe in Christ as your Judge, you never will accept Him as your Saviour. V. THE SAVING WORK OF CHRIST'S MEDIATORIAL OFFICE IS THAT WHICH CONCERNS US MOST AT THIS PRESENT TIME. 1. Note the words, "Shall receive remission of sins." What is this? It is the causing of sin to cease to be. God in wondrous mercy is prepared to forget your sin, to blot it out, to cast it behind His back, to cast it into the depths of the sea. 2. Note that this is to be done in Christ's name. There is no other name in which pardon can be bestowed. 3. This is to be had through faith. 4. This blessed news has reference to every one in the whole world that will believe in Jesus. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Jesus, the Judge:*— I. THE MESSAGE. 1. This begins with the assurance that there is a moral government. There is a Judge over the race of men. Men are not permitted to do whatsoever is right in their own eyes. The race is not left to anarchy: Jesus Christ is Head of all. 2. We have to go on to say that there will be a judgment. Consider— (1) The character of God. Being the Ruler of the world, He must do justice. We should count any man a miserable counterfeit of a monarch if he never administered justice. And "the Father who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's works" will not permit offenders to insult His laws with impunity. (2) The character of man equally involves a judgment, for he is evidently a responsible being. We count not the cattle of the hills or the fish of the sea responsible; no one blames the wolf that he ravens, or the lion that he devours; but when we come to think of man, we regard him as a creature whose actions have a moral quality about them, and are either right or wrong. Surely, where there is responsibility there is a law, and where there is a law there must, some day or other, be rewards for well-doers and punishments for malefactors. (3) The present tangled condition of the world's history requires that there should be a day of rectification at the end of time. We often see the wicked prosper, while the righteous are abased. The Judge of all the earth must do right; and how can this be but by a final adjustment in which it shall be clearly seen that, though the wicked prosper for a while, they are as bullocks fattening for the slaughter; and though the righteous suffer for a while, it is but as the gold suffers in the furnace, that it may come forth purified? (4) Moreover, there is in the consciences of most a testimony to a coming judgment. I will not say of all men, for I believe that some manage so to drug their self-consciousness as at last to quiet all their fears; but yet the most of men believe in a judgment to come, and in their more thoughtful moods are alarmed thereat. 3. This judgment will be conducted by the Man Christ Jesus. He will be thus enthroned, I suppose, partly because it is involved in His mediatorial office, in which the Lord hath put all things in subjection under His feet. But specially remember that the Judge is the *Man* Christ Jesus. There must be special reason for this honour done to the manhood of our Lord, or it would not be so continually insisted upon (Dan. vii. 13; John v. 22, 27; Matt. xxv. 31, 32, xiii. 41). Be ye sure, then, of His impartiality. He is God, yet Man, having an intense sympathy both with the King and with the subjects. 4. This judgment will concern all mankind. He will judge the quick and dead; that is, those who will be alive at His coming He will judge, as well as those who have already died. The summons will exempt no man. Here and there a criminal escapes the vigilant eye of human law; but there shall be no such instance at the coming of the Lord. 5. A few words concerning this judgment. It will be—(1) A very eminent one. It will be a judgment fixed by the peremptory ordinance of God, for the text saith that He hath "ordained" Jesus to sit as Judge. The whole trial will be most solemnly conducted (1 Thess. iv. 16). (2) Very searching, into deeds (2 Cor. v. 10); words (Matt. xii. 36); every secret thing (Eccles. xii. 14). (3) Very exact. It will proceed upon evidence and documentary testimony, and slander and hearsay will not be mentioned there. "The books were opened." (4) Very severe; for things will not be judged by their outward appearance, but put to thorough test and trial. 6. The sentences will be so just as to be indisputable, and even the condemned will own the justness thereof. That verdict will be final and irreversible. When Jesus has once pronounced it, there will be no appeal, no suing out of a writ of error, no reversal of the decree. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." II. THE EVIDENT IMPORTANCE OF THIS MESSAGE. 1. This may be gathered from the text. (1) "He commanded us." Then God must know that there is a great necessity for its being

declared. (2) "To preach"—to herald, to proclaim. Lo, we this day precede the great Judge, as the trumpeters go before our judges on assize day, and this is our cry, "He cometh! Jesus, the Judge of quick and dead!" (3) "To testify." Having given the proclamation, we are then to bear witness solemnly, and to speak the fact over and over again for God, adding our own belief that it is surely true. (4) "Unto the people"—not to some few, but to all. 2. There is importance in this from other reasons. (1) It sheds a great light upon the future of the ungodly. (2) It reflects great glory upon Christ. Ye may despise Him, but He is your Master after all. (3) It has a beneficial effect upon our everyday life. I constantly hear people say, "Tell the people about something that has to do with to-day—about cleanliness and honesty, and all that." But if I want men to live righteously, I know of no motive that can have greater weight than this. You are stewards; you will have to give in your account. Will anybody tell me that this is unpractical? If God will judge men at the last, it behoves men to see how they live to-day. (4) It has a convincing and awakening power. Men tremble when they hear of judgment to come, and they are led to cry, "What must we do to be saved?" This is the plough which makes furrows for the good seed; the surgeon's knife which prepares for the reception of the healing balm. Years ago a gentlewoman had been spending an afternoon at cards, and the evening at a ball. She came home very late, and found her maid-servant reading a book. "Ah," said she, "are you still poring over your dull books? They make you moping and melancholy." The lady retired to her chamber, but she slept not. In the night she was troubled, and fell a-weeping. She tossed to and fro; and at length she called her maid. She said, "Madam, what ails you? I thought I left you very merry and well." "Oh," said she, "but I looked over your book, and I only saw one word, but that word stings me: I cannot sleep; I cannot bear it!" "What word was it, madam?" "It was that word 'eternity.' Oh, maid," said she, "it is very well for me to sport and play and waste my time as I have done; but oh, eternity, eternity, eternity! How can I face eternity?" And so that night was turned to prayer. I could wish the like might happen now to many of you. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christ's coming to judgment*:—This last act of Christ is a special part of His exultation and honour, bestowed upon Him because He is the Son of Man (John v. 27). Wherein we have four things to be distinctly considered—1. The subject of it, Christ. Judgment is the act of the undivided Trinity. The Father and Spirit judge in respect of authority and consent, but it is the act of Christ in respect of visible management and execution. 2. The object. The quick and dead—*i.e.*, all that at His coming do live, or ever have lived. This is the object personal, and in this is included the real object, viz., all the actions (2 Cor. iv. 5; Rom. ii. 16). 3. The fountain of this authority is God the Father; for He hath ordained Christ to be the Judge. 4. The infallible truth, or unquestionable certainty of all this. He gave us commandment to preach and testify it to the people. We had it in charge from His own mouth; and dare not hide it. This truth, that our Lord Jesus Christ is ordained by God the Father, to be the Judge of quick and dead, stands upon the firm basis of Scripture authority (John v. 22; Acts xvii. 31; Rom. ii. 16). Three things will be opened here. I. First, THE CERTAINTY OF A JUDGMENT. This is a truth of firmer establishment than heaven and earth. 1. As the Scriptures aforementioned (with 2 Cor. v. 10; Eccles. xii. 14; Matt. xii. 36, &c.) do very plainly reveal it: so the justice and righteousness of God require it should be so (Gen. xviii. 25). Righteousness requires that a difference be made betwixt the righteous and the wicked (Isa. iii. 10). But no such distinction is fully made in this world (Eccles. vii. 15; Hab. i. 13; Eccles. iii. 16, 17; James v. 6. 7). 2. Man is an accountable being. His actions have a relation to a law (Rom. xiv. 12; Matt. xxv. 14, 15). 3. What need we seek evidence of this truth, further than our own conscience? II. THE NATURE AND MANNER OF THIS JUDGMENT. 1. It will be a great and awful day (Jude vi). Three things will make it so. (1) The manner of Christ's coming will be awfully solemn (1 Thess. iv. 16, 17). (2) Much more the work itself. For it is to judge the secrets of men (Rom. ii. 16). To sever the tares from the wheat. To make every man's whites and blacks appear. (3) And no less the execution of the sentence. 2. It will be a critical and exact judgment, every man will be weighed to his ounces and drachms. The name of the Judge is the Searcher of Hearts. No hypocrite can escape. Justice holds the balances in an even hand. 3. It will be a universal judgment (2 Cor. v. 10; Rom. xiv. 12; Rev. xx. 12). 4. It will be a judgment full of convictive clearness. 5. It will be a supreme and final judgment, from which lies no appeal. III. THIS JUDGMENT MAKES FOR CHRIST'S HONOUR. For—

1. This act of judging pertaining properly to the kingly office; Christ will be glorified as much in it as He hath been in either of the other. We find but some few glimpses of the kingly office, breaking forth in this world. Now that office will shine as the sun in the midst of the heavens. 2. This will be a display of His glory in the highest, before the whole world (2 Thess. i. 10). 3. This will roll away for ever the reproach of His death. Inferences: Is Jesus Christ ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead? 1. How great then is the security believers have, that they shall not be condemned in that day. Who shall condemn, when Christ is Judge? 2. How miserable a case will Christless souls be in at that day! They that are Christless now will be speechless, helpless, and hopeless then. 3. How are all concerned to secure their interest in Christ, and therein an eternity of happiness to their own souls, by the work of regeneration? 4. Then look to it, all you that hope to be found of Him in peace, that you avoid those sins and live in the daily practice of those duties which the consideration of that day powerfully persuades you to avoid or practise. (1) See you be meek and patient under all injuries and abuses for Christ's sake (James v. 7–9). (2) Be communicative, public-hearted Christians, studying and devising liberal things for Christ's distressed members (Matt. xxv. 34, 35). (3) Be watchful and sober, and see that you be not overcharged with the cares and love of this present life (Luke xxi. 34, 35). (4) Improve all your Master's talents. Take heed of the napkin (Matt. xxv. 14, 18). (5) But above all, be sincere in your profession (Luke xii. 1–3). (*J. Flavel.*) *The certainty and circumstances of a future judgment:*—I. THERE IS A JUDGMENT ORDAINED BY GOD, AND TO BE DECLARED TO MEN. The Holy Scripture teacheth us—1. That God hath appointed a determinate time for this judgment. "A day in which He will judge the world in righteousness." 2. That in order to this judgment all the actions of men are with greater exactness registered in books. "The books were opened." 3. That, in order thereto, there shall be a general resurrection of all persons, both just and unjust. 4. That then all persons so raised shall be presented at the bar of our Lord, to answer and undergo their trial. 5. That then and there every thought, word, and work of men shall be throughly disclosed and discussed; so that it, together with its due quality and desert, shall plainly appear. 6. That on each man, according to the true quality of his doings, a definitive sentence shall pass, whereby he shall be acquitted or condemned. 7. That according to the purport of this sentence a discrimination shall be made; and to one party a gracious reward; to the other, a sore punishment. 8. That all this shall be transacted in a regular, public, and most solemn manner, in open court, in the face and audience of all the world, before angels and men. 9. That the judgment shall pass to the full conviction and entire satisfaction of all that are present; so that each one concerned therein shall be forced in conscience to acquiesce in his doom, as most just and equal. II. THE JUDGE ORDAINED; Jesus, our Lord and Saviour. Why it should be so, many reasons may be assigned. 1. It was requisite that the judge should be visible, and audible; such whom the parties concerned might discern and converse with, in order to their clearer and fuller satisfaction, or conviction: such our Lord, the Son of man, clothed with glorified flesh, will be. 2. This Judgeship is a good part of that regal office which God did confer on Christ; giving Him a power over all flesh, all authority in heaven and earth. 3. It is an office of too great eminence to be imparted to any other. "Worthy is He alone to receive the book." 4. He alone also capacities proper for this judicature: that Divine faculty of searching men's hearts; wisdom to know all matters of fact that ever were, and to discern the right in every case; absolute goodness, perfect equity and immutable love of right, and that exact temperament of affection toward men which is requisite to the distribution of equal justice toward them, according to due measures of mercy and severity. 5. By this designation the glory of God is especially promoted: His wisdom appeareth in constituting one so in all respects most fit to discharge the office; and His goodness, for since it was requisite that a judgment should pass on us, how could the terror thereof be better allayed than by putting it into the hands of His Son? How also could He exhibit a more illustrious instance of His justice and love to righteousness than in advancing Him to so glorious an office, who, out of perfect compliance to His will, did freely stoop so low, and gladly undergo so much? 6. Just it likewise was that to Him should be consigned a power to reward His friends and do Himself right on His enemies. 7. This appointment is conducible to our edification. (1) It is apt to raise in us a high reverence of our Saviour; and consequently to dispose us to the observance of His laws and imitation of His example. (2) It is a matter of special comfort and encouragement to

consider that hence assuredly we shall find a fair and favourable trial; since it is no enemy, but our best friend. III. THE OBJECTS, OR THE EXTENT OF THE JUDGMENT ORDAINED. All, without exception. IV. APPLICATION: The doctrine is calculated—1. To make us circumspect and vigilant; for, since we must render an account of every thought, word, and action, what exceeding reason have we, with most attentive and accurate regard, to mind whatever we do! 2. To beget and preserve sincerity in us. What a folly is it to delude men with false appearances, or rather by them to abuse themselves; seeing they soon will be rightly informed, and we grievously disgraced for it! 3. To render us serious in all our thoughts, opinions, affections, actions; suppressing all proud conceits, all admiration of these transitory things, all wanton joys; for—(1) Why should any apprehension of worldly state, of any endowment, puff up our minds, seeing the day is near at hand which will quite level men? (2) Why should we value those splendid toys, or that sordid trash, which men here do so eagerly scramble for; which then evidently will be discountenanced? (3) Why, having affairs on foot of such vast importance, should we amuse ourselves with trivial matters? (4) How shall we dare to embrace the serpent of sinful excess? (5) And how can we be easily transported into wild merriments, if we consider how infinitely serious business lieth on us; how nearly our everlasting welfare lieth at stake? 4. To engage us carefully to improve all the talents by God's providence and grace committed to us. Hath God bestowed—(1) Wealth on us? this will engage us so to use it in God's service. (2) Power? this should induce us to use it moderately and fruitfully. (3) Any parts, wit, knowledge? this should move us to employ them in drawing men to the practice of virtue and piety. (4) Honour or credit among men? this may oblige us to use it as an instrument of bringing honour to God. 5. To induce us to the observing strict justice and equity in all our dealings. "Let no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter, because God will judge and avenge for all these things." 6. To breed charity in us; in giving, in forgiving, in judging and censuring of men. 7. To support and comfort us, as against all other wrongful dealing, so against all unjust and uncharitable censures, groundless slanders and surmises, undeserved reproaches of men; for that assuredly at that judgment right will be done, and innocence cleared. 8. To preserve us from being deluded and poisoned by the more favourable opinions of men. For "God seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart." 9. To encourage us to "judge ourselves so that we be not judged," or not condemned with the world. 10. To guard us from infidelity and from impatience in regard to the providential dispensation of affairs here. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." (*I. Barrow, D.D.*) **Whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins.** *Forgiveness of sin*:—I. THE BLESSING CONFERRED—"Remission of sins." Remission is to remove the guilt of sin, that the punishment of it may not be inflicted upon the sinner. God alone can fully forgive sins in this way; and He does it eminently, so that not a vestige of it remains. Remission implies—1. An offence, and consequently an offender. We have offended God. 2. A sovereign act. It is a pure act of grace and love. 3. A complete and perfect act. He does not forgive the greater offences and omit the smaller ones; neither does He forgive the smaller and leave the greater ones unpardoned. II. THE UNLIMITED NATURE OF THE BLESSING. "Whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." The qualification necessary in the recipient of the blessing is to believe. This includes penitence for the past offences, and a full reliance on Christ for pardon. There is no respect of persons—"Whosoever." This may be regarded alike in respect to nations, in respect to class, and in respect to moral character. 1. The Jews were still "slow of heart to believe" that the Gentiles were to be partakers of the grace of the gospel. There is no distinction of race or colour of skin. "Whosoever believeth" among all nations, and languages, and tribes, and shades of mankind, shall receive remission of sins. 2. As the blessing of forgiveness is applicable to all nations, so it is also to all classes. 3. Moral character does not exclude from the blessing. Some have run to a greater "excess of riot" than others; still there is no distinction made. III. THE MEDIUM THROUGH WHICH THE BLESSING IS CONVEYED—"Through His name." God could not, consistently with His justice and holiness, forgive sins without atonement. IV. THE UNIVERSAL TESTIMONY BORNE BY THE ANCIENT PROPHETS TO THE FACT THAT SIN MUST BE FORGIVEN THROUGH CHRIST—"To Him give all the prophets witness." Soon after the entrance of sin it was intimated that it should be remitted through the Saviour. The door of hope was opened when God said, "I will put enmity

between thee and the woman." We refer to some of the prophecies on this point. Isaiah tells us—"He was wounded for our transgressions . . . and with His stripes we are healed." "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied; by His knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities." Jeremiah says—"This is His name, the Lord our Righteousness." We see, then, that Christ is the medium of communication between God and man. If we shall be reconciled to God it must be through Him. (*Homilist.*) *The universality of the gospel*:—It was John Berridge who thanked God for "that blessed word 'whosoever,'" in the gospel invitations and promises. "If it had been written, 'John Berridge may come,' there might have been a doubt as to who was meant by it; for there may be a hundred John Berridges in the world. But with that word 'whosoever' just there, there is no room for questioning." Whosoever will, may come. Whosoever comes, shall receive. If you or yours are without remission of sins, whose fault is it? *Way to accept remission of sins*:—To accept pardon and its peace, not from any perception of God's power to pardon, but from the conviction that love carries pardon with it; to accept it as the inevitable consequence of gratitude and growing affection; to accept it, feeling the preciousness and sweetness of the Divine paternal love; to accept it, and by it to be led through sickness and trials of every kind; to accept it, and find that it is enough for every emergency; to accept it, and feel that it is all, and in all—if that does not fashion the character more potently than conscience and reason, then character is no more the effect of a cause, and cause and effect are disjoined. *Christ, the preacher's great theme*:—The best sermon is that which is fullest of Christ. A Welsh minister, when preaching at the chapel of Jonathan George, was saying that Christ was the sum and substance of the gospel, and he broke out into the following story:—"A young man had been preaching in the presence of a venerable divine, and after he had done he foolishly went to the old minister and inquired, 'What do you think of my sermon, sir?' 'A very poor sermon indeed,' he replied. 'A poor sermon! it took me a long time to study it.' 'Ay, no doubt of it.' 'Why, then, do you say it is poor: did you not think my explanation of the text to be accurate?' 'Yes.' 'Were not the metaphors correct and the arguments conclusive?' 'Yes.' 'Why, then, do you say that it was a poor sermon?' 'Because there was no Christ in it.' 'Well, there was no Christ in the text, we are not to be preaching Christ always, we must preach what is in the text.' So the old man said, 'Don't you know, young man, that from every town, village, and hamlet in England, there is a road to London? and so from every text in Scripture there is a road to the metropolis of the Scriptures—that is Christ, and my dear brother, your business is, when you get to a text, to say, "Now, what is the road to Christ?" then preach a sermon running along that road to Him. And,' said he, 'I have never yet found a text that had not a plain and direct road to Christ in it; and if ever I should find one that had no such road, I will make a road, I would go over hedge and ditch but I would get at my Master.'" (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 44–48. **While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the Word.**—*Peter's preaching*:—I. THE EFFECTS OF PETER'S PREACHING. It—1. Converted Gentiles. Peter preached the gospel (vers. 34–43). And the gospel thus proclaimed is never in vain. Man's oratory may please the ear: it is the Word of God, applied by the Holy Spirit, which alone can convert the heart. God often works suddenly and unexpectedly. A thoughtless sinner enters a church, pays no attention; but all at once some word strikes his ear. It is an arrow from the Divine quiver. He quits the Church converted. It was thus with this congregation. "*While* Peter yet spake," intending, probably, to say much more, "the Holy Ghost fell"—just as while Ezekiel was prophesying the dry bones moved. 2. Astonished Jews (vers. 45, 46). (1) The proof that Peter's preaching was owned of God, was the gift of the Holy Ghost. The converts spake with tongues, and thereby showed their qualifications and willingness to go as missionaries in foreign lands, and at once used their tongues to magnify God. And this is ever the effect. Whether the convert speaks in his own or foreign language, he will glorify God by telling others of Christ's pardoning love and redeeming grace. (2) The astonishment of the six Jewish disciples who had come from Joppa with Peter arose from prejudice. It probably gave them some uneasiness, because that "upon the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost." They conceived that these blessings belonged exclusively to their own nation. Had they understood their Scriptures, they would have known that this event had been long ago predicted.

Beware, therefore, not only of prejudice, but also of ignorance of the Scriptures. How many are being carried away by all kinds of delusions from this neglect of the Word of God! Some are settling down in a dependence upon the outward ceremonies of religion, because forgetful that a man may have "the form of godliness" without its "power." Some are trying to combine the love of the world with the service of Christ, forgetful that "No man can serve two masters." Some are panic-struck at the existence of infidelity, forgetful that "In the last days scoffers shall arise." II. PETER'S ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT'S WORK (vers. 47, 48). This inquiry of Peter shows us—1. How unsound are the views of the Society of Friends, who affirm that the baptism of water is unnecessary, if we have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We must never forget, however, that it is an ordinance of Christ. We admit that, like the thief upon the Cross, a believer may enter Paradise without baptism; still, our Lord's own words are—that "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." The same remarks apply to the other sacrament. Many approach those emblems with devout joy and gratitude and experience the richest blessing. But others turn their backs upon that precious ordinance, which was appointed by none other than our Lord Himself. 2. How erroneous are the views of those who hold that baptism is invariably accompanied by the gift of the Holy Ghost. These converts received the Holy Ghost first, and were baptized afterwards. It was with them as it was with Abraham. Abraham first believed and then was circumcised. And our Church says that before an adult is baptized he must have repentance and faith; both which are the fruits of the Spirit working in the soul. These we could not have as infants; but we must have them now, otherwise our infant baptism is a delusion. How wrong, therefore, is it to speak of regeneration accompanying, by necessity, infant baptism! Jewish children, at eight days old, were admitted into covenant by circumcision; and we conclude that the children of Christian parents should be brought into the Christian covenant by the rite of baptism: but then, to dogmatise upon the effects of infant baptism is to dogmatise where the Word of God is totally silent. 3. How wrong they are who exalt baptism at the expense of preaching. Peter felt (as Paul) that his grand commission was not so much to baptize as to preach the gospel; for "he commanded them to be baptized." III. THE ANXIETY OF THE CONVERTED SOUL FOR SPIRITUAL INSTRUCTION (ver. 48). Peter, in another place, describes believers as "new-born babes," desiring "the sincere milk of the Word, that they might grow thereby." These converts gathered themselves together, as in the presence of God, to hear Peter preach; and after they had received saving instruction, by the blessing of the Holy Ghost, they were anxious to obtain further benefit from Peter's ministry. Learn that those of you who have received the Holy Ghost need the further ministry of the Word. It is a sure proof that there is spiritual good going forward when we perceive this thirst for larger acquaintance with the love and the work of the Saviour. (*C. Clayton, M.A.*) *The direct results of Peter's sermon*:—I. THE EFFUSION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. 1. It came to those who heard the Word. The gospel is the channel through which the Holy Spirit in His regenerating influences flows into the soul; the chariot on which the Divine Conqueror goes forth to crush the soul's enemies, and to bring it forth to freedom, light, and glory. True, He works through all nature for various purposes, but for salvation He works through the Word. 2. It produced miraculous as well as moral effects. The recipients spoke with "tongues." In what language they expressed their gratitude we are not told. Now as at Pentecost new thoughts and emotions require a new dialect. Change the thoughts and feelings of the world and you will change its language. II. THE ADMINISTRATION OF BAPTISM (ver. 47). From this we conclude that baptism is—1. A symbol of the Spirit's action on the soul; not only perhaps in His cleansing influence, but in the mode of communication—"poured out." 2. A ceremony of easy observance. "Can any forbid water?" which implies—(1) That the water was in the house. (2) That water could be brought. Christianity is an universal system, and any ordinance that cannot be attended to anywhere and always has no vital connection with it. 3. A service of subordinate importance. Peter does not baptize; He has a higher work. Christ baptized not (John iv. 3), and Paul said, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Preaching and success*:—"How comes it," demanded a bishop of Garrick, "that I, in expounding Divine doctrines, produced so little effect upon my congregation, while you can so easily rouse the passions of your auditors by the representation of fiction?" The answer was short and pithy—"Because I recite falsehoods as if they were true, while you

deliver truths as if they were fiction." (*Clerical Anecdotes.*) *The Holy Ghost given*:—There are two things we may notice concerning Peter's discourse—I. THE IMPORTANT TOPICS IT EMBRACED. "While Peter spake these words." What words? Christ was the theme of this sermon; and is the grand subject of our ministrations. We tell you of Him, in the dignity of His person, the perfection of His character, the fulness of His grace, and the suitableness of His salvation. In Peter's address there are five things he mentions respecting Christ. 1. His mediatorial qualifications (ver. 38; see also Isa. lxi. 1). 2. The activity of His life. "Who went about doing good." 3. The fact of His death (ver. 39). 4. The power of His resurrection (ver. 40). 5. The extent of His dominion (ver. 42). II. THE DIVINE INFLUENCE WITH WHICH IT WAS ACCOMPANIED. 1. Its import. "The Holy Ghost fell on all," &c. There are three principal things He does: He —(1) Enlightens the mind. (2) Convinces the conscience. (3) Sanctifies the soul. 2. Its objects. Those "which heard the Word." "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of the Lord." 3. Its extent. "On all them that heard." What vast numbers were converted to God in the first ages of Christianity! Two reflections naturally arise out of this subject—1. The importance of the Christian ministry. 2. The necessity of the Spirit's agency. (*E. Temple.*) *The descent of the Holy Ghost*:—I. SOME CIRCUMSTANCES THAT PRECEDED THIS DESCENT. 1. The time of the miracle—"While Peter was speaking." The Holy Ghost cannot go at a slow pace; it is the devil in the serpent that creeps, but the Spirit as a dove flies. As regards the centurion we may say, "When God teaches, how fast a godly man learns." Christ did His miracles in an instant. It is true that there is a growth in knowledge, and ignorance is overcome by degrees; but when the Holy Ghost takes a man into His school, He deals not with him as a painter who makes an eye, an ear, &c., and passes his pencil a hundred times over every muscle and hair, and in many sittings make up one man, but He deals as a printer that in one strain delivers a whole story. The time, then, was when Peter prepared by the Holy Ghost was to prepare others for the Holy Ghost. "When he spoke," *i.e.*— 2. Preached to them. For to him who has a spiritual taste no honey is so sweet as the Word of God preached according to His ordinance. If a man taste a little of this as Jonathan did, though he think his eyes enlightened, it may be to his death (1 Sam. xiv. 27). If a man read the Scriptures a little, superficially, he thinks he sees everything clear as the sun: but he may find wormwood in this honey, because he finds "the wages of sin is death," and he will take no more of the honey, viz., that "when a sinner repents he shall find mercy." As the Essential Word, the Son is Light of light, so is the written Word—one place takes light of another: and if thou wilt so read and hear that thine affections mislead thee; if thou hear sermons so that thou art glad when sins are rebuked that thou art free from, and art deaf when thine own sins are declaimed against, thou wilt take so little of this honey that Jonathan's case will be thine. The Scriptures are made to agree with one another, but not to agree with thy particular humour. But yet the counsel is good on the other side too (Prov. xxv. 16). Content thyself with reading and hearing what is clear and profitable, and perplex not thyself with those things which God has not revealed. 3. "Whilst he yet spake." The Spirit did not leave them to future meditations, but spoke at once to their consciences. As a gardener takes every bough, and places it against a wall where it will produce most fruit, so the Holy Ghost places the words of the preacher, one upon an usurer, another on an adulterer, another on an ambitious person, another on a briber, when the preacher knows of none of these. 4. Nay, it is not only "whilst he was yet speaking," but as St. Peter says in the next chapter, "As I began to speak." It was then when, whilst, and as soon as, he preached; but Peter had some preparation as we know from the vision, and with the subject of his preaching he was well acquainted (ver. 43). So while his manner was extemporal, his matter was prepared. II. THE DESCENT itself. 1. The Person who fell. As the Trinity is the most mysterious part of our religion, so in the Trinity the Holy Ghost is the most mysterious Person. But these mysteries are not to be chewed by reason, but to be swallowed by faith. We professed the three Persons in one God at our baptism, and have sealed that contract in the other sacrament: and this is our eternal life. There is a Holy Ghost, and He falls down on those who hear the Word. 2. It is as wonderful that He should fall down from heaven and yet be in heaven. "How art thou fallen" (Isa. xiv. 12) was asked of a being who should never return. But the Spirit fell so from, that He remained in heaven. This Dove did more than that which was sent from the ark (Gen. viii. 7). 3. But there is

more than a descent, even an earnest communication, a throwing, a pouring out of Himself. He falls as waters that cover that it falls on, as an army which conquers and governs that on which it falls. But He falls otherwise on the ungodly; on him He falls like hail, and leaves him in impenitence because he hath despised the Holy Ghost. But when the Spirit puts on the nature of a dove, and a dove with an olive branch, and that in the ark—*i.e.*, testimonies of our peace and reconciliation with God, in His Church—He falls as that kind of lightning which melts swords and hurts not scabbards—He shall melt thy soul, and not hurt thy body. 4. Further, this falling of the Holy Ghost was not such an insinuation that He conveyed Himself into these particular men for their salvation, but such a powerful and diffusive falling as made them work for others. A great doubt was removed by them whether it were lawful to receive Gentiles. So this falling was not an infusion of justifying grace merely, but also such an infusion of gifts as might edify others. Good hearers, then, became good preachers. (*J. Donne, D.D.*) *The outpouring of the Spirit*:—I. WHAT IT IS. "The Holy Ghost fell," *i.e.*, "descended"—1. As lightning, flashing conviction suddenly, startlingly, effectually. 2. As rain, gentle, refreshing, fertilising. 3. As cataracts and waterfloods, destroying and bearing away all obstacles. 4. As fire consuming stubble, purifying dross, and turning the true metal into its own nature. The Holy Spirit thus convinces of sin, prepares the heart for the Word, vanquishes unbelief and self-will, consumes sin and inspires enthusiasm. II. WHAT IT ACCOMPANIES. The preaching of the Word. "While Peter yet spake." 1. The Spirit honours the instrument of His own making. "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," and what they said He reinspires, and makes the gospel the power of God unto salvation. Sometimes He works directly, sometimes with other instruments—prosperity or adversity, sickness or restoration, the commonplace or extraordinary events of life, life or death, for "the wind bloweth where it listeth"; but usually it is by the Word. 2. Let men not dishonour this instrument. (1) The tendency is to disparage preaching and exalt devotion, but without preaching there will be few converted worshippers, although there may be many who draw near with their lips whose hearts are far from God. (2) If preaching is to be tolerated it must be short. But this usually comes from people who can sit out three hours at a concert or a play, whereas they tire with half an hour of the "words of eternal life." 3. The preacher's duty is to declare the whole counsel of God, whether men will hear or not. But let him so preach as to win the ear; then he may expect the same results as Peter had. "My Word shall not return unto Me void." III. WITH WHAT IT IS FOLLOWED. 1. On the part of the beholders—astonishment. (1) It was astonishing in itself. It ought not to have been in the case before us, for we have the record of three similar manifestations, of which these spectators must have heard from Peter, if they were not actual witnesses. Let us not blame them, for nothing would surprise an average church to-day more than a revival, although "we have heard with our ears and our fathers have told us," &c. (2) It was astonishing in the subjects of it. Yet it ought not to have been, for it had been clearly predicted, as Peter announced at Pentecost. But we must not judge them harshly, for the Church to-day, with a wider knowledge, throws up its hands in wonder at the conversion of any one of more than ordinary depravity. 2. On the part of the subjects. (1) Testimony. They spoke with tongues—miraculously endowed in this case. But when the Spirit comes, does He sanctify the heart and not the tongue? Our modern proprieties permit the use of every other instrument, but lay an embargo on the tongue. But the Scripture saith, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." (2) Praise. They magnified God the Author of this good and perfect gift. If conversion does not lead to rapturous thankfulness, it may well be suspected. (3) Baptism—obedience to Christ's particular requirement, and involving all else in the way of duty. 3. On the part of Peter—(1) Continuous instruction (ver. 48). (2) Vigorous defence of his policy (chap. xi. 1-18). (*J. W. Burn.*) *Holy Spirit: His workings inscrutable*:—What is the doctrine of the Holy Spirit? 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 these 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. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The Holy Spirit needed for effective preaching*:—Mental power may fill a chapel; but spiritual power fills the Church. Mental power may gather a congregation; spiritual power will save souls. We want spiritual power. We know some ministers before whom we shrink into nothing as to talent, but who have no spiritual power, and when they speak they have not the Holy Spirit with them; but we know others, simple-hearted, worthy men, who speak their country dialect, and who stand up to preach in their humble sanctuary, and the Spirit of God clothes every word with power; hearts are broken, souls are saved, and sinners are born again. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Holy Spirit needed for regeneration*:—It may be that during a sermon two men are listening to the same truth; one of them hears as attentively as the other, and remembers as much of it; the other is melted to tears or moved to solemn thoughts; but the one sees nothing in the sermon, except certain important truths well set forth; as for the other, his heart is broken within him and his soul is melted. How is this? I reply, because the mysterious Spirit of the living God goes with the truth to one heart and not to the other. Yonder sinner only feels the force of truth, and that may be strong enough to make him tremble, like Felix; but this man feels the Spirit going with the truth, the Spirit causes him to pass into the state of salvation. This change takes place instantaneously. It is as miraculous a change as any miracle of which we read in Scripture. It may be mimicked, but no imitation of it can be true and real. Men may pretend to be regenerated without the Spirit, but regenerated they cannot be. It is a change so marvellous that the highest attempts of man can never reach it. We may reason as long as we please, but we cannot reason ourselves into regeneration; we may meditate till our hairs are grey with study, but we cannot meditate ourselves into the new birth. This is worked in us by the sovereign will of God alone. (*Ibid.*) *Holy Spirit needed to make ordinances effectual*:—In vain do the inhabitants of London go to their conduits for supply unless the man who has the master-key turns the water on; and in vain do we think to quench our thirst at ordinances, unless God communicates the living water of His Spirit. (*H. G. Salter.*)

CHAPTER XI.

VERS. 1–8. And the apostles and brethren . . . heard. . . . And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him.—*The dispute in the early Church*:—Learn—1. That even among God's saints no one has been without blemish and folly. 2. That we must not put down the faults of the saints to wickedness. 3. That when we truly recognise and experience the universal love of God we shall be able to judge better of many events in God's kingdom though they occur without the limits of our own Church. (*Biblical Museum.*) *Rents in the primitive Church*:—These are here represented—I. FOR HUMILITY—in order to observe from them the power of the enemy, who never neglects to sow tares among the wheat. II. FOR COMFORT—in order to recognise in them that nothing new befalls the Church in the divisions of the present day. III. FOR DOCTRINE—in order to see from them how the rents are to be healed by the power of evangelical truth and love. (*K. Gerok.*) *The ecclesiastical opposition*:—We have here—1. A STRIKING IMPERFECTION IN THE FIRST CHURCH. "The apostles and brethren heard"; and the point to be considered is the highly improper state of mind which the information produced. Instead of rejoicing at the event, and congratulating Peter, they called him to account as a criminal. This imperfection teaches us—1. That antiquity does not confer infallibility. There are churches which are constantly referring us to the ancient and patristic for the final settlement of theological questions. Nay, there are men of antiquarian proclivities in every Church who refer to the past for the unerring and the perfect. Now, the fact that the Apostolic Church was imperfect exposes this folly. 2. That Christianity does not perfect its disciples at once. Some of these men had attained the rank of apostles, and yet

had many errors to correct and habits to overcome. Christian excellence is a growth only, the germ of which is given at conversion; and unless the soil is well looked after, and the noxious weeded out, it will continue a frail and imperfect thing. Christians must "grow in grace," &c. II. A GREAT MAN CENSURED FOR A NOBLE WORK; which teaches us—1. That Peter was not regarded as an infallible dictator in spiritual matters. The circumstance that he was called to account by the whole body of Christians goes against the assumption that he was vicar of Christ—the pope. "Call no man rabbi: one is your Master, even Christ." 2. That men's works must not be determined by the judgment of contemporaries. The best works have generally met with contemporary censure. Men ahead of their time awaken envy and alarm. The greatest theologians have been the heretics of their age, and the greatest heroes its martyrs. III. AN INSPIRED APOSTLE CONCILIATING HIS BRETHREN. There was nothing of the haughtiness of modern primacy about Peter. He might have heard in silence and withdrawn in contempt, or denounced their ingratitude and narrowness. Instead of that he listens attentively, and offers a calm, generous, dignified reply. 1. He recites facts—those of the previous chapter, with the exception of his sermon which was productive of such mighty results. He bases his defence, not on what he said, but on what God did, which—(1) Indicates his own modesty; (2) rebukes vanity in preachers. 2. He makes an appeal (ver. 17). This is the logic of his address—God had unmistakably indicated His will; who was he that he should oppose it? III. A GLORIOUS VICTORY OVER AN OLD PREJUDICE (ver. 18). 1. They heartily acquiesced in the fact: "They held their peace," feeling that the apostle had done the right thing. 2. They devoutly rejoiced in the fact: "They glorified God." That which had pained them now filled them with delight. 3. They joyfully declared the fact: "Then hath God," &c. (1) Salvation is the life of man. (2) Repentance is essential to salvation. (3) Repentance is the gift of God through the gospel ministry. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The best testimony of the servant of God against opposition and misapprehension*:—1. The Divine injunction of which he is conscious. 2. The eyes of men under which he acted. 3. The tranquillity of spirit with which he can vindicate himself. 4. The fruits of his work to which he is permitted to point. (*K. Gerok.*) *Religious contention* is the devil's harvest. (*Fontaine.*) *Sectarianism, the strife of brethren*:—I recollect on one occasion conversing with a marine, who gave me a good deal of his history. He told me that the most terrible engagement he had ever been in was one between the ship to which he belonged and another English vessel, when, on meeting in the night, they mistook each other for enemies. Several persons were wounded, and both vessels were much damaged by the firing. When the day broke great and painful was the surprise to find the English flag hoisted from both ships. They saluted each other, and wept bitterly together over their mistake. (*W. Williams.*) *Bigotry, Narrowness of*:—What a circumstance is that, that in 1624, at the request of the University of Paris, and especially of the Sorbonne, persons were forbidden by an *arret* of Parliament, on pain of death, to hold or teach any maxim contrary to ancient or approved authors, or to enter into any debate but such as should be approved by the doctors of the faculty of theology. So, again, after the telescope had been invented, many of the followers of Aristotle positively refused to look through the instrument because it threatened the overthrow of their master's doctrines and authority; and so when Galileo had discovered the satellites of Jupiter some persons were infatuated enough to attempt to write down these unwelcome additions to the solar system. (*Paxton Hood.*) *Bigotry is concealed selfishness*:—Sir Humphry Davy, when he introduced his "safety-lamp," which has saved so many valuable lives, declined to take out a patent for it, saying that his sole object was to serve the cause of humanity. What of men who claim prescriptive rights to the gospel of Jesus Christ! (*W. Baxendale.*) *Peter reports to the Church*:—1. The importance of the centurion's baptism rested not simply on its being the issue of a series of Divine interpositions, but on its being accepted as the commencement of a new era. Its recognition by the Church, however, hinged on its having been brought about by God. Hence Peter's narrative was necessary before the new conditions of membership could be welcomed. 2. The news reached Jerusalem before Peter, and in an imperfect form, viz., that Peter had been treating uncircumcised men ecclesiastically and socially as though they were circumcised. Why they did not know, and hence they hardly knew whether to be glad or vexed. 3. Peter gave his report when "they of the circumcision were disputing with him," *i.e.*, those who afterwards came to form, and had when Luke was writing formed, the Judaizing party. The strong Jewish prejudice which was to work such mischief

must have already been latent in the minds of many baptized Jews. This was the first occasion on which that prejudice was stirred into activity. The apostles would have inquired into the spiritual side of the transaction—the reception of Christ by heathen—whereas the question raised was merely that of "eating." Nor would the heads of the Church have used the phrase rendered softly "men uncircumcised," an untranslated expression of rude and displeased contempt. 4. Peter met the question with a calm and careful narrative of facts. It can hardly fail to startle those who know how his name has been used to cover the most unbounded claims, that he should be reduced to justify his apostolic action. Yet this is in perfect accord with the whole New Testament. The Church is never represented as a close oligarchy, much less as an empire with an infallible head. Before the assembly of the faithful this "Prince of the apostles," this Rock-Man, to whom Jesus had given the keys, was content to plead, and that on a matter which could justify itself, and to disputatious brethren whom he might have treated with contempt. 5. Peter passed over matters already known to detail the circumstances which prepared him for the reception of Cornelius—the vision, the coincident arrival of the messengers, the monition of the Holy Ghost—a threefold strand spun by a celestial hand, which drew him with a force he dared not withstand. So far the incident had been personal; now came the corroborative evidence of the six brethren who were witnesses that the Master's promise to baptize His disciples with the Divine Spirit was fulfilled. Nay, more; God had bestowed that Spirit on the original disciples, not because of their Jewish birth or circumcision, but simply because they had believed on Christ. To the Gentiles, therefore, who believed had now come the very same "free gift," to prove that "neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision." In Peter's words there lies, as in a seed, the whole doctrine of free grace and justification by faith, and no better commentary on them can be found than in Gal. ii. 15, 16, which was addressed to Peter when he renounced for a time the position that he here defends. 6. The general enthusiasm over this new-won freedom and the happy consciousness of a wider brotherhood broke forth in praise. It might have been hoped that the Church would now pass from its subordination to the Mosaic law into the spiritual freedom of Christ. Alas! the rise of a Gentile Church at Antioch soon after came to be viewed with rivalry, and a synod at Jerusalem could not compose the strife. Upon Peter's vacillation Paul became the rock which turned aside from the Gentile Churches a current which would have swept Christianity into Mosaic legalism and exclusiveness. Yet in their convictions the two apostles were one. 7. The limitation which for so many centuries confined God's favour to one tribe was one which must have for ever shut out us and our fathers. In His wise pleasure He had elected Israel, and might have let the election stand. But the very election contemplated ultimate catholicity. Israel was made a guarded focus of light just that it might one day enlighten the Gentiles. But, in spite of their prophets, they kept to their tribes what God had given to mankind. Thus it came that the grace of life had to tear itself away from their grip to overspread the globe. Yet it was by the hands of Jews after all that the grace of God was first conveyed to Gentiles in Cæsarea, and by Jewish missionaries that the gospel has at length reached ourselves. (*J. O. Dykes, D.D.*)

Peter to Jewish Christians:—1. This differs from the previous speeches of the apostle (except the first), in that it is not an appeal to men to become Christians, but an explanation to Christians of a fresh course of action taken in the service of Christ. 2. While Peter tarried at Cæsarea the apostles and brethren heard with surprise of this unexpected victory of the gospel. He was well aware of the necessity for a full explanation, and therefore went straight to Jerusalem, and with excellent judgment took the six Jewish Christians from Joppa who had baptized the believing Gentiles, who could corroborate his story. 3. "They that were of the circumcision contended with him," not apparently about the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, or even their baptism, but about his eating with them. They were displeased that an apostle had broken a tradition of strict Judaism. 4. Such a condition of mind we regard with wonder and pity; and yet something very like it is far too common in modern Christendom. Who has not seen Christian faith miserably united with small-minded prejudices? And this also we see, that narrowness of sympathy goes with dulness of perception. These Jews could not see anything more important than the question whether Peter did well or ill in sitting at table with the uncircumcised. So now: the more that men make of external restriction in religion, the more they incapacitate their minds for appreciating what is spiritual and permanent. Note—I. THE POSITION TAKEN BY EVEN THE LEADING APOSTLE.

1. The name of Peter has been used to cover the claim of supremacy advanced by the Pope. But here we see that the brethren were not afraid to "contend with him"; and he made no attempt to silence the objectors by dint of authority, but patiently explained his action till he won their approval. Is it not plain that there was no such thing as Popedom known to St. Peter? There was not even oligarchic government by the apostles. The Church had leaders and guides; but the wisdom of Christ was imparted to the whole body, not to a few conspicuous members only. 2. It is not well that any one should reckon himself above question from the brethren. It is quite possible that they may find fault through ignorance; but in such a case Christ's servant must not give way to irritation, but calmly explain what they have misunderstood. Let him tell the unvarnished truth, and leave it to the heavenly Master to vindicate him. II. THE BEST WAY TO REMOVE MISUNDERSTANDINGS AMONG BRETHREN. 1. Nine-tenths of the fault-finding comes of defective information. The objectors here knew but very partially what Peter's conduct had been, and none of the reasons. They heard that he had been living among Gentiles, but nothing of the visions or of the spiritual results. They certainly laid themselves open to a sharp reproof. But the apostle did not even make complaint. He wished to conciliate their better judgment, and preserve peace in the Church. 2. This, too, conveys, a most valuable lesson to those who find their course of action called into question. It will be often found that fault-finders proceed on most inaccurate information; and, by doing so, they lay themselves open to retort. But the object of Christ's servant should be not to triumph over an unreasonable brother, but to gain victories for the truth and maintain peace and charity. III. THE MOST EFFECTIVE ANSWER TO STICKLERS ON POINTS OF ORDER. 1. St. Peter did not enter into an argument upon the permanence of those restrictions which had separated the Jews from the Gentiles. He was himself scarcely prepared for such an argument, though a new light had been cast into his mind by the vision. No such light, however, had fallen on those at Jerusalem; and it would have been worse than useless to argue. Peter took them on ground which no Christian could call in question. As the Word of life was being preached to the Gentiles the Holy Ghost fell on them, just as on the Jews at Pentecost. Did not that one momentous fact settle all questions, overcome all misgivings? 2. This way of handling a difficulty makes short work with many Church controversies about holy orders, correct ritual, and the like. In ways that we consider exceptional, and through the labours of persons whose ordination has but an uncertain validity, thousands have been converted from sin to righteousness. This seems to us to be matter of fact which only a desperate bigotry can ignore? Surely when we see that sinners are turned from their evil ways our simple duty is to acknowledge the work of God whenever and wherever He pleases to work and give Him thanks. IV. THE TRUE PLACE AND JUSTIFICATION OF BAPTISM. The Gentiles at Cæsarea having been baptized with the Holy Ghost, it was impossible to deny to them baptism with water. Indeed, there are not two baptisms, but one, having an outer form and inner sense. The former requires water, the latter the grace of the Holy Spirit. Superstition holds that the former always involves the latter, and therefore urges people to be baptized, or to have their infants baptized, in order that by that rite they may receive the Holy Ghost. This is "Christening" of which the Bible knows nothing. It is enough to trace the dispensation of baptism through these early chapters. At Jerusalem they that received the Word of salvation were baptized. At Samaria they that believed the good tidings were baptized. On the road to Gaza the Ethiopian treasurer first received Philip's preaching of Jesus, and then was baptized. At Damascus, Saul, through the intervention of Ananias, was filled with the Holy Ghost. Then "he arose, and was baptized." So here. Conclusion: 1. Peter's speech had a marked success. The Jewish brethren "glorified God, saying, Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance into life." Would that they had cherished this mood! What controversies would have been avoided! What trouble might have been spared to Paul! 2. These disciples had a clear conception of repentance—(1) In its origin as the gift of God's grace; (2) in its issue as "unto life." And with this doctrine ought "the fallow ground" of men's hearts to be broken. It is God's command; it is God's gift; it is God's encouragement: "Turn ye; why will ye die?" (*D. Fraser, D.D.*)

Ver. 8. **But I said, Not so, Lord.**—*Not so, Lord*:—How mental and moral characteristics cling to a man even after he has received grace! It is a false theory of conversion which represents human nature as changed. Grace is a principle

working a slow and gradual change—"First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." The leaven was hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened. Peter is the same before and after conversion—strong-willed, vehement, and impatient of contradiction. He is here seen meeting the Divine directions with outspoken resistance. Here is—I. PRESUMPTUOUS RESISTANCE OF DIVINE WISDOM AND GRACE. The most perilous endowment of a mortal is free will. All possibilities of evil and good are contained in this great endowment. How near the true use of will stands to its abuse! Will changes into wilfulness. "I will" becomes self-assertion, denies the rights of others, sets man in array against the rights and claims of God. This was Peter's moral weakness, the source of errors and sins. Strong-willed, he had firmness. It had grown into self-assertion and presumption. There was a clear openness about him in his sinning; he was not a sneaking, backdoor sinner, and not a polished, snivelling hypocrite. It is better so. There is more hope for such a man than he who sins secretly; but it does not lessen his guilt. On several occasions Peter thought he knew better than the Lord. He said, "The Son of Man shall be rejected," &c. Peter answered Him, "Be it far from Thee, Lord. This shall not be." Jesus said, "I have prayed for thee." Peter's reply was, "I am ready to go with Thee, even to prison and death." Jesus said, "Whither I go thou canst not follow Me now, but thou shalt afterwards." Peter says, "Lord, why? I am ready." And then the Lord warned him: "Verily the cock shall not crow," &c. The Master bade His disciples tarry in Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Father. Peter, instead of waiting, set about electing an apostle. Here the Lord was disciplining him, that he might open the door of the kingdom to the Gentiles. "Arise, Peter; kill and eat." He refuses point blank, and begins to justify refusal. There is a good deal of Peter in most men. They generally act as though they knew better than God what ought to happen and what they ought to do. This spirit gets into men—1. When they object to the provisions of Divine wisdom and grace. Some sinners want to show God the conditions on which sin ought to be pardoned and heaven secured. Some are not content with unbelief and rebellion; they find fault with the scheme of mercy. Why should not God let the guilty go free? 2. The same spirit is manifested in all murmurings against Providence. How strange are the vagaries of the restless will! Men say God is all-wise in the ordinations of life, and sing, "Thy will be done!" But let a sickness come, a project miscarry, one dearer than life be smitten, and what rebellion there is! Often what we call resignation is only the exhaustion of nature after a useless fight with the inevitable. 3. All refusal to follow the leadings of Providence grows out of this resistance to the all-wise will. God is a guide. He has a way of life for each. Men miss the providential way; they will not simply trust and follow. They want certainty. "The bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," and when God says, "Forward," they say, "Let us alone," or "Let us choose a new leader and go back to Egypt," or they shut all up with a "Not so, Lord." Christ says to a young Christian, "Come out and be separate." The reply is. "Not so, Lord. I can use the world without abusing it." The Lord says, "Honest poverty is better than dishonest riches." "Not so Lord; I mean to be generous to the poor, to help Thy cause." II. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS PRESUMPTUOUS REBELLION. "Not so, Lord," takes a man out of the circle of Divine and helpful benedictions and co-operations. He who will not have God for a friend when he may shall not find Him when he would. Men resent presumptuous opposition and folly. They think it a wonder God does not. But here are all the irregularities created by sin, and they work out a punitive discipline. Under the Divine government presumptuous and rebellious men come into contact with the negative action of the Divine laws, and cannot avoid their chastisement. But God's harsh ways are kindnesses. Thorns in the hedge, which tear us as we attempt to get out of the right way, are admonitions to us to go back. Things go awry; troubles, worry. What is it all but the reaping what we have sown? Sensitive nerves suffer pain to warn us against what causes pain. If God be resisted, pain must follow, for we are out of the way of peace. Our wisdom is to submit to God, accept His plan of mercy, look unto Jesus, walk in His way. "Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom, lead Thou me on." (*W. H. Davison.*) *Human ignorance contradicting Divine wisdom*:—Peter had before this supposed that he knew better than the Lord what was right. Accordingly, this "Not so, Lord," was very Petrine. God was going to honour Peter by giving him the second key wherewith he would open the kingdom to the Gentiles. Peter is shocked at the idea, and says, "Not so, Lord." He not only refuses to obey, but offers a reason. His refusal and his buttressing argument were both shivered to

atoms by the Lord's reply: "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." I. POOR, WEAK, IGNORANT MAN IS FOUND CONTRADICTING AND CORRECTING THE ALMIGHTY AND ALL-WISE GOD. If God had a human heart, the thing would not happen twice from the same person. The Divine fire would consume the presumptuous soul. But God is not a man. He patiently endures all man's presumptuous folly. Many, arguing from impunity, go on to increase their rebellion against God. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily," &c. But this daring resistance to God is not confined to unbelievers. Our text shows that a Peter can say, "Not so, Lord." There may be politeness in the form, but in the matter it is rebellion and nothing else. It is a declaration that "I know better than God." What is complaint of our lot (which God has arranged) but a saying, "Not so"? What is refusal to follow the clear leadings of Providence but saying, "Not so, Lord"? And then we wonder we are not prospered. As if children in open rebellion could prosper! II. ALL THE FORLORN EXPERIENCES OF CHRISTIANS COME FROM THEIR SAYING, "NOT SO, LORD." An Abraham going unhesitatingly to offer up his son at the Divine command is given us as a marked example of spiritual attainment. If ever man could have said, "Not so, Lord," it was Abraham. He might have said, "Lord, I cannot commit murder; and I cannot commit sin against my natural affections. Furthermore, what will people say of it? Not so, Lord; I cannot do this thing." But that which made Abraham's name the synonym of faith, and which exalted him to the very highest rank in sainthood, was a humble, unquestioning, immediate obedience. Compare him with Jacob, who was fond of saying, "Not so, Lord," and see the difference. A young Christian starts out in life. The Lord says to him, "Come out and be separate from the world"; and the young Christian replies, "Not so, Lord, for if I can marry into that influential family it will be of great benefit to me, and I can persuade my wife to become a Christian"; and so, repeating his "Not so," he marries and is soon led into the entanglements of a thoroughly worldly society. To another young man the word of the Lord comes, "They that desire to be rich fall into a temptation," and the young man responds, "Not so, Lord—there must be exceptions. I want to be rich in order to do more good." And so this young man starts on a career for gold, and whether he grows rich or ends his life in poverty, his life is a wretched failure on the side of God. III. THE SOUL THAT SAYS, "NOT SO, LORD," MUST NECESSARILY MEET WITH EVIL. The unfortunate experiences are not accidents, but belong to the Divine system of government. Every departure from God's way has a sting in it, that we may be stung into going back into the right way. Conscience does a godly service to every Christian wanderer. It is harsh in its kindness. But the work of conscience is supplemented by events around us. Are you finding things going awry? Are troubles multiplying? Look and see if you have not been saying, "Not so, Lord." David suffered greatly from his children, and two "Not so's" stand out conspicuously as the cause of it all. What a man soweth that must he also reap. If we resist God's commands, we shall certainly meet a reversal, because we are out of the only way where He insures our peace. It is of God's mercy that those reactions occur, just as it is of God's mercy that if I run a nail in my foot I am pained. IV. THE VERY OPPOSITE SPIRIT TO THAT WHICH WE HAVE BEEN CONTEMPLATING IS THE SPIRIT OF HUMBLE INQUIRY FOR GOD'S WILL. It becomes us to be distrustful of our own knowledge and wisdom. James describes God as giving wisdom liberally to all who ask Him. We surely need not be discouraged. Now, the only method for every child of God to pursue is to go to God for everything, to seek constantly the Divine guidance. "But," some one says, "how can you tell when it is God's will?" Let me answer, "If you stand a quarter of a mile off from your father, you will be sore puzzled to know what he says; but if you go within five feet of him, everything will be plain. So, if you stand away from your Heavenly Father, you will undoubtedly be much at a loss to know what is His will; but if you live near to Him, you will have no difficulty of this sort. Now, it is true (and Peter is an example of it) that a Christian may live near to God and understand His will and yet say, "Not so, Lord." A paroxysm of self-confidence may seize him even in the very presence of God. It is a sad commentary on our feeble faith. The reaction in such a case is overwhelming. Peter's "Not so," when Jesus told him of a coming Calvary, was the direct antecedent of the threefold denial and the deep scar which it made on his whole life. Such a catastrophe arises from breaking what should be the invariable rule of going to God for everything. "Pray without ceasing" is the Divine injunction, and its fulfilment is this life which is habituated to rest upon the Divine support and guidance. The thought of opposing God's will

would cause a shudder in such a soul. As in the case of a little child, it feels that independence would be only misery. (*Howard Crosby, D.D.*)

Ver. 14. **Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.**—*Words whereby we may be saved*:—I am about to tell you such words; yet I am far from supposing that this announcement of my purpose is calculated to ensure to my message that attention which it demands; for man is interested about anything rather than the salvation of his soul—and yet, "what should it profit" man? The soul once lost is lost for ever. I. EVERY MAN'S FIRST AND CHIEF CONCERN OUGHT TO BE ABOUT THE SALVATION OF HIS SOUL. 1. Every man is a sinner, and without salvation he must perish. You may be too proud to acknowledge this, or too much occupied to give it attention, or too indifferent to ponder it, or ready to deny it in the sense which we contend. Well, "you make God a liar, and His truth is not in you," for "God has included all under sin." Perhaps you will point me to that abandoned woman, or to that bloody blasphemer, or to that iron-hearted jailer, and bid me go preach this doctrine to such as these. Ah, the question is not whether you have sinned like this or that man, but whether you have sinned at all, for so it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Oh, you will say, I never did anybody any harm, I have been a kind parent, an upright tradesman, my reputation without a blemish; but that is not the question; the question is, hast thou "loved the Lord thy God with all thy heart"? &c. I see you shudder and shrink back! I hear you cry, "But God is merciful"—so He is, but then, if you appeal to His mercy, you give up the point, you confess yourselves sinners, for if you be not sinners you may appeal with confidence to His justice. 2. Every man's first and chief concern ought to be about the salvation of his soul, because, being a sinner, he is placed by his sin in circumstances of the most imminent peril. The wretch that trembles on the brink of a tremendous precipice, over whose head a sword is suspended by a hair, upon whom the volcano is ready to burst or the earth to yawn, is in safety compared to that sinner who has transgressed the law of God, and is exposed by his transgression to His righteous indignation and wrath. Oh, then, what will you do to be saved? Will you present an atoning sacrifice for your sins? Where will you obtain it? Have you wealth to purchase it? The ransom of ten thousand monarchs would do little, rivers of oil and oceans of blood are not sufficient. Do you propose to work out a righteousness whereby you can be justified in the sight of God? How can you do it? Can an imperfect creature work out a perfect righteousness? and even if you could for the time that is to come, how would it avail for the atonement of the sin that was past? Listen, it is our business to tell you the response to this cry from heaven. II. THE GOSPEL IS THE ONLY SOURCE FROM WHICH SATISFACTORY INFORMATION IS OBTAINED ON THIS MOST MOMENTOUS OF ALL SUBJECTS. Take this question, "What must I do to be saved," to the system of modern infidelity or of ancient philosophy. What answer do you get? The sneer of derision, or the sullen silence of despair—they cannot tell. Take it to this Book, and the answer is instant, decisive, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." What does the violated law of God demand? Perfect obedience. Behold it in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Does justice demand an infinite atonement? Behold it in "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." 1. In the gospel there are words whereby we may be saved, and the salvation they announce is precisely adapted to the sinner's case. You are guilty, but there is forgiveness for you, and you are condemned, but there is a righteousness that justifies you freely; you are a rebel and an outcast, but there is an Advocate that pleads for you; you are polluted, but there is "a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness." 2. These are words whereby you may be saved individually. Let us hear your personal history. I hear one say, "I am a child of pious parents, and I have sinned against early instruction and impressions!" Well, but thou mayest be saved! I hear another, "I trampled under foot a father's admonitions, and despised a sainted mother's tears, and brought down their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave!" Well, but you may be saved! I hear another say, "Ah, but I mingled with infidels and apostates, I mocked the Bible, at God, I blasphemed Christ!" Ah, but you may be saved! 3. But while these are words whereby you may be saved, rejecting these, you must perish. "He that believeth not shall be damned." "How shall you escape if you neglect so great salvation?" (*T. Raffles, D.D.*) *Saved by the Word*:—1. Cornelius was no common publican or sinner, but possessed all the

qualifications of a saint, if a saint can grow in the soil of this earth, without a seed from heaven. If any man could be just with God apart from Christ, surely this is the man. Yet the Word of God treats him as a sinner, and tells him what he must do to be saved. There is no escape from the force of this case. It effectually shuts out all hope of merit. The difficulty of attaining a conviction of sin is greater where sins are less gross. Hence publicans and harlots go into the kingdom more readily than Pharisees. 2. By what means shall Cornelius be saved? By words. Strange when the loss is so deep and real that words, articulated air, should bring deliverance. It was natural for Naaman to toss his head in contempt at the proposal of a bath in Jordan as a cure for disease, and there is a class of scholars in our day who sneer at the proposal to cure sin by words. They have no confidence in doctrines that enter the mind from without; they would rather trust to principles that spring up within. Beware of wandering into the mist here. Words become life or death when God employs them to proclaim His will. God said, "Let there be light, and there was light." "Lazarus, come forth," and he came. Even in the ordinary experience of life men are saved or lost by words. An ocean steamer is rushing through the water—two words, "Breakers ahead!" from the watchman, "Starboard hard!" from the master, words that passed away as breath on a breeze, saved five hundred human beings from a watery grave. Humanity is like that ship, and God sends words whereby we may be saved. 3. Truth, like spirit, is invisible till embodied, and words are the body of truth. They may be spoken, or printed, or wired, it matters not what form they assume, they are the body in which truth dwells. Satan embodies himself in words whereby man may be destroyed, the Holy Spirit in words whereby we may be saved. Take heed how ye hear; the missing of a word may be the loss of a soul. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*)

Ver. 18. **Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.**—*Repentance unto life*:—Consider—I. CERTAIN FALSE REPENTANCES. 1. Trembling beneath the sound of the gospel is not repentance. "Felix trembled," but had no sorrow for sin. 2. You may be "almost persuaded" to turn to Christ, you may even desire the gospel, you may even go upon your knees in prayer, and yet have no repentance, for you may get no further than Agrippa's "almost." 3. It is possible for men to positively humble themselves under the hand of God, and yet they may be total strangers to repentance. Ahab humbled himself, but did not turn from sin. 4. It is possible that you may confess your sins, and yet may not repent, for you may acknowledge your transgressions, and yet have no abhorrence of sin. 5. You may do some work meet for repentance, and yet you may be impenitent. Judas made restitution, but "he went out and hanged himself." II. TRUE REPENTANCE. 1. Let me correct one or two mistakes. (1) That there must be deep, horrible manifestations of the terrors of law and of hell before repentance. Terrible thoughts are very often not the gift of God at all, but the insinuations of the devil; and even where the law worketh these thoughts, they do not enter into the essence of repentance. "Repentance" is a hatred of sin; a turning from sin and a determination in the strength of God to forsake it. (2) That they cannot repent enough. But there is not any eminent degree of "repentance" which is necessary to salvation. There are degrees of faith, and yet the least faith saves; so there are degrees of repentance, and the least repentance will save the soul if it is sincere. 2. And now what are the signs of true "repentance" in the sight of God? (1) There is always sorrow with it. More or less intense, it may be, according to the way in which God calls, and previous manner of life; but there must be some sorrow. Not, however, that you must shed actual tears. Some men cannot. (2) Practice—practical repentance. "'Tis not enough to say we're sorry, and repent, and then go on from day to day, just as we always went." We know a tree by its fruit; and you who are penitent will bring forth works of repentance. (3) Does it last or does it not? Many of your repentances are like the hectic flush upon the cheek of the consumptive person, which is no sign of health. (4) Do you think you would repent if there were no punishment? Do you repent because you know you shall be punished for ever if you remain in your sins? Every murderer hates his crime when he comes to the gallows. If you knew that you might give up your life to sin with impunity, would you still desire holiness? If so, you need not fear but that you have a "repentance" which is "unto life." III. THE BLESSED BENEFICENCE OF GOD IN GRANTING TO MEN "REPENTANCE UNTO LIFE." It is the marvel of Divine mercy that it not only provides the way of salvation, and not

only invites men to receive grace, but that it positively makes men willing to be saved. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The propagation of the gospel in foreign parts:*—I. I begin with THE BLESSING OR BENEFIT HERE SAID TO BE BESTOWED. "Repentance unto life." Repentance is the infinite and inestimable gospel privilege, which the grace of God does, in and through Jesus Christ, allow to sinful men, and the happy consequence of this being no less than eternal life, it is therefore styled repentance unto life. As to the import of the word "repentance," the expression in the Greek plainly signifies a change of mind; and the Scripture sense of the word implies somewhat more than that, and takes in besides a thing which naturally follows it, or is caused by it, viz., an alteration likewise of practice or behaviour, a changing or turning from one course or custom of life to another. By "life" here some indeed understand that present most blessed and desirable state and condition in which sinners are placed by repentance; whereas before this they were in a state of wretched darkness, no better than spiritually dead. And this is undoubtedly a true and good notion of repentance unto life, viz., that repentance is that which brings men to live like themselves, *i.e.*, happily and at ease and with comfort; which it was not possible for them to do, so long as they continued in their former course. For that was irregular and disorderly and unnatural; and whatsoever is so is a certain enemy to quiet, and utterly destructive of true satisfaction. I see no inconvenience in considering life in this place in both acceptations, viz., the rational and religious life which repentance brings men to here, and that blessed and immortal life to which, upon their true repentance, they are to be advanced hereafter. For they are of very near affinity to each other. Life considered in the former sense is the certain forerunner of life considered in the latter, and the latter is the undoubted effect of the former, and a greater benefit or blessing than both of them together cannot be desired or imagined. And happy is it for us, happy for the whole race of mankind, that God has dealt out so great a blessing with so liberal a hand. For—II. THE PERSONS IT IS BESTOWED UPON. "The Gentiles." We find that this favour was not confined, as the Jews, upon the first promulgation of the gospel, imagined it to be, to one people and nation, so that none besides themselves were to be partakers of it. By the term Gentiles the Jews understood all that were not of their own people and country and religion. Heathens and nations and Gentiles are synonymous expressions in Holy Scripture, as may be seen by the following texts: 1 Sam. viii. 20; Psa. xliv. 2, and lxxix. 1, and by many other places. These were the people whom the Jews, in comparison of themselves, greatly scorned. "Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou" (Isa. lxv. 5), was the scornful language of the Jew to the poor neglected Gentile. And this distinction between the Jews and the other nations, or Gentiles, was also mightily kept up even in the time of our Saviour; nay, perhaps never was at a greater height than then. So little aware were they, at the time of the appearance of the Son of God, of the gracious errand upon which He was sent, which was to break down the partition wall that was betwixt Jews and Gentiles, and to make both one, imply two things considerable. 1. I say, here is implied the wide and universal extent of this blessing, which seemed to the Jews very strange and wonderful. 2. Here was likewise a great difficulty and stumbling-block in their way, and that was, that the people on whom this favour was conferred seemed to them, on other accounts, so utterly unfit for it, besides their not being of their stock and country. The Gentiles were persons that wholly set themselves against God, and were addicted to all manner of idolatry, but as for themselves they were a holy and a peculiar people. Nay, St. Peter himself, till convinced by the fore-mentioned miracle, was of this mind. He was for keeping up the distinction of clean and unclean till God Himself commanded him to the contrary. III. THE AGREEABLENESS OF THIS METHOD OF PROCEEDING WITH THE NATURE AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD AND WITH THE SEVERAL DECLARATIONS HE HAD MADE TO THIS PURPOSE BY HIS PROPHETS. Now they had great reason to think it highly probable that even to the Gentiles God would grant repentance unto life, from the three following considerations. 1. From the contemplation of the boundless mercies and infinite goodness of God. The infinite goodness of God, if the Jews had attended to that consideration, might have rendered it to them highly probable that God would allow to the Gentiles also access to eternal salvation, or, in the words of the text, "repentance unto life." These attributes, though inseparable from the idea of God, the Jews most plainly overlooked, or else they would never have gone about to confine God's blessings and engross His favours wholly to themselves, but must have argued after this, or

the like manner, with themselves. "God being, as the very natural notions of Him do imply, a God of infinite and unlimited goodness, surely He will not continue to shine upon us only, but will dart the rays of His bounty over all the world. He is not, as Esau suspected of his father Isaac, furnished only with one blessing, but has an unexhausted fountain of blessings, and will therefore undoubtedly visit other nations in His good time with the same. For they likewise are the work of His hands as well as we. They, too, are of the same make, and have enstamped upon them the like Divine and heavenly image with ourselves. They are preserved by the continual care of His providence, and do already enjoy the common blessings of this life, such as health and strength and sunshine and rain." 2. The Jews might have argued the great probability of this, from the extraordinary great need the Gentiles had of the blessing here spoken of, and that whether they considered their number or their condition. As to their number they were vastly the greater part of the world, the inhabitants of Judæa being very few and inconsiderable in comparison of those of all the earth besides; and yet that only, like Goshen in Egypt, was a land of light, whilst other parts were overspread with darkness and ignorance; and this suggests to us also the consideration of their condition. And the more sick the more need had they of a physician. Such sinners as they had the greatest need of all to be called upon to repentance. Their necessities were great, their indigences and wants were pressing and crying out for help; and these were such things as could not but plead strongly for them, with a good and merciful God, that they too might have a share in the blessed redemption effected by the Son of God. 3. This was not an instance of the Divine goodness barely to be hoped for from those lovely attributes of God, His mercy and lovingkindness, but it is what God had promised and foretold He would do (Gen. xxii. 18, xlix. 10; Isa. ii. 2; ix. 2; v. 2; Psa. xcviii. 3; Hag. ii. 7). IV. THE GREAT REASON THAT PERSONS ALREADY ADMITTED TO THE BLESSING OF THE GOSPEL, HAVE TO USE THEIR HEARTY ENDEAVOURS, THAT IT MAY BE ENJOYED BY OTHERS AS WELL AS BY THEMSELVES. 1. In the first place, I say, gratitude to our Lord and Saviour, who hath redeemed us with His most precious blood, should make us not only pray that the kingdom of God may come, but should make us as on the one side, highly delighted to see it flourishing, so, on the other, uneasy whenever we see either any of the subjects of Christ's kingdom in danger of falling away from Him, or others (who might, would we but take the pains to gain them, become subjects of His kingdom), not so much as knowing the Lord that bought them, nor consequently capable of bringing their thoughts and actions to the obedience of Christ. 2. And in the next place, this is the greatest instance of charity to man that is possible (1 John v. 12). If, affirmatively, the belief of the gospel be the way to life, and negatively, there be no other way beside it, how great a blessing, how valuable a privilege do we suffer men to want by letting them continue in unbelief? But to this it may be said, with regard to the infidel part of the world, *Ignoti nulla cupido*. As they have not heard of the joys of heaven, so it is not to be supposed that want of knowing the gospel can cause in them any uneasiness. But then we are to consider that the rewards of the gospel are a great prize, and to miss of that prize is a great loss for any to sustain, who might, if we so pleased, have had an opportunity of obtaining it. In the meantime, their being at present sensible, or not sensible, of their loss, makes no manner of alteration as to the truth and reality of it. With regard to persons who are in a lethargy, whilst they lie under the power of their distemper, and are utterly insensible of the badness of their own case, it cannot, because they are so, be therefore said of them that they are well. No; bystanders know the contrary, and pity them, and if they have any humanity will endeavour to relieve them. Just so should Christians act with regard to the Gentile world. We know how wretched a state the heathen world was in at the time of the promulgation of the gospel. And what reason have we to think that, at this present time, it can fare better with any people who have not amongst them the gospel of Christ to free them from these evils? Has not the common enemy of mankind, now as formerly, the same frailties and corruptions of fallen man to work upon? Or has he, since the mischief he did to our first parents, abated anything of his inveterate hatred to our race? (*Bishop of St. David's*, 1736.) *Repentance unto life*:—Consider—1. A blessing granted; "repentance unto life"; so called, to distinguish it from legal repentance, and the sorrow that is unto death. This true repentance is unto life; for, by God's appointment, it must go before eternal life; and whoso have it shall be sure of that. 2. The parties to whom it was granted; "the Gentiles," those who were once without hope and without God

in the world. 3. The author of it, "God." It is His gift, as well as faith is. He works it in the heart. The doctrine of the text is, "Repentance unto life is 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." Note—I. The KINDS of repentance. 1. Legal, such as was in Judas, and is not saving (Matt. xxvii. 3), being produced by law terrors, without gospel-grace changing the heart. 2. Evangelical, which is that in the text, and is the only true and saving repentance. The general difference betwixt them lies here, that in this last, one repents of his sin as it is sin, or offensive to God, as David did (Psa. li. 4); in the other, only as it brings wrath on him (Gen. iv. 13). II. Its GENERAL NATURE. It is a saving grace (2 Tim. iii. 25), disposing the soul unto all the acts of turning from sin unto God. 1. It is not a transient action, a sigh for sin, a pang of sorrow for it, which goes away again; but an abiding grace, a new frame and disposition, fixed in the heart, disposing one to turn from sin to God on all occasions (Zech. xii. 10). 2. Nor yet a passing work of the first days of one's religion, but a grace in the heart, setting one to an answerable working all their days. 3. It is a saving grace, distinguishing one from a hypocrite, and having a necessary connection with eternal life. III. Its AUTHOR. 1. Not men themselves; it is not owing to one's natural powers (Jer. xxii. 23). The stony heart is beyond man's power to remove. 2. It is God's free gift, and wrought by the power of His Spirit in the heart (Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27; Jer. xxxi. 18, 19). Sometimes notorious sinners become penitents, as Manasseh, Paul, &c. The knottiest timber is as easy for the Spirit to work as any other. The means the Spirit makes use of is the Word; hence we read of preaching repentance. And (1) The law serves to break the hard heart (Jer. xxiii. 29). It is like the Baptist preparing the way for the Messiah's coming. Hence it is called "the Spirit of bondage" (Rom. viii. 15). (2) The gospel serves to melt the hard heart, like a fire (Jer. xxiii. 29); and so bow and bend it toward God. The soul is driven by the law, but drawn by the gospel. IV. Its SPRINGS. 1. A true sense of sin. (1) A sight of it (Psa. li. 3). The man's eyes are opened to his sinfulness; the evil of his sin, its misery and danger to himself, and the dishonour it does to God. (2) A painful feeling of it (chap. ii. 37, xvi. 30). This is necessary, because otherwise the sinner will never part with his sin, nor prize Christ and His grace (Rev. iii. 17). 2. An apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ (Joel ii. 12, 13). Not mercy for mercy's sake, but Christ's sake. This is necessary. For without it, one will either—(1) Go on in secret despair, casting off the thoughts of his case, and making the best of it he can (Jer. ii. 25); or (2) Lie down in tormenting despair, like Judas. Both which will fix sin in the heart, and bar out repentance. V. Its PARTS. 1. Humiliation. The sinner goes from God by the highway of pride and self-conceit, but always comes back the low way of humiliation. Grace pulls him down from the seat of the scorner, and lays him at the Lord's feet (1 Pet. v. 6). In it there is—(1) Sorrow for sin; (2) A holy shame for sin (Rom. vi. 21). They see now their spiritual nakedness and pollution. (3) Self-loathing (Ezek. xxxvi. 31; Luke xviii. 13). (4) Penitent confession (Jer. iii. 13), accusing and condemning themselves. 2. Conversion, or returning—(1) From sin, (2) To God and holiness. (*T. Boston, D.D.*) *Apostolic and modern missions compared:*—The passage I have chosen as the subject of our present inquiry informs us of the impressions produced on the minds of the Jewish converts at Jerusalem by St. Peter's relation of the circumstances and success of his first mission to the Gentiles. The passage implies the previous operation of prejudice; it records the confutation of that prejudice; and it illustrates the argument in support of missions which arises from their success. I. The passage implies THE PREVIOUS OPERATION OF PREJUDICE—a prejudice against missions to the Gentiles. "They held their peace." Then they had before opposed them. Was there anything in the character and genius of the gospel that could warrant the indulgence of this prejudice? No. How can we account for their prejudices against missions? They can be ascribed to their strong nationality, their religious distinction, and their material views of the Messiah's reign. The old Jewish spirit was specially exclusive. II. The passage records the CONFUTATION OF THEIR PREJUDICES. "When they heard these things, they held their peace." Their prejudices were refuted and their objections silenced by the facts which the apostle reported. III. The passage illustrates THE ARGUMENT FOR THE SUPPORT OF MISSIONS ARISING FROM THEIR SUCCESS. Success, abstractedly considered, is not the invariable criterion of a Divine religion, or the unequivocal proof of truth. The success of the false prophet of Mecca and

of the Jesuits in China, on account of the way in which that success was won, proves nothing as to the value of their mission. But the success of the gospel does. It is a success against the passions, prejudices, and habits of mankind, won by moral means, and moral means alone. (1) The success explains and vindicates the object of missions. (2) The success supports and confirms our expectations. (3) The success demands increased exertions. (*J. Fletcher, D.D.*) *Repentance to life granted to the Gentiles*:—The wise man hath said, "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame to him." Without waiting for the reasons of the apostle's conduct, his Jewish brethren had contended with him. They listened to his explanation, and their reproaches are converted into praise. Upright minds may err in opinion and feeling, but they are accessible to evidence. They deny not themselves the pleasure and advantage of fresh discoveries in the path of truth, because they cannot endure the proof of their own fallibility. I. ITS NATURE. 1. In general. Repentance is distinguished by infallible signs. Not only does it awaken fear, by considerations of consequences, but hatred, by a perception of its intrinsic malignity. Such a repentance never fails to produce meet fruits. The subject of it abandons the sins he mourns, and enters on a new and holy course. Such was David's repentance, but not Herod's or Judas's. 2. This repentance is unto life. The life with which it is connected is of the highest order; not animal life, alike the gift of worms and man; not mere intellectual life, by which man bears resemblance to angels, whether holy or fallen; but spiritual life, consisting in a right bias and employment of natural powers; its business, the service—its bliss, the enjoyment of God. True repentance originates in a principle of this life, implanted by the Holy Spirit, introduces into a course of it on earth, and issues in the eternal perfection of it in heaven. II. ITS AUTHOR AND GIVER. So hardening is the deceitfulness of sin, that repentance to life would never have become the inmate of the human bosom, but as a gift from God. I. Who, except the merciful Author of our being, grants space and opportunity to repent? Why was not the persecuting Saul cut down in his sins? The prolongation of existence is the continuance of opportunity to return to God. He is "long-suffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." The long-suffering of God waited on the people of the old world. They disregarded, and they perished. Let their example be our warning. 2. He who grants the opportunity also bestows the means. Are some awakened by the preaching of the gospel? It is His appointment. Are others affected under the reading of the Word? All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. Is a third aroused by afflictions? They are the chastisements of their heavenly Father's hand. If, in a further instance, the counsel and prayers and holy example of friends have been instrumental, whose gift are they? And, if in any cases the effect has been the result of a concurrence in these various kinds of subordinate agency, from whom do they all descend? 3. The best adapted means, however, will be unavailing unless the Father of lights bestow the Spirit of repentance. Jesus is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, that He may give repentance. Shall the necessity of this heavenly gift be pleaded to excuse a neglect of the means of repentance? Nothing can excuse it. Penitence is God's command as well as His gift; and the Spirit which produces it is promised to him who seeks. III. ITS EFFECTS ON CHRISTIAN BEHOLDERS. The joy here was—1. Benevolent. The good man knows the way of transgressors to be hard. He thinks of the tremendous end that awaits them; of the felicities in which penitence results. 2. Devout joy. He beholds in the repentance of a sinner a glorious triumph of almighty power over the might and artifice of Satan, and the ignorance, pride, and obstinacy of the human mind; of Divine mercy over its awful demerit. He contemplates an immortal mind debased and polluted by subjection to sin, emerging from its degradation, and resuming its primitive beauty. And thus it is an exultation like that of the angels of God. Such a blessing granted to an individual may well kindle joyful admiration of Divine goodness and power, but extended to many the effect should be proportionably augmented. If the bestowment of this blessing on others be a just ground of exultation, what pleasure and gratitude should it awaken when conferred on ourselves? Of a blessing, so pre-eminently important, can any regard themselves as destitute, and abide in tranquillity? (*Essex Congregational Remembrancer.*)

Vers. 19–21. **Now they which were scattered abroad . . . travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch.**—*Christianity at Antioch*:—I. ITS ENTRANCE INTO ANTIOCH. Here (ver. 19) we discover—1. Evil overruled for good. The very

efforts to crush the gospel gave it new vigour and a wider sweep. Thus it has ever been. 2. The invincibility of Christian courage. The fugitives did not flee from the cause they had espoused, nor relax their efforts to advance it. While true courage does not consist in callous indifference to danger, it demands at all risks eternal fealty to principle and duty. 3. The legitimacy of lay preaching. It is significant that the planting of Christianity here, and in numerous instances since, has been the work of private men holding no ecclesiastical office whatever: which shows—(1) That it is the duty of every one who knows the gospel to proclaim it. (2) That those who would restrict preaching to the professionally ordained are opposed to the best interests of man and to the genius of the New Testament. 4. The universality of the gospel. It is a system as suited to the Greek as to the Hebrew mind, and equally essential to the highest interests of both. II. Its ACHIEVEMENTS AT ANTIOCH, which—1. Involved a Divine change in the characters of many (ver. 21). Observe—(1) The Divine power which attended their ministry. (2) The faith which their ministry generated. (3) The revolution which their faith effected. 2. Attracted the attention of the mother Church (ver. 22). This was natural. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The Church at Antioch*:—Persecution was the first means of propagating the gospel. Blow on the candle, and you extinguish the flame; blow on the fire in the grate, and you increase it. The reason is in the hold the fire has upon the combustible substance. If the hold is slight, blowing will put it out; if deep, will intensify it. Christ came to send fire on the earth; the fire ate its way down to the very depths of the disciples' spirits. Saul "breathed out threatenings," &c.; but the breathing only fanned the fire. Observe that this Church—I. WAS ESTABLISHED BY LAY AGENCY. These men were not commissioned by any ecclesiastical authority to preach. They did it instinctively. The flowers do not require to be told to blossom; let the sun but shine, and they do it without being told. Birds do not need an almanack to remind them that May is come, and that the season for outdoor concerts has arrived. And as soon as a man has knowledge of the Saviour, he feels an impulse to tell others of Him. Some Churches object to what they call irregular teachers. They forget that there are two ordinations. Sometimes the human and the Divine meet in the same person; sometimes they diverge. If you can get the two, well; if not, give me the Divine, let who will have the human. The hand of an apostle had not been laid on the heads of these disciples. But what of that? "The hand of the Lord was with them." If that "hand" is with a man, surely the bishop's is not vitally essential. II. WAS ESTABLISHED AMONG THE GENTILES. 1. It was the first Gentile Church. Ver. 19 tells us that they "preached the Word to Jews only." But the following verse tells us that the natives of Cyprus and Cyrene preached to the "Greeks" also. The text, therefore, marks a new epoch in the history of the kingdom of God. Christ had plainly intimated the admission of the Gentiles into the fold. But the disciples understood Him not, and for years confined their labours to "Jews only." And when Peter ventured to preach to Cornelius, he was put on his defence. We are prone to look upon the primitive Church as our pattern; but the infant Church cannot be a pattern to the Church in its maturity. Shame upon us if modern Churches are not much better than primitive! How narrow and bigoted was the Church of Jerusalem! How contentious and immoral the Church of Corinth! But life proved too much for prejudice; whilst they of the circumcision were contending the Church was instinctively extending its frontiers—it claimed the Gentiles also as its inheritance. 2. Three stages are traceable in the growth of this idea. (1) From the establishment of the Church in the wilderness down to the Babylonish captivity, it was strictly Jewish. Not but that there was provision made in the law for the stranger and the alien; but the system was more tolerant than the men, and born Jews only were allowed to participate in its manifold privileges. (2) But during the Captivity, Jews and Gentiles were brought into frequent contact, and better knowledge led to kindlier feelings. The Jews, therefore, on their return, attached to their temple a court of the Gentiles. Such a thought never entered the mind of Solomon or of his architects. Henceforth they displayed a missionary spirit, and compassed sea and land to make one proselyte. True, they did not pull down the wall; but they *did* put a few gates in it through which the Gentiles might be admitted. But mark—they were not received as Gentiles, but as Gentiles circumcised. (3) The third stage is that indicated in this chapter. The wall is being pulled down, and Greeks may become Christians without first becoming Jews. The Jewish Church was like the chrysalis containing life in an undeveloped

state; the Christian Church is the chrysalis emerging in the winged butterfly. In Judaism the Word of the Lord was standing; in Christianity it is flying. "And I saw an angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel." III. WAS FLOURISHING IN GRACE. 1. When the Church at Jerusalem heard of the great things that had taken place at Antioch, "they sent forth Barnabas" mainly for his natural fitness (ver. 24). "Good" signifies more than mere moral worth; it means that he was a kind, genial, loving man. Many men—good, morally speaking—are stern and hard. But Barnabas was a man of a very gracious disposition—a very attractive man. A rash, haughty, domineering man, coming down upon a Church to which he was a stranger, would do more harm than good. But Barnabas—a son of sweetness and light—would disarm opposition, and secure confidence. 2. No sooner did he arrive in Antioch than "he saw there the grace of God." If you have true religion in the heart, it is superfluous to declare it. If it is in the heart, it will be seen in the life. An ancient poet tells the painters of Greece, in a period of great art decadence, to write under their pictures the names of the animals they pourtrayed, implying that without the name it would be impossible to tell one animal from another—a very bitter satire upon the painters. And some men's religion is such that you would never suspect it unless they carried about them the label; they do not shine before men, that their good works may be seen, &c. But the moment Barnabas's eye caught the canvas, he could tell the picture. Nay, so decided was the likeness between them and Christ that the public recognised it, and there "the disciples were first called Christians." 3. "He exhorted the people that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." Barnabas is by interpretation the "son of consolation" or exhortation. From this word we can partly judge of the character of his preaching; his exhortation brimming over with comfort, full of cheer and encouragement. His preaching was fine and stimulating rather than deep and convincing. He had the good sense to know this, and therefore hastened to Tarsus to fetch Saul. Barnabas would be worthy of grateful remembrance were it only for this one act. Barnabas exhorted the people; but when Saul came to his help, the "exhorting" became "teaching"; deeper thoughtfulness characterised the ministry. The people were before growing in grace—they are now growing in knowledge. Man has both a heart and a head. And every true minister, if he cannot accomplish the twofold work himself, will, like Barnabas, seek another to help him. The dahlia is a gorgeous flower, but it has no fragrance. The perfection of a flower consists in exquisiteness of colour combined with deliciousness of fragrance. And the perfection of Christians consists in the combination of grace and knowledge. (*J. Cynddylan Jones, D.D.*) *Success of preaching Christ:*—I. THE IMPORT OF PREACHING CHRIST. 1. The season in which these words were spoken. 2. The persons addressed—Jews only. 3. The impediments in the way—prejudice, ignorance, unbelief. 4. The topics announced. (1) The harmony between Christ and the Old Testament representations of Him. (2) The certainty of His resurrection and ascension into heaven. (3) The design of the whole in its adaptation to them as sinners. II. WHAT WAS CONNECTED WITH THIS PREACHING. 1. The Divine authority and approbation. 2. Divine aid and support. 3. Power attending their ministry. III. THE EFFECTS PRODUCED. "Many believed and turned to the Lord." 1. "They believed." (1) They credited the facts relative to Christ. (2) They entered into the spirit of the whole design. 2. "They turned unto the Lord." (1) Renounced Jewish prejudices and ceremonies. (2) They renounced justification by the law. (3) Became holy in their lives, and manifested the fruits of the Spirit. Application: 1. God acts mysteriously in accomplishing His important designs. 2. God never wants means to fulfil His gracious intentions. 3. All instruments and means, though weak in themselves, are mighty through Divine power. (*W. Kent.*) *The first preaching at Antioch:*—1. It needed a vision to impel Peter to preach to Cornelius, but here some Cypriote and African Jews, with no vision, command, nor precedent, with nothing but the truth in their minds and Christ's love in their hearts, unconsciously do the thing about the propriety of which there had been such serious question in Jerusalem. 2. Ver. 19 is a repetition of words in an earlier chapter. The writer returns to take up another thread of his narrative contemporaneous with those already pursued. Three distinct lines of expansion appear to have started from the dispersion of the Jerusalem Church—Philip's mission to Samaria, Peter's to Cornelius, and this work in Antioch. 3. This, the effort of a handful of unnamed men, was the true "leader"—the shoot that grew. Philip's work, and Peter's, were side branches, which came to little; this led on to

a Church at Antioch, and so to Paul's missionary work, and all that came of that. Notice—I. THE SPONTANEOUS IMPULSE WHICH THESE MEN OBEYED. Wherever they went they took their faith with them, and, as a matter of course, spoke about it. The coals were scattered from the hearth, but that did not put the fire out, but only spread it. They had no special injunction "to preach the Lord Jesus." They believed, and therefore spoke. Such a spontaneous impulse is ever the natural result of—1. A personal possession of Christ. In regard to worldly good the instinct is to keep the treasure. But even in the natural sphere there are possessions which to have is to long to impart, such as truth and knowledge. And in the spiritual sphere this is emphatically the case. The old prophet spoke a universal truth when he said: "Thy word was as a fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." Deep conviction and strong emotion demand expression. True, sometimes the deepest love can only "love and be silent," and there is a just suspicion of vehement protestations. But for all that, it remains true that a heart warmed with the love of Christ will give it forth, as certainly as light must radiate from its centre, or heat from a fire. 2. True kindliness of heart. We cannot truly possess the treasure for ourselves without pity for those who have it not. What kind of Christians must they be who think of Christ as "a Saviour for me," and take no care to set Him forth as "a Saviour for you"? What should we think of men in a shipwreck who were content to get into the life-boat, and let everybody else drown? What should we think of people in a famine feasting sumptuously on their private stores? 3. Loyalty to Christ. If we are true to our Lord, we shall feel that we cannot but speak up and out for Him. He who lives among rebels and is afraid to show his colours is already a coward, and is on the way to be a traitor. Our Master has placed in our hands the honour of His name, and the carrying out of the purposes on which His heart is set. How can we be loyal to Him if we are not constrained to respond to His trust in us, and if we know nothing of the "Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel!" II. THE UNIVERSAL OBLIGATION ON ALL CHRISTIANS TO MAKE KNOWN CHRIST. 1. In these early days the Church had a very loose organisation. But these fugitives had among them none even of the humble office-bearers of primitive times. Neither had they any commission from Jerusalem. Whatever functions may be committed to Church officers the work of telling Christ's love to men belongs to every one who has found it for himself or herself. "This honour have all the saints." 2. Whatever may be our differences as to Church order and offices, they need not interfere with our firm grasp of this truth. "Preaching Christ" implies no special method of proclaiming the glad tidings. A letter to a friend, a sentence in casual conversation, a lesson to a child on a mother's lap, or any other way by which the great story of the Cross is told, is as truly preaching Christ as the set discourse which has usurped the name. 3. We profess to believe in the priesthood of all believers, in opposition to sacerdotal assumptions. Are we as ready to recognise it as laying a very real responsibility upon us, and involving a very practical inference as to our own conduct? Every Christian is solemnly bound to take heed to this: "Freely ye have received, freely give." III. THE SIMPLE MESSAGE WHICH THEY PROCLAIMED. 1. "Preaching Jesus as Lord." Their message was a proclamation of the person and dignity of their Master, the story of the life of the Man, of the Divine sacrifice by which He had bought the right of supreme rule over every heart; and the urging of His claims on all who heard of His love. And this, their message, was but the proclamation of their own personal experience. They had found Jesus for themselves to be lover and Lord, and the joy they had received they sought to share with these Greeks. All have not the gifts which would fit for public speech, but all who have tasted that the Lord is gracious can tell somehow how gracious He is. The first Christian sermon was very short, and it was very efficacious, for it "brought to Jesus" the whole congregation. "He first findeth his brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias." Surely we can all say that, and shall long to say it, if we are glad that we have found Him, and if we love our brother. 2. Notice, too, how simple the form of the message. "They spake." It was no set address, but familiar, natural talk to ones and twos, as opportunity offered. What we want is that Christian people should speak anyhow. What does the shape of the cup matter? What does it matter whether it be gold or clay? The main thing is that it shall bear the water of life to some thirsty lip. All Christians have to do is to tell the good news—(1) Simply and faithfully, as one who only cares to repeat what he has had given to him. (2) Confidently, as having

proved it true. (3) Beseechingly, as loving the souls to whom they bring it. Let His mighty salvation, experienced by yourselves, be the substance of your message, and let the form of it be guided by the old words, "It shall be, when the Spirit of the Lord is come upon thee, that thou shalt do as occasion shall serve thee." IV. THE MIGHTY HELPER WHO PROSPERED THEIR WORK. "The hand of the Lord was with them." However feeble our hands, that mighty hand is laid on them to direct their movements and to lend strength to their weakness. It is not our speech, but His presence with our words by which a great number shall believe and turn to the Lord. (1) There is our encouragement when we are despondent. There is our rebuke when we are self-confident. (2) There is our stimulus when we are indolent. (3) There is our quietness when we are impatient. (4) If ever we are tempted to think our task heavy, let us not forget that He who set it helps us to do it. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Primitive Christianity*:—Wearied of manifold errors and corruptions, we listen gladly when we hear of this. But, alas! those who are most ready to adopt the name are the most ready to abuse it. They boldly set out in search of it, but they lose their way in the Dark Ages, and never emerge into the Scriptural light that shines beyond. Three things appear at this point. I. THE MINISTRY OF MEN. These evangelists kept back their own names, but put forward their Lord's; their only record is the multitude they brought to the Saviour. Persecution was the blast which spread the living seed. Being themselves Jews they preached at first to Jews only. The first opening into the wider world was made by Peter, but being made the crevasse widened rapidly. The theme of these evangelists was "the Lord Jesus." Doctrines cannot arrest and control men: they are like spirits not embodied: they elude us. But when the soul of doctrine is embodied in a person we can apprehend it, and when that Person is Jesus faith looks and lives. Primitive preaching is to tell the story of Jesus until hearts of stone give way and flow down like water. II. THE HAND OF THE LORD. The instrument human, the power Divine (1 Cor. iii. 9), just as in the cultivation of fields. Man breaks up the ground, watches, weeds, drains. The God of nature does nothing which man can do for himself. He gives rain, sun, and air. So in the cultivation of souls, as here, after man has done all he must wait for the hand of the Lord to give the increase. III. THE FRUIT THAT FOLLOWED. "Believing" and "turning to the Lord" stand in interesting relation to each other—the one the root, the other the fruit. The root of a tree lies out of sight, but the fruit can be both seen and tasted, and by it we know the tree. To believe is the secret act of the soul; to turn, &c., is the visible course of the disciple's life. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *Primitive Christianity*:—I. EXTENSION. Ver. 19 is a condensation of vers. 1–18. 1. To the amazement of the early Christians the Word took effect upon others besides Jews. In this way the gospel became quite as much a revelation to Jews as to Gentiles. They saw that Christianity was not a local lamp, but a sun, and as its glory brightened the distant hills and made the far-off valleys sing with new joy, they were glad; they felt themselves invested with a new responsibility, and stirred with a new hope. Some such passions should fill our hearts when we see far-off men touched by the power of Christ. Herein is a proof of the Divine origin of Christianity. All other religions remain at home. Christianity is an aggressive religion. If its professors are non-militant they give the lie to their own faith. In the universality of the Christian offer I see its Godhood. Luxuries are only here and there, but necessaries are everywhere. Wines do not grow everywhere. But men need water, not wine. Some of God's gifts are local and individual, but whatever is necessary to salvation is to be spoken in every language of earth. 2. There are two typical instances in the narrative. Christianity touched the mind of the centurion. Let him represent Roman strength, sternness, law, dignity. Christianity touched the Grecian mind. Let that stand for refinement, elegance, philosophy, for the completing line of human thought and service. Christianity becomes Roman to the Roman, Grecian to the Grecian—a great rock to the rocky man, a rainbow to the dreaming genius, a summer light to the poet's fancy. No other religion does this. II. RECOGNITION. What was the effect of the news upon the Church? At once they sent Barnabas to inquire. 1. When he came he saw the grace of God. There is no mistaking it. It is like nothing else. Imitations perish under scrutiny, but the real grace of God grows upon examination. He did not find a number of technical theologians, skilful disputants. He found men praying, with eager minds, with forgiving souls, more on high than below. 2. When Barnabas saw this he was glad. Is the farmer glad when he sees corn growing

upon land on which it never grew before? It is so the Christian feels when he sees strange men turning to the faith. Are we glad when we see men converted? Do newly-converted men find a warm, cordial, comforting atmosphere in the Church when they come in? 3. Having made this recognition, Barnabas said, "Now with full purpose of heart you must cleave unto the Lord." Exhortation will do more than suspicion. A word of encouragement is what young beginners in the Christian race require. You who gave your heart to Christ a week ago or a month since—persevere. 4. Why did Barnabas take so much interest in these new converts? Because "he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." Good men see goodness in other men. Evil be to him who evil thinks. The good man comes to be made glad. With a charitable spirit, and benign and hopeful heart, he looks upon the work, and it must be very bad if he does not see in it something to quicken his own faith, and deepen his own grace, and heighten his own love to God. 5. What was the consequence? "Much people was added unto the Lord." Barnabas did not go to Antioch for nothing—the work grew upon him, and now he said, "Saul must come." So he brought him to the Syrian capital, and there for a whole year they taught much people. Thus are spheres found for men, and thus have men sometimes to tarry at Tarsus till their proper Antioch is found. But God will find it. III. PROOF (vers. 27–30). Were the men at Antioch really converted? Read in ver. 29 the proof. These men have received the Lord Jesus; and instantly on hearing that men who are partakers of the same faith are in prospect of want, they send to such men under the name of "brethren," according to their ability. This is how Christianity works. Here is the communism of the Church. The formal communism of chap. ii. soon broke down, but the spiritual communism must continue for ever. Wherever there is Christian need, Christian brotherhood must be acknowledged. The Cross broke down the middle wall of partition, and made the human family one. Conclusion: "And the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." This name stands above all other names to-day. Of no man is so much expected as the Christian. The man who despises your faith expects from you on its account what he expects from no other man. So he answers himself. After having traduced your Lord, and disproved your documents, and cast scorn on your theology, if you do anything that calls down his displeasure he is the first to accuse of treason to the faith you profess. I ask for no higher intellectual and moral recognition of the purity of the religion of Jesus Christ. From no atheist is so much expected as from the weakest Christian. By Christians I understand Christ-ones, and were we what we ought to be there should be no other designation. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The spread of the gospel*:—Here we trace a series of providences—I. IN THE INSTRUMENTALITIES. As the gospel was to be first preached to the Jews, it was fitting that Jews should be the first to proclaim it. Between that people, however, and all other nations, there existed formidable barriers. When, therefore, the time was come for them to be broken down, some medium must be found less hampered than the Jews by prejudice, and at the same time so far Jewish as to have received from the Jews the gospel. Such a medium was afforded here (ver. 19) by Greeks who had become Jewish proselytes. Belonging to a class "who sometime were afar off," to whom should they turn so naturally as to their kindred, the Greeks? As, when the fulness of time was come for Christ to be born, God had prepared Gentile watchers to be looking for His star, so when the gospel was ready for the world the same Providence had prearranged that messengers fitted for the work should be ready to be to it as wings to bear it on its world-wide flight. It is ever thus. He who has prepared the gospel for the race, prepares means for its extension. In this God has often been in advance of His Church. When she has faltered He has opened ways into regions beyond, where His preordained messengers might plant Christian standards. II. THE PLACE. Antioch was a centre of commanding influence. If the new religion could be planted in this queen of Gentile cities, with her wealth, her culture, her sources of widespread influence, her teeming thousands, then the followers of Christ would stand on vantage-ground unequalled. And this was substantially accomplished. Antioch became a Christian city. In the time of Theodosius it is alleged that one half of her population were professed followers of Christ. Between the years 252 and 360 A.D. ten Christian assemblies were here convened. Here Paul exercised his first systematic ministerial work, and from this point he started on all his missionary journeys. Here Chrysostom was born, and here Ignatius wielded his mighty power for the Christian faith. Thus, this city, where the first Gentile Church was gathered, exerted for centuries a controlling influence in spreading the new religion.

From this let us, who are now entrusted with the gospel, learn—1. To be bold. Christ calls for no timorous messengers. Christianity is in this world to conquer, and it will. 2. To plant the gospel in centres of influence. There were other cities than Antioch, but none of so extended and controlling influence. III. IN SHAPING THE IMMEDIATE RESULTS. 1. The name by which, for all ages, the followers of Christ are to be known (ver. 26). To the formation of this word each of the three leading nations of earth made a contribution. The thought is Jewish, denoting "The Anointed One"; the root, Χριστ, is Greek; the termination, ιανοι, is Latin. Thus, in the providence of God, the same three nations whose differing dialects proclaimed above the Cross, "Jesus, the King of the Jews," now unite in forming a word which for all time shall be applied to those who follow Christ. 2. The breaking-down of jealousies between Jewish and Gentile converts, as seen in—(1) The mission of Barnabas. (2) The generosity evoked by the prophecy of Agabus. (*Sermons by the Monday Club.*) *The spread of the gospel*:—I. BELIEVING IN CHRIST'S NAME. In this story three forces are to be noted. 1. Persecution (ver. 19). The devil made nothing when he stirred this up. The blood of the martyred Stephen was the seed of many Churches. 2. Conservatism. "Speaking the Word to none save only to Jews." Conscientiously seeking "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Unlike Peter, they had had no vision. They were acting under the impulse of hereditary bigotry and natural affiliations. 3. Progression. "Some of them . . . spake unto the Greeks also." Notice—(1) That it was only "some of them." When an old bondage is to be thrown off, emancipation comes to individuals before it comes to the many. (2) That it was not native Jews. Men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who had associated with Greeks as well as with Jews, it was as easy for them to speak to the one as to the other, and, not blinded by Jewish prejudice, they could see their equal right to the benefit of the sacrifice upon Calvary. (3) That they were unknown men. In the time of Chrysostom about 100,000 were reputed to be Christian—here truly a great result from the efforts of a few obscure men. (4) That their work was a simple one. They held up Jesus as Saviour and Lord—that which any other earnest disciple of Christ can do, and must do if the world is to be evangelised. (5) That their work was immediately attested. "The hand of the Lord was with them." II. KNOWN BY CHRIST'S NAME. Let us see how this came about. 1. The work reported (ver. 22). 2. The work approved. (1) The sending. The case of Cornelius had prepared the Church at Jerusalem for such tidings. Perhaps they were afraid that the workers might do some things ill-advised, but they showed their sympathy with the work by sending such a man as Barnabas. (2) The rejoicing. The joy of Barnabas was the best sort of approval. Barnabas knew the Lord's handiwork when he saw it. (3) The exhortation. Barnabas believed in the perseverance of the saints—not in putting the hand to the plough, and then looking back. God wants no ninety-day recruits in His service. His enlistment-roll is for life. Note, that continued fidelity to Him comes from "purpose of heart," rather than purpose of the will or conviction of the head. (4) The man. "For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith." This statement is given as the reason why Barnabas so instantly showed his sympathy with the work among the Gentiles. 3. The work assisted. (1) By the countenance that Barnabas gave to it. "And much people was added to the Lord." As a representative of the Church at Jerusalem his approval would give the work a new impetus, as being done under the sanction of the Church. To this was added the force of his own personality, made potential by his goodness and possession of faith and the Holy Spirit. (2) By the united efforts of Barnabas and Saul. The work too great for one. The glory of much of Paul's career is due to the man who believed in Paul, and gave to him his opportunity. Many a man who is no Paul himself may set a Paul to work. The revival, as such, appears to have been over, and they devoted themselves to instructing these converts in the new faith they had professed. 4. The new name. "The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." III. HELPING BELIEVERS IN CHRIST'S NAME (vers. 27-30). The starving Jewish believers at Jerusalem learned how good it was to have brethren not of the direct seed of Abraham. The Gentiles and Jews indeed had become "one flock, one Shepherd." (*M. C. Hazard.*) *The diffusive power of the gospel*:—As there is in all living objects a reproductive capacity, so the gospel has in it a certain vitality which ensures its diffusion. Our Lord illustrates this in His parables of the wheat and the mustard seed. The incident of the text is a singular illustration of this wonderful potency. Note here—I. THE STIMULATING POWER OF THE GOSPEL. 1. These men of Cyprus and Cyrene continued without the least abatement of zeal

to preach the gospel whilst in the very act of fleeing for their life. The storm of persecution seemed rather to fan the flame of their holy enthusiasm. 2. This enthusiasm is the Christian's normal condition. The religion of Jesus is a religion of love and gratitude, and where these emotions abound they never fail to kindle enthusiasm. In the face of this, an apathetic, unimpassioned Christian is an anomaly as incongruous in conception as a frozen sunbeam or a petrified flame. The sun floats in an atmosphere of flame, which is the source of its marvellous influence over scores of worlds, of its power to quicken their myriad forms of life. The true Christian is a moral sun surrounded by an atmosphere of enthusiasm. 3. This enthusiasm, born of love and gratitude, constitutes the gospel's most effective guarantee for its diffusion. For in nothing is this enthusiasm more assiduously manifested than in efforts to spread the story of the love which kindled it. 4. This enthusiasm the gospel is ever capable of awakening. So long as its power of benefiting men remains, so long will its power of awakening gratitude remain, and where this gratitude exists there will be enthusiasm ever impelling men to self-sacrificing labours for Christ. 5. This spirit should, however, be manifested not in the ministry alone, nor in the more official walks of Christian service, but should permeate equally all its humbler forms. Wherever present it illumines the most commonplace things, and invests the humblest service of God's house with sublime dignity. II. ITS ASSIMILATIVE POWER—its power of raising men's minds into loving unison with its own spirit and aim. This comes out in relation to these men in the fact that they preached the gospel to the Greeks—uncircumcised heathen. 1. It was a course of action for which they had no precedent, and was opposed to all their previous notions. Such views came even to apostles only as the result of extraordinary training. Could it come to them otherwise than by the broadening and heart-expanding influence of the gospel itself? They rightly apprehended that a scheme so rich in grace and wisdom must comprehend all nations. As with the ancient Jews, so is it with many modern Christians. There is a tendency to regard the grace of God as the special monopoly of a sect. Such feeling will cramp every effort to extend its operations. The gospel must be viewed as a thing destined for humanity, and it is only in the measure that Christians rise to this conception that their hearts will receive that breadth which will bring them into sympathy with every institution having for its object the realisation of its world-embracing aims. 2. But this new departure involved considerably more than the breaking away from Jewish traditions. In preaching to the Jews, the utmost that they had had to encounter were Jewish prejudices regarding the Messiah. They both believed in the Scriptures; but in presenting the gospel to the Greeks they were brought face to face with idolatry—a foe which enlisted every element likely to secure the sympathy of corrupt human nature. They had also to confront philosophies commended by the highest culture. Before these men could have ventured to initiate such a stupendous campaign, they must have had the most unfaltering conviction that the gospel was fully adequate to grapple with every form of opposition that the heathen world could furnish. Have we not in the firm, unwavering faith of these men in the gospel a most fitting lesson for the times? There are still to be encountered prejudices as strong as Jewish intolerance, abominations as foul as ever characterised ancient heathendom, assumptions of science and philosophy far more daring and arrogant than those of apostolic times. Like these men, we must not only believe that the gospel is for all men, but, also, that it is a power capable of overcoming every opposition standing in the way of it reaching all men. III. ITS UTILISING POWER. These persons were not recognised preachers, but men constrained to engage in the work by force of circumstances. Had they been persons of official standing their names would have been given. Philip, who was a deacon, is mentioned by name when his evangelistic labours are referred to. The lessons are—1. That efforts to promote the spread of the gospel are not to be confined to those formally set apart. Offices are necessary. Christ has ordained them. This was essential to ensure order and steady systematic labour. Unofficial labour is subject to ebbs and flows, and hence the need of a duly appointed class to ensure regular and unbroken efforts. In countries subject to long droughts extensive systems of irrigation are provided to ensure a steady supply of moisture. But the falling rain, however intermittent, is no less welcome. Similarly the irregular services of voluntary workers are peculiarly acceptable to Christ, and He has not only sanctioned but enjoined such. 2. It is a great defect that ordinary Church members have come to regard all efforts to promote the cause of Christ as an obligation resting solely upon the official portion of the Church.

Consequently—(1) They make no personal effort to promote the salvation of their fellow-men, and manifest the utmost indifference with regard to Sabbath-school work and the operations of kindred agencies. (2) The effect of this notion upon the official section of the Church is no less disastrous. It becomes the prolific source of some of the worst evils of priestism. The ministry becomes isolated from the people, and is lifted up with an undue sense of its authority, and surrounds itself with an air of cool official propriety. 3. The highest ideal of a Christian Church, and the one which is most in harmony with the primitive type, is that in which both official and voluntary agencies are found skilfully blended and wisely co-operating. (1) Those spiritual energies and aspirations awakened by the influence of the gospel in the breast of every Christian would by voluntary labours obtain a proper channel for development and usefulness. Personal piety would gain considerably in breadth and depth by being called upon to act and interest itself on behalf of souls; and officers, looking on the results, would be "glad," and would work with redoubled ardour, and so many would be turned to the Lord. (2) By these efforts Christianity becomes clearly recognised. "The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch." (3) Generous sympathies are evoked (vers. 27–30). (4) Gifts are multiplied. This Church abounded in prophets and teachers. (5) Spheres of usefulness are indefinitely widened. To this Church was allotted the great honour of being made the centre of the first systematic efforts to evangelise the world. It seemed fitting that a Church, thus composed of Gentile converts, should become the principal channel for communicating the blessings of the gospel to their own brethren in the flesh (chap. xiii. 3). (*A. J. Parry.*) *How the manifold gifts of Christians contribute to the general use:*—1. Those who are received as guests give the gospel as a present in return (vers. 19-21). 2. Those who possess the Word in abundance impart it to those who are in the first beginnings (vers. 22-28). 3. Those who are blessed with earthly wealth assist those who have nothing (vers. 29–30). (*Lisco.*) *The essentials of successful work:*—1. Undaunted courage in opposition to the world (ver. 19). 2. Docile attention to the Divine intimations (ver. 22). 3. Brotherly concord among the labourers. (*K. Gerok.*) *Christ all in all to His Church:*—I. THE CENTRAL SUBJECT OF PREACHING (ver. 20). II. THE LIGHT AND POWER OF BELIEVERS (vers. 21, 23). III. THE EXAMPLE AND MODEL OF MINISTERS (vers. 24, 25). IV. THE NAME AND WATCHWORD OF THE CHURCH. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 21. **The hand of the Lord.**—*The hand:*—The word "hand" occurs in Scripture no fewer than 1,295 times. Man is the only being on earth that is furnished with two hands. Some other creatures have claws, but not hands. They cannot do as you can, make the thumb meet all the four fingers, so as to seize and hold all the most minute objects; nor can they perform one thousandth part of the skilful acts that man can perform with his hand. What other creature, *e.g.*, can make a watch, or a needle? And there is power in man's hand as well as skill: he can apply force in ways which none of them can approach. I. IN RELATION TO GOD HIMSELF, the word "hand" is used—1. To denote His eternal purpose and almighty power (chap. iv. 28, 30). 2. To denote His mighty power to keep, defend, preserve (John x. 28, 29; Isa. xlix. 2). 3. To express His rich, providential provision for the wants of all His creatures (Psa. civ. 28; 1 Chron. xxix. 16). 4. To signify God's right to be, as He is, the sovereign disposer of all circumstances, persons, and events (Psa. xxxi. 15; Job ii. 10). 5. When His inflictions and corrections are referred to (Judg. ii. 15; Psa. xxxii. 4; Heb. x. 31). 6. To denote His power to help (Psa. lxxiv. 11; Ezra vii. 6, 9, viii. 18, 22; Neh. ii. 8, 18; Psa. lxxx. 17; Luke i. 66). As an expression for God's Spirit, putting the spirit of power into us, as well as of love and of a sound mind (Ezek. i. 3, iii. 14, 22, viii. 1, xxxvii. 1). We can be strong for any high and arduous duty only in His strength; all power indeed, all energy of purpose, all special skill in any art, cometh of Him. And not only is this spoken of as God's "hand" as the mover, but the term is applied to the agent—the doer of the particular thing. The men of the world are spoken of as God's "hand"; and His hand is also to be upon all them for good who seek Him. The "right hand," as specially denoting power, is an expression that often occurs in Scripture, and is almost always applied to God (Psa. xvi. 11, xvii. 7, xx. 6, xxi. 8, xliv. 3, xlv. 4, 9, xlviii. 10, lx. 5, lxiii. 8, lxxiv. 11; Isa. xlviii. 13, lxii. 8; Mark xvi. 19; Heb. i. 3, &c., &c.). II. IN RELATION TO MAN the word "hand" is used—1. To denote power in all its various applications (Prov. iii. 27; Eccl. ix. 10). To "give one's hand" is an expression which signifies to pledge

peace, promise security, swear friendship, make an alliance. 2. To denote help (Psa. xvi. 8, lxxiii. 23, cxlii. 4). 3. To indicate possession, as to rend it out of the hand of any one denotes deprivation (1 Kings xi. 11, 12). 4. For the giving of advice (2 Sam. xiv. 19, 5). 5. For deliverance from the power and oppression of others (Exod. xviii. 9, 10). 6. To denote work of any kind (Luke i. 1, ix. 62; Acts xx. 34; Prov. x. 4, xii. 24). (*S. Jenner, M.A.*) **A great number believed, and turned to the Lord.**—*Conversions desired*:—I. THE END WHICH WE DESIRE. 1. That men may believe the testimony of Christ to be true. There are some who have not reached as far as that: they reject the inspired Word, and to them the incarnation, &c., are so many old wives' fables. There are also many who profess to believe these things, but their only reason is that they have been taught so, and it is the current religion of the nation. But we want more than this faith of indifference, which is little more than unbelief; we want men to believe for themselves because they have felt the saving power of Christ. We pray that nominal believers may treat the doctrines of revelation, not as dogmas, but as facts. 2. That men may savingly believe by putting their trust in Christ. A man commits his soul to Christ for safe keeping, and that saves him. He makes the Saviour trustee of his spiritual estates. 3. That men may so believe in Jesus that they may be turned unto the Lord. This means—(1) To turn from idols to the living and true God. We desire that faith in Jesus may lead you to give up the objects of your idolatrous love, yourselves, your money, your pleasures, the world, the flesh, the devil. (2) To turn from the love of sin. He who looks sinward has his back to God—he who looks Godward has his back to sin. (3) That henceforth God shall be sought in prayer. The man who lives without prayer lives without God, but the man who has turned to God is familiar with the mercy-seat. (4) To yield yourself obediently to His sway. Faith is nothing unless it brings with it a willing mind. II. THE POWER BY WHICH THIS CAN BE ATTAINED. "The hand of the Lord was with them." Be encouraged; the hand of God—1. Is upon men before we speak. I am studying a certain subject, and praying for a blessing on it, and in a chamber, which I have never seen, one of my hearers is smitten with a sense of sin, or troubled with uneasy thoughts, or rendered hopeful of better things, and thus he is being made ready to accept the Christ whom I shall preach to him. Sickness and pain, shame and poverty, often produce a condition of mind most hopeful for the reception of the gospel. Sow, brother, for God has ploughed. Go up and build, for God has prepared the stones and made ready the foundation. 2. Upon the teachers and preachers themselves. There are strange impulses which come over us at times, which make us think and say what otherwise had never crossed our minds, and these work with power upon men's minds. 3. Upon the hearts of men when the gospel is preached. Not only is the Spirit in the Word, but over and above that He makes men—(1) Recollect their sins. Men who have been giddy and careless and forgetful have on a sudden found themselves reviewing the past. (2) See the beauty of holiness. When the preacher proclaims the way of salvation the Spirit leads men to admire it and to long for a share in it. Yes, it is not the preacher, and it is not altogether what the preacher says, but there is a power abroad as potent as that by which the worlds were made. III. THE DESIRABLENESS OF OUR OBJECT. Because conversions—1. Promote the extension of truth, godliness, and virtue. 2. Make men happy. If religion be indeed a source of joy to yourself, you are inhuman if you do not wish others to drink of it. 3. Save men from hell. 4. Increase the Church. Self-preservation is a law of nature, and the Church can never preserve herself except by increasing from the world by conversion. 5. Promote the glory of Christ and give Him to see the travail of His soul. 6. Augment personal blessedness. IV. HOW WE MAY PROMOTE ITS ATTAINMENT. 1. We must distinctly aim at it. As a rule, a man does what he tries to do, and not that which is mere by-play. There is the target, and if you continue to shoot into the air long enough an arrow may perhaps strike it; but if you want to win the prize of archery you had better fix your eye upon the white and take your aim distinctly and with skill. 2. We must press upon men the truths which God usually blesses (ver. 20). If we do not preach Christ we shall not see souls saved. Who ever heard of a Unitarian Whitfield, or a Socinian Moody gathering twenty thousand people to listen to a Christless gospel? We must equally avoid the modern intellectual system in all its phases. How many conversions are wrought by displays of genius, fine rhetoric, &c.? Certain views as to man's future are equally to be kept clear of, if you would be the means of conversion. Diminish your ideas of the wrath of God and the terrors of hell, and in that proportion you

will diminish the results of your work. Other crotchets and novelties of doctrine are also to be let alone, for they are not likely to promote your object, and will most probably divert men's attention from the vital point. If you want a harvest, look well to your seed. If I had to sow my fields with wheat I would not take any but the very best. 3. We must feel a solemn alarm about souls. Believe their danger, their helplessness, that only Christ can save them, and talk to them as if you meant it. The Holy Spirit will move them by first moving you. 4. There must be much prayer. In your closets, at your family altars, and in your prayer-meetings be importunate, and the hand of the Lord must and will be with you. 5. There must be direct personal effort on the part of all of you. Great numbers may be saved by my preaching if the Holy Spirit blesses it, but I shall expect larger numbers if you all turn witnesses for Christ. We must expect converts. "According to your faith so be it unto you." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 22–26. **Then tidings of these things came to the ears of the Church, . . . and they sent forth Barnabas.**—*A St. Barnabas the need of the hour*:—You know the strain and the stress of the situation recorded in my text. We are speaking of Antioch, to which Barnabas is sent. Here, then, we have a strong, central, organised Church, going its own way on somewhat new lines, with a new environment, with a new development. And yet it causes a great deal of anxiety in those who are left at home in the old places in Jerusalem. This strong, assertive child of theirs, to what will it grow, what will happen to it? The very preachers who founded it made them at Jerusalem nervous. The gospel was in them as Stephen had proclaimed it; and they knew it was for the Greeks as well as for the Jews. It was the Greeks that were flocking in, from beyond the strict borders of the old race, and it was out of this people the Church grew. Such a Church would sit light by the old traditions. It was a new capital for Christianity, with altogether Gentile associations; and habits, and customs, and interests, and environment, and style of thought, and even of language, would none of them be Jewish. How different! And it was all going on so fast! "To what lengths are they going at Antioch? Where will they stop?" And so there was a bitter problem to solve, then as at all times; and it is difficult for us to realise how deep their anxieties would go; how possibly the Twelve would be almost as anxious as any. They might share the alarm with perfect loyalty. And then they had so much to think of—those Twelve at Jerusalem. There were the angry, hot-headed Pharisees, who believed in such numbers after the Lord had risen. They came pouring into the Church; but they were half Pharisees still. Their prejudices were very strong; and they had always been in terror of these Gentile converts; and here were the people at Antioch going ahead in a way just to give these people a sort of excuse to say, "Ah, we told you what would happen if these foreigners were let in!" And naturally the apostles say, "Well, we must be tender to these Jewish converts of ours, we must consider them, they are sensitive; there may be a recoil, a schism, if we do not hold in those at Antioch." We can measure how terrible the danger was by remembering how fierce was the storm when it did finally burst on the head of St. Paul. So severe was the crisis, so imminent the peril. And yet all was warded off; the storm that afterwards broke on St. Paul was kept clear for the moment, and it was all done by one man. One name, the most honourable and beautiful; one name that could hold things together for the time; one name that could persuade, conciliate, win confidence, and avert wrath. It is the name of a man of healing, of advocacy, of intercession, of prevailing comfort—Joses, who was called Barnabas, the Son of Consolation. Now, Barnabas held this unique position, that each side of the controversy had a claim upon him. First for Jerusalem. He is, as we know, the very model and hero of the earliest Church in Jerusalem. In those very first days of the Church, when it still lingered on the Temple steps, when the apostles were altogether dominant, even then one name is singled out as specially catching the spirit of the hour—Barnabas, the Levite, who, "having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet." As if to say that in that beautiful little Church, out of the host of people who were so good, one was supremely good, and he was Barnabas. He had the very spirit of generosity and charity that marked that hour. And yet Barnabas was not himself a Jew of Jerusalem; he was not a man who had been hedged in by all the ancient barriers and customs of the Jewish life. No; he was from Cyprus; he came from the very place to which these Antioch preachers had gone. He was a Jew of the Dispersion; he had got the temper and mind of a Jew who had lived in close

contact with the Gentile life; and so disposed, he had been quick to understand, accept, and trust St. Paul. He was in sympathy with the Church at Jerusalem; he was in sympathy with the freer, bolder doings of the Church at Antioch. He would know these men who were going forward with such a dash. "Let Barnabas go"—that was the end of all these consultations. It was not a hostile mission, but one sent to allay a little alarm caused by wild rumour and exaggeration. Barnabas is just the man to review, to advise, to control anything amiss, to give confidence if he approves. So it was decided—"They sent forth Barnabas." It was a delicate mission; and we know what happened, and how well he carried it out. We read of his wisdom, his sympathy, his width, his firmness, his insight, his courage. He came, and he saw "the grace of God." Not suspicious, jealous, no standing aloof and refusing to acknowledge it. No! he saw it—it was "grace." Only he gave them some warnings against unsteadiness, "exhorting them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." And then he does a most bold thing. He, so far, recognises that it is grace, true and real, that works at Antioch, that he determines to forward it with all his might; and he goes to Tarsus, where Paul is still in hiding, unable to work in a Church that suspects him. So he made the stroke of strokes—brought Saul to Antioch. That was the beginning of the work of St. Paul, of his ministry to the Gentiles; and all came from Barnabas, who had the courage to hold out his hand to Saul, and give him twice over to the Church. So triumphantly did he keep the unity of the Church and avert the storm. Antioch goes on growing apace, Barnabas and Paul working hand in hand for a whole year, "assembling themselves with the Church and teaching much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." "Barnabas," the mediator between the contrasted forces that press for mastery over the fortunes of the Church. Ah! yes, we need his name still, to-day as much as ever. There is always a Jerusalem and an Antioch in the story of the Church. There is always an Antioch being occupied, always some new centre of action to be taken up, some new post on the line of advance, some new venture to be made, breaking new ground. There must always be a new Antioch where the fresh forces of civilisation and culture are active—forces which the Church must go out to, and establish herself in the midst of them. They cannot be reached from the old centres. There must be some adaptation of methods to reach them. Then Jerusalem too. There is—there always ought to be—"Jerusalem" behind us—the witness to the Eternal Truth, the unchanging apostolic deposit, on which the passage of time marks no alteration; there must always be the infallible experience, which touched, which felt, and knew the Word of God—the old, firm, solid centre, whence indeed all new effort must take its rise. Jerusalem—the sacred hearth of the holy fire whence all other fires were lighted; the ancient home, dear to all who name the One Name, Jesus Christ—Jerusalem, the mother of us all. There must always be Jerusalem, and always Antioch; but the difficulty is to keep the two together. Each will be apt to misjudge and to think the worse of the other. Each will judge the other by its most perilous adherents. At Jerusalem they will hear of nothing of Antioch but what is head-strong, reckless, rash, audacious, insolent. At Antioch they will be groaning at the rigid stiffness and obstinacy, nervous timidity, narrowness, and suspiciousness of Jerusalem. So there will alway be the need of a Barnabas, ready to pass from the one to the other centre; gracious, capable, sympathetic, loyal to the backbone; yet appreciative, sensitive, inside the movement, strong yet benign. Such men save the Church at each sharp crisis in her story. We want this son of advocacy to hold us together, some one who is courageous without hardness, conciliatory without weakness, who is so strong that he can afford to be firm. We shall want him in days to come I doubt not. We remember the simple qualification that the Bible gives of St. Barnabas—"He was a man full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." That is all we want—some one sound and healthy to the core, some one felt to be morally wholesome, to have a good heart and a good nature all through, with nothing perverted or twisted about him, a man who has proportion and balance, and all his gifts in genial exercise. That first, "full of the Holy Ghost"—that Holy Ghost who is the Spirit of advocacy, who is so strong, who is so sweet and gentle—that Holy Ghost who is the very power that binds these two opposite gifts. He is the Spirit of fire, of vehement decision, the unconquerable purging force. And yet the Spirit of the wind—the Spirit so pliable, so elastic, so sensitive, so free, so moving, so quick, so ready to pass in and out, "blowing where it listeth." The fire and the wind, strength and gentleness—that

is the power of this blessed Spirit of God. Barnabas has both gifts; and we want a Barnabas nourished by the Holy Ghost, and so lifted and transformed by the power of Him who is fire and wind, to be full of faith, to be full of loyalty to the living Christ. (*H. Scott Holland, M.A.*) *Barnabas at Antioch*:—I. WHAT BARNABAS WAS. 1. "He was a good man"—a man of a kind, affable, and courteous disposition. This "goodness," which is one of the fruits of God's Spirit, should characterise all Christians. It—(1) Adorns the doctrine of God our Saviour. (2) Attracts the notice of the unhappy worldling. (3) Wins the affections of the young. 2. He was also full of the Holy Ghost. An amiable disposition does not make a Christian. There are many whom we esteem for their sweetness of character, but who, like the young man that Jesus loved, yet lack one thing—the gift of the Holy Ghost. (1) No man can be said to be a true Christian till the Holy Spirit has shown him his guilt, and led him to the Saviour. (2) No man can call Jesus Lord but by the Holy Ghost. (3) The sons of God are led by, pray, walk, and live in the Spirit. 3. He was full of faith. He had the most implicit confidence in the remedy he was to apply to the souls of men. II. WHAT HE SAW. "The grace of God"—*i.e.*, its effects. These are sometimes seen in men's—1. Countenances. Wisdom "maketh the face to shine." "A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance." And what can make the heart so merry as the assurance of salvation? Stephen's face was as "the face of an angel." Thus, too, was it with Moses. The believer may not be conscious of this heavenly expression. Others, however, will observe it. 2. Conversation. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." A man cannot himself feel the value of the Saviour without commending His preciousness to others. 3. Conduct. A tree is known by its fruits, so are believers known by their works. III. WHAT HE FELT. He was glad because—1. Souls were saved. A thirsty traveller would not rejoice over a dry well, nor a musician over a tuneless organ. Nor will the believer rejoice over ordinances, however well administered, unless he has evidence afforded that Christ is faithfully preached, and that good is being done to the souls of men. 2. A public profession of Christ was made. "With the heart man believeth, but with his mouth he maketh confession." Nothing gives so much consolation and influence to a minister and his people as when they first see one and then another coming out from the world and joining themselves boldly to the Lord's side. 3. Christ's presence was vouchsafed. Excellent as are a pure creed, a large Church, and an attentive congregation, the faithful minister will esteem them but formal and unprofitable unless he can see resting upon his labours Christ's presence and blessing. IV. WHAT HE DID. Barnabas knew the weakness of the flesh and the power of Satan; and hence, although he saw the grace of God, he rejoiced with trembling. He saw the tree covered indeed with blossoms, and this made him the more anxious lest any of those blossoms should be blighted. He therefore exhorted these disciples. In every age similar exhortation has been needful. There are now, as there were then, false teachers, and temptations to seduce men from Christ into the world. Suffer ye the word of exhortation. 1. Do I address any who are growing weary in well-doing?—any who are beginning to be backsliders? I have an errand, O worldly professor, to thee: "Remember Lot's wife." Arouse yourselves, then, and do your first works. 2. I am doubtless addressing some who do not wish to be considered as religious professors. Now you I cannot exhort "to cleave unto the Lord," for you have never yet come to the Lord. To you I address this: "If in that day the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (*C. Clayton, M.A.*) *The mission of Barnabas*:—I. AUTHENTICATED THE GENUINENESS OF CHRISTIANITY AT ANTIOCH. Vers. 23, 24, shows us that personal Christianity—1. Is essentially identified with Divine grace. It—(1) Originates in it. "Of His own will begat He us." (2) Is sustained by it. (3) Is a reflection of it. 2. Is an observable fact. Barnabas saw it. It is not an inoperative sentiment, a light under a bushel. It must reveal itself. (1) The ruling spirit of life is new. There is a new heart. Old things are passed away. (2) The master-purpose of life is new. The aim is not how to serve self or the world, but to glorify God. (3) The prevailing conduct of life is new. Converted men are about their Father's business. 3. In its extension delights the heart of the good. They know that as it spreads—(1) The world's happiness will be promoted. It is the only power that works off social, political, and moral evils. (2) God's character will be revealed. It clears away all that conceals the moral beauty of God. 4. In its development is dependent on personal efforts. Though it originates in Divine grace, it is only kept by cleaving to God. II. GAVE A NEW NAME TO THE DISCIPLES.

1. Though given in derision—(1) It towers above every other name. (2) Represents the highest thinking. (3) Stands for the Divinest sympathies. (4) Is the inspiration of the grandest enterprises. (5) Produces the sublimest characters. 2. Is destined to supersede all other names that have usurped its place. III. DEVELOPED A NEW SPIRIT OF BENEFICENCE (vers. 27–30). This was—1. Individual. "Every man." There was no one who did not contribute something. 2. Proportionate. "According to his ability"—not according to what others did or expected. 3. Prompt. They did not postpone it for future consideration. 4. Judicious (ver. 30). (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

Ver. 23. **Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad.**—*The grace of God*:—1. ITS SOURCE. 1. God is the God of all grace (1 Pet. v. 10). 2. God is the giver of (Psa. lxxxiv. 11). 3. God's throne is the throne of (Heb. iv. 16). 4. The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of (Zech. xii. 10; Heb. x. 29). 5. Christ was full of (John i. 14). 6. Came by Christ (John i. 17; Rom. v. 15). 7. Given by Christ (1 Cor. i. 4). II. HOW DESCRIBED. 1. As great (chap. iv. 33). 2. Abundant (Rom. v. 20, 21). 3. Rich (Eph. i. 7; ii. 7). 4. Exceeding (2 Cor. ix. 14). 5. Manifold (1 Pet. iv. 10). 6. All-sufficient (2 Cor. xii. 9). 7. True (1 Pet. v. 12). 8. Glorious (Eph. i. 6, 9). III. ITS NECESSITY. 1. Necessary to God's service (Heb. xii. 28). 2. Necessary that Jesus may be glorified in the saints (2 Thess. i. 11, 12). 3. Necessary to prevent pride (Rom. iv. 4, 5, xi. 6; Gal. v. 6; Eph. ii. 7–9). 4. Saints are what they are by (1 Cor. xv. 10; 2 Cor. i. 12). IV. ITS RECIPIENTS. Saints—1. Are heirs of (1 Pet. iii. 7). 2. Receive from Christ (John i. 16). 3. Abound in gifts of (chap. iv. 33; 2 Cor. viii. 1, ix. 8, 14). 4. Should be established in (Heb. xiii. 9). 5. Should be strong in (2 Tim. ii. 1). 6. Should grow in (2 Pet. iii. 18). 7. Should speak with (Eph. iv. 29; Col. iv. 6). (*S. S. Times.*) *The grace of God*:—I. WHAT ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND BY THE GRACE OF GOD? 1. His free love or favour (Eph. ii. 5), by which believers are delivered from the curse of a broken law, from wrath, from the guilt, love, and dominion of sin. 2. A Divine principle in the heart (2 Pet. iii. 18; Col. iii. 16). II. HOW THIS GRACE MAY BE SEEN. 1. In spiritual quickening (Eph. ii. 1). 2. In the work of conversion. 3. In the outward deportment (Matt. vii. 17; xii. 35). 4. By the company kept. 5. By the places of resort frequented (Psa. lxxxiv. 1, 2). III. THE EFFECT THE SIGHT HAD ON BARNABAS. 1. He was glad—(1) That sinners were called. (2) That their lives were reformed. (3) That Christ was believed on. (4) That the gospel was received. (5) That God was glorified thereby. 2. He exhorted them to cleave unto the Lord. (1) Unto His Person. (2) To His blood for pardon. (3) His righteousness for acceptance. (4) His fulness for supplies of grace. (*S. Barnard.*) *A glorious sight and a good man*:—1. That persecution, instead of silencing, has spread the gospel. "Tidings of these things." What things? The persecution which had Saul for its instigator, Stephen for its martyr, and the widespread distribution of Christians for its effect. 2. That God can render any pious agency in His Church soul-saving and successful. The founders of this Church at Antioch, which was destined to play a most conspicuous and commanding part in the history of the Church, do not appear to have been apostles, or regular ministers. 3. That whenever God extends His Church, the Church should add to her concernment and care. The Church at Jerusalem does not appear to have taken umbrage at what was going on at Antioch. They did not say, "This is irregular, we must interdict it; this has not had our sanction, it must receive our condemnation." They would not pronounce a judgment until they had investigated the cause. They selected a true and trusty messenger; they sent him, as far as I can see, not as a spy, or a critic, or a censor, but as a friend, an inquirer, a counsellor. The eye of Barnabas filled his heart. He was "glad." I. WHAT HE SAW. He saw "the grace which (is) of God" (*τὴν χάριν τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ*), *i.e.*, the grace which is manifestly, unmistakably, of God. But how could he see that which in itself is invisible? The grace of God is as viewless as the wind, as impalpable as gravitation. It is a life, and it grows; a leaven, and it leavens the lump; but we might look in vain to see the growth of life, or the influence of leaven. How then did Barnabas see the grace of God? He saw it, as other invisible things are seen, by its effects. We cannot see the wind; but when the trees rustle and their leaves wave, we know that it is because the wind blows. We cannot see gravitation; but when the earth rotates, producing day and night, and revolves, producing the seasons of the year, with their characteristic varieties and attractive beauties, we see by these effects that gravitation is at work. We cannot see the tree grow; but

we know from its foliage and its fruit that it must have grown. It is thus the invisible puts on visibility; and "the invisible things"—even of God Himself—"are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." Where the grace of God is, ignorance of God, both shameful and baneful, gives place to a knowledge of Him which is as wondrous as glorious. Virtue supersedes vice, holiness displaces wickedness, the liar becomes truthful, the blasphemer reverent, the cruel merciful, the selfish beneficent; in fine, God's grace transforms the lion of violence and vice into the lamb of innocence and uprightness. Now, Barnabas saw the wondrous effects of God's grace upon the Grecian believers at Antioch. He saw idolaters discarding their gods, and turning to the "Living God." "Is not this the finger of God?" II. WHAT HE FELT. Great sights always produce inappreciative observers, powerful emotions. The stupendous works of God, the splendid productions of art, and the manifold inventions of genius, in this way fascinate the eye and stimulate the mind of those who study them. But for a devout mind no sight is so pleasing, and no work so glorious, as the progress and peace of God's Church. Of what character was his gladness? 1. Sympathetic. We are sometimes glad, and sometimes sad, we know not why. Now, it was holy unction, associated with a holy gathering, and admitted by a holy sympathy, that led Barnabas, "when he saw the grace of God," to be "glad." 2. Intelligent. Sympathy is a distinguished power in man, but it is not a distinctive prerogative. It exists, often in a larger degree, in the "inferior creatures" around him. But if they feel, if they love, if they rejoice like him in virtue of a sympathetic nature, they are not like him endowed with the powers of reason and the appliances of ratiocination. So here, Barnabas not only felt when he saw this sight, but he thought; and whether he looked upon it with a sympathetic eye, or reflected with an intelligent mind, he saw equal cause for gladness. For what did this work imply? It implied the presence and the propitiousness of God. It implied the triumph of truth over falsehood, and of Christ's beneficent rule over the devil's foul usurpation. If, then, Barnabas had looked upon this spiritual phenomenon as a Christian philosopher only, he might well have been, as he was, "glad." 3. Religious. If, however, as a social and an intellectual man, Barnabas found gladness in the contemplation of this scene, how much more as a religious man and a gospel minister? It was his religion, indeed, that gave complexion and character to the whole case. It was his goodness that gave to him his gladness. Hence ver. 23, declaring his gladness, is conjoined with ver. 24, describing his goodness—"For he was a good man," &c. III. WHAT HE DID. Barnabas was called *Paraclesis* (a name similar to that given to the Holy Ghost), and, in harmony with his name, he "exhorted them" (*παρεκάλει*)—encouraged them, comforted them. Now, his exhortation related to three distinct objects. 1. To God. In fine, God alone is the great Guide, the Almighty Guard, the impregnable Fortress, and the everlasting Friend of His people; and to cleave unto Him is at once their duty, their safety, and their glory. Then think how suggestive this word "cleave" is. To cleave to anything is to grasp it firmly, to hold it tenaciously, and to prefer to be torn in pieces rather than to be torn from it. It is thus the ivy cleaves to the oak, the sailor hangs to the rope that is to rescue him from a furious sea and a watery grave, and thus Ruth "clave" unto Naomi. "Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth clave unto her"; and the incident teaches how much more there is in cleaving than in kissing. So let young converts, and even aged saints, cleave unto or continue "to abide with the Lord"; then they will avoid every by-path. 2. To their own hearts. "With purpose of heart." There is tremendous force in these words. Without a purpose a man in this world will never become a power—never! Abraham and Moses, Paul and Peter, Augustine and Peter the Hermit, Luther and Knox, Latimer, Ridley, and Cranmer, wielded great powers because they were swayed by great purposes. But of all purposes, that of the heart is the most thorough. It quails in presence of no danger. The eye may fail to see the shore from which we sail; the hand may fail to hold its grasp, or may be severed from its object; but when the eye is lost in distance, and the hand is no longer capable of grasping, the heart "clings" to a land it cannot see, and to a person or cause it cannot grasp—"clings" with infinite longing and undying love. 3. To their entire number. He exhorted them "all." This shows—(1) His impartiality. He did not select for special regard the rich, the learned, and the Hellenist, to the exclusion of the poor, the unlearned, and the Hebrew. (2) His discrimination. He knew full well there were duties which were not common to all Christians. (*John Stokoe.*) *Apostolic generosity in encouraging goodness:*—The character in which

St. Barnabas is here presented to us is that of a person greatly rejoicing in other men's goodness. He was glad when he saw the grace of God in his brethren. Of his doing so, there are several other instances; indeed, almost the whole of his conduct towards St. Paul is full, from the beginning, of such generous and affectionate joy. Now, concerning this disposition to rejoice in other men's goodness, it is much easier to see how amiable it looks in others than to practise it one's self in good earnest. Do not men envy others, not merely for their outward advantages, but for their goodness itself; especially for those parts of goodness which they themselves have not the heart to imitate? It is an ancient story, told of a virtuous heathen, that when a loud outcry was once raised against him, and he was to be banished from his country, a person of whom he asked a reason why he gave his vote against him, replied, "I have no objection to you, but I am quite tired of hearing every one call you the Just." And so throughout life, there is a disposition in the unrenewed heart to grudge all those graces which go too far beyond itself; a disposition the very opposite to that which the Holy Ghost wrought in St. Barnabas by faith. He rejoiced, but these are sorry, on beholding the grace of God. It certainly must require no small faith to believe that it is better on the whole for others to do the good which you desire than for it to be done by yourself. St. Barnabas must have his heart steadily fixed on the unseen rewards prepared on high, to make him acquiesce thus joyfully in his companion, St. Paul, receiving so much more of the encouragement provided for apostolical men in this life. Such self-denial, when regularly kept up, and not only indulged now and then, out of laziness or partial affection, is one of the clearest tokens that God's Holy Spirit is with men, preparing them for eternal glory. And it is seen in nothing so much as in making persons continually watchful, to cherish and confirm one another in every good purpose of heart; in which respect the Spirit of the gospel is most directly opposed to the evil and selfish spirit of this age. For I know not how it is, but people, under pretence of liberty of one sort or another, are come to be, very generally, quite indifferent about the grace and salvation of others. Surely the hard, indifferent way in which too many of us treat the thought of our neighbour's condition towards God is sadly like Cain's way: sadly like the temper which led to a brother's murder. The Christian, Catholic, renewed heart is altogether different from this; it is not at all satisfied, as men of the world are, with persons going on decently and quietly; it wants them to be inwardly sound and pure; first of all to have a good "purpose of heart," and then to persevere in that purpose, "cleaving" to our Lord and Saviour continually. That anxiety about your neighbour's soul, which Christian love causes you to feel, will be a continual, a watchful, a self-denying, but, for the most part, a silent principle. It will show itself in deeds rather than in words, in timely prevention of mischief rather than in late and loud remonstrance. It will not be very sanguine, nor reckon too much of any good which appears to be done, knowing that we are all by nature unstable as water. Nor yet will it be too soon disheartened or disconcerted, knowing that there is hope even of the worst, and that constant efforts and prayers, with the Church of God to your aid, will, by the aid of His good Spirit, prevail against everything but hardened obstinacy. Above all, this care of others' good purposes, to be at all like that of St. Barnabas, must be accompanied with scrupulously good example; even as it is here said of this holy apostle, very emphatically, that "he was a good man." Finally, the good advice of St. Barnabas, here given to the people of Antioch, may well serve as a kind of watchword for all Christians of every station, in times when the Faith and the Church are being violently assailed by their enemies. Then is the time to practise a holy obstinacy; not to mind if you be not able to give reasons, and talk knowingly about things, but "with purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord"; that is, to abide by what the Church has taught you, let people say what they will. This will be called bigotry and stubbornness; and they who are wise in their own conceit will insist on your giving a reason for everything. Well, then, let your reason be given, not in words, but in a holy life. (*Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times."*)

Barnabas:—I. HIS HISTORY AND CHARACTER. 1. His ancestors had settled in Cyprus, for what purposes we know not. There Barnabas was born. He was called at first Joses, but after his conversion to Christianity, Barnabas, perhaps because of his estate—he was a wealthy man, and relieved the necessities of the poor—or because by his preaching he consoled the people of God, and encouraged sinners to come to Christ. 2. Ministers often differ considerably. Some are sons of thunder, others have "the tongue of the learned." Now, never oppose ministers to each other. Their situation, natural complexion, gifts, graces,

are different; but the Church needs them, and can well employ them all. Let Paul therefore plant, and Apollos water; let one comfort the feeble-minded, and another be set for the defence of the gospel; let one lay the foundation, and another build thereon. Each has his own work, and each shall have his own reward. 3. Much of the dispositions of persons may be discovered by the objects which awaken their attention and desire when they first enter a country or a town. Some are immediately looking about for scenery, some for curiosities, some for trade, some for buildings, some for libraries, some for pictures. Barnabas was alive to something else—it was "the one thing needful." He immediately looked after the cause of God. II. His DISCOVERY. 1. "The grace of God" is a principle. Seen it must be to God, "to whom all hearts are open"; and known, it may be, by the individuals themselves. But how can it be seen by others? I know only one way: by its effects. You cannot see life, but you can see the man alive. You cannot see health, but you can see the freshness and vigour of the healthy man. You do not break a tree to examine the rind, or open it to examine the wood, to know of what sort it is; a tree is known by its fruits. God says, "I will put My Spirit within them." But who is to know this? Read on—"and cause them to walk in My statutes." James says to the professor of religion, "Show me thy faith without thy works. I will show thee my faith by my works": I will show thee the spring by the stream; the sun in the shining; the creed by the conduct. 2. When may we be said to "see the grace of God"? I expect to find in a man in whom there is a work of grace—(1) A change in his outward conduct. If he has been vicious before, he learns to be virtuous; the drunkard becomes sober, &c. (2) A love of good men; for like not only begets, but also attracts, like. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." (3) A peculiar attachment to the Scriptures. (4) A regard for the Sabbath. I am sure that the righteous man always "calls the Sabbath a delight, and the holy of the Lord, honourable." "The grace of God," therefore, will lead a man to regard the means of grace. (5) Speech seasoned with grace. Physicians look at the tongues of their patients. Ministers should always examine the tongues of their patients. If these are disordered, they may be assured something else is disordered; for "ont of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." (6) A temper conformed to the spirit of Christ. Some, in exculpation of their fretful or fierce tempers, say, that the grace of God is sometimes grafted on a crab tree; yes, but when the tree is so grafted, we expect that it will bring forth fruit, not according to the stock, but according to the scion. (7) Family piety. (8) Consistency. 3. With regard to the visibility of Divine grace, there are three things which I must remark. (1) We may, after all, be deceived with regard to it. The imitation may be so nice and fine as to impose upon the most judicious observers. None of the disciples suspected Judas; and Peter, after baptizing Simon Magus, was careful to write of Stephanas, "A faithful brother, as I suppose." (2) You are not to consider persons as destitute of "the grace of God," when their lives are blameless, and they are regular at the means of grace, and in their discharge of the duties of religion. When things are fair in character, you are not to go motive-hunting. It is better to be occasionally deceived, than to live always in a temperature of suspicion. (3) Divine grace is compatible with infirmities; otherwise we should exclude all from the possession of it. Our Saviour does not "despise the day of small things." Let us follow His example. III. His PLEASURE. What he saw was not a pleasing sight to all men. It was a hell to Satan to see how things were now going on; and there are those who too much resemble him. The elder brother did not rejoice when he saw the prodigal received, and there are Pharisees now who are ready to say, "Go to heaven with publicans and harlots"! But the salvation of the sinner is "the pleasure of the Lord." The Saviour here "sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied." The angels "rejoice over one sinner that repenteth." And every convert may say, "They that fear thee will be glad when they see me." We may consider Barnabas as a partaker of this pleasure. 1. As a man of piety. Whenever a man is converted, God has a subject born. Here is one in whom He is then glorified passively, because he displays traces of His perfections, actively, as he is now "made willing in the day of His power." Can a man of piety see this and not rejoice? 2. As a man of benevolence. Barnabas was pleased when he saw the poor healed, the hungry fed, &c. But he knew that the body was nothing to the soul, or the time to eternity. What is every other attainment compared with that godliness which is "profitable unto all things"! Besides, every subject of Divine grace is not only blessed in himself,

but he is made a blessing to others. Can a man of benevolence look on such, and not rejoice? 3. As a minister who had come here from preaching. There are some who cannot rejoice to see things done by others, especially if they do not belong to their own communion. But if a man has the spirit of Barnabas, he will be able to say, Let God employ what instruments He pleases, therein I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. IV. His CONCERN. "Exhorted them." Observe—1. The importance of his admonition—that they would "cleave unto the Lord," *i.e.*, the Lord Jesus. Him they had received; in Him they were to walk. Had we heard Barnabas, it would have been something to this effect: Cleave to Him as your Teacher, as your Redeemer, as your Support in all your duties and in all your conflicts, as your Comforter, as your Master, as your Example. 2. The nature of it. He "exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they should cleave unto the Lord." Now this impulse—not only conviction, but resolution—always issues out of the heart; and what is religion, unless the heart is engaged from the beginning to the end? Where the man can say with David, "My heart is fixed," he will push on notwithstanding difficulties, and will convert hindrances into furtherances. 3. Its extensiveness. He "exhorted them all"; not only those who were weak in the faith, but those who were strong; not only the young, but the old. When was Solomon's heart led away? In his old age. And does not Paul even say to that fine young man Timothy, "Flee youthful lusts"? (*W. Jay.*) *The experience and work of Barnabas:*—I. THE FACT WHICH HE OBSERVED. The grace of God operating in the converts. Note—1. That conversion is always the result of Divine grace—that is, God's free and sovereign favour. "For by grace are ye saved, through faith," &c. True conversion thus resulting from Divine grace always becomes apparent and manifest by its effects. In place of the works of the flesh there will be the fruits of the Spirit, in place of carelessness, impenitence, unbelief, worldliness, and, peradventure, open and flagrant crime, there will be seriousness, there will be contrition, faith, holiness, love to God and to man. II. THE EMOTION WITH WHICH, IN THE CONTEMPLATION OF THE FACT, HE BECAME INSPIRED. "He was glad." This gladness is justly excited because of—1. The personal happiness which the operation of Divine grace in conversion secures to those who feel it. 2. The honour which the operation of Divine grace in conversion secures to the Godhead In every conversion there is a display of the Father; for by His purpose the conversion was accomplished, the conversion was directed. There is a display of the Son; for by His sacrifice the conversion was purchased. There is a display of the Spirit; for by His agency the conversion was effected. III. THE EXHORTATION WHICH, IN CONNECTION WITH THE EMOTION, HE EXPRESSED AND URGED. Mark—1. Its nature. Purpose signifies firm and resolute determination. "Cleave to the Lord" is an expression of Hebrew origin, and it occurs two or three times in the earlier part of the Old Testament Scriptures in a striking manner. To cleave to an individual seems to imply the act of a man anxious to obtain a blessing from another—a man who lays fast hold on his person, being resolved not to permit his departure until the blessing has been obtained; and this is the spirit in which we are exhorted with purpose and determination of heart to cleave unto the Lord. We ought to be steadfast in cleaving to the principles of the Lord; in obeying the commandments of the Lord; in promoting the praise and the glory of the Lord. And each one in whom Divine grace has operated must have it as a constant desire, that in the spirit of steadfastness he may be preserved till death. For this purpose, use the means which God has been pleased to appoint—meditation, the study of His Word with prayer, social conversation with those who are established in the faith and hope of the gospel, diligent and devout attendance on the public ordinances and means of grace, and then the result will be accomplished, and you will cleave unto the Lord. You will emphatically be kept from falling, and be presented faultless before the presence of the Divine glory with great and exceeding joy. 2. The reasons by which this exhortation may be enforced. "Cleave to the Lord"—(1) That you may not produce disgrace to the gospel you have professed. (2) That you may continue and complete the joy of those who have rejoiced over your conversion. (3) That you may partake of the highest joy in this world which Christianity can impart. (4) That you may become endowed with capacities of usefulness to the hearts of others. (5) That you may prepare for that final recompense which will be your portion throughout the eternity of heaven. (*J. Parsons.*) *The experience and work of Barnabas:*—I. THE GRACE THAT BARNABAS SAW. 1. What a man sees depends on what he looks for. An architect would have seen buildings, a merchant wares, a soldier fortifications. And Barnabas had an eye to business. He saw a temple

built of living stones; to win souls was the gain he coveted; and like a good soldier he calculated how these teeming thousands might be made subjects of His King. True, he saw sights that made him weep, but he does not mention them any more than a navigator reports the vast tracts of water over which he travels. The business of the latter is to report the discovery of islands standing out of the waste of waters, of the former the state of the Church which stood out amidst the waste of sin. 2. Barnabas had this grace in himself, or he would never have seen it in others. Philosophers saw the same people and pronounced them vile fanatics, and many to-day would have done the same. God's grace is only to be spiritually discerned. 3. But this grace is nothing less than the free pardon of sin, bestowed by God and accepted by man. II. THE GLADNESS HE EXPERIENCED. Incidentally it throws light on his own character. Tell me what gladdens or grieves a man and I will tell you what he is. The prosperity that made him glad was—1. Spiritual. Men with an eye and a taste like his are wanted now. We are carried away in a mighty tide of material progress; but the gospel is a more precious treasure than all our inventions. 2. Possessed and exercised by others. There is no finer feature in a man's character than the tendency to rejoice in a neighbour's good. "Charity envieth not." 3. Produced by others. It is easy for a minister to be glad when he sees his own work prospering; but it requires no little piety to rejoice over another's. But God teaches us that converting power does not reside in an arm of flesh. Unknown refugees founded a Church in Antioch while gifted apostles seemed to be spending their strength in vain. 4. Heightened by the contrasted masses of moral misery around. 5. No sentimental or selfish emotion. He brought Saul to share it. III. THE EXHORTATION THAT HE GAVE. That they should cleave to the Lord. There is nothing here about sacramental grace, the true Church, or a consecrated priesthood. In primitive Christianity everything was made to depend on personal union to a personal Saviour. There is mystery here. Yes, and I have seen a huge piece of iron hanging on another not welded or glued, but clinging with such a tenacity that it could bear my weight and its own. A wire charged with an electric current was in contact with its mass, and hence the adhesion. What that wire is to it, love is to us. We love Him, for He first loved us. Those who would keep a man close to God by brandishing the terrors of judgment before him, turn the wrong pole of the magnet to the steel and thereby repel instead of attract. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *The exhortation of Barnabas:*—I. WHAT HE SAW. "The grace of God," and wherever that grace is made visible there we are to recognise a brother. Augustine said, "Where Christ is there is the Church." True! but where is Christ? Wherever Christlike men manifest a life drawn from, and kindred with, His life. And so we say where the grace of Christ is visible, there is the Church. That great truth is sinned against by the successors of the more Jewish portion of that Church who sent Barnabas to Antioch, who exalt sacraments and priests to the same place as the Judaizers did the rite of the old covenant. The attempt is about as wise as to try to measure a network fine enough to keep back a stream. The true answer to all that assumption which confines the free flow of the water of life to the conduits of sacraments and orders, and will only allow the wind that bloweth where it listeth to make music in the pipes of their organs, is simply the homely one which shivered a corresponding theory in the fair open mind of Barnabas. It used to be an axiom that there was no life in the sea beyond a certain limit of a few hundred feet. And then when that was settled, the *Challenger* put down her dredge five miles, and brought up healthy and good-sized living things. We have all been too much accustomed to draw arbitrary limits to the diffusion of the life of Christ among men. II. WHAT HE FELT. It was a triumph of Christian principle to recognise the grace of God under new forms, and in so strange a place. It was a still greater triumph to hail it with rejoicing. We are apt to forget the strength of the convictions which these Jewish Christians had to overcome. Hence the context seems to consider that Barnabas's gladness needs explanation, and so it adds, "for he was a good man, full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." And there is much to overcome if we would know this Christlike gladness. Our natural interest in the well-being of our own Churches makes our sympathies flow most deeply in denominational channels. And then come in abundance of less worthy motives, and we have but a very tepid joy in anybody else's prosperity. Let us set a jealous watch over our hearts that self-absorption, or denominationalism, or envy do not make the sight a pain instead of a joy; and let us remember that the eye salve which will purge our dim sight to behold the grace of God in all its forms is that grace itself. III. WHAT HE SAID. 1. The exhortation itself. The sum of all

objective religion is Christ—the sum of all subjective religion is cleaving to Him. From whatever point we approach Christianity, it all resolves itself into the person of Christ. He is the revelation of God; theology properly so called is but the formulating of the facts which He gives us. He is the perfect exemplar of humanity! Wrenched away from Him, Christian morality has no being. He is the sacrifice for the world, the salvation of which flows from what He does, and not merely from what He taught, or was. There is a constant tendency to separate the results of Christ's life and death, and unconsciously to make these the sum of our religion and faith. Therefore it is well to mark how vividly these early Christains apprehended a living Lord as the sum and substance of all which they had to grasp. We begin to be Christians, as this context tells us, when we "turn to the Lord." We continue to be Christians, as Barnabas reminded these beginners, by "cleaving to the Lord." Let us cleave to Him—(1) By continual renewal of our first faith in Him. The longest line may be conceived of as produced simply by the motion of its initial point. So our progress should not consist in leaving our early acts of faith behind us, but in repeating them over and over again till the points coalesce in one unbroken line which goes straight to the throne and heart of Jesus. As in some great symphony the theme which was given out in low notes on one poor instrument recurs over and over again embroidered with varying harmonies, and unfolding a richer music till it swells into all the grandeur of the triumphant close, so our lives should be bound into a unity, and in their unity bound to Christ by the constant renewal of our early faith. Each moment must be united to Christ by its own act of faith, or it will be separated from Him. So living in the Lord, dying in the Lord, sleeping in Jesus, we shall at the last be found in Him at that day, and shall be raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. (2) By habitual contemplation. There can be no real continuous closeness of intercourse with Him, except by thought ever recurring to Him amidst all the tumult of our busy days. The Church has forgotten how to meditate. Many of us are so busy thinking about Christianity that we have lost our hold of Christ. Cleave to the Lord by habitual play of meditative thought on the treasures hidden in His name, and waiting like gold in the quartz, to be the prize of our patient sifting. And when the great truths embodied in Him stand clear before us, next must come into exercise the moral side of faith, the voluntary act of trust, the making our own of the blessings which He holds out to us. (3) By constant outgoings of our love to Him. The same love which is the bond of perfectness between man and man, is the bond between us and Christ. Cold natures may carp, but love is justified of her children, and Christ accepts the homage that has a heart in it. The order is faith, love, obedience, that threefold cord knits men to Christ and Christ to men. For the understanding a continuous grasp of Him as the object of thought. For the heart a continuous out-going to Him as the object of our love. For the will a continuous submission to Him as the Lord of our obedience. For the whole nature a continuous cleaving to Him as the object of our faith and worship. 2. Its sufficiency. If Barnabas had been like some of us, he would have said, This irregular work has been well done, but there are no authorised teachers here. The first thing is to give these people the blessing of bishops and priests. Some of us would have said, A good work has been done, but these people are terribly ignorant. The best thing would be to get ready as soon as possible some manual of Christian doctrine. Some of us would have said, No doubt they have been converted, but we fear there has been too much of the emotional in the preaching. Plain practical instruction in Christian duty is the one thing they want. Barnabas knew better. He did not despise organisation, nor orthodoxy, nor practical righteousness, but he knew that all three, and everything else that any man needed for his perfecting, would come, if only they kept near to Christ, and that nothing else was of any use if they did not. (1) We spend much effort in perfecting our organisations, and I have not a word to say against it. But heavier machinery needs more power in the engine, and that means greater capacity in your boilers and more fire in your furnace. (2) A definite theology is needful, but the basis of all theology is the personal possession of Him who is the wisdom of God, and the light of the world. (3) Plain straightforward righteousness and every-day morality come most surely when a man is keeping close to Christ. The same life is strength in the arm, pliancy in the fingers, swiftness in the foot, light in the eye, music on the lips; so the same grace is Protean in its forms, and to His servants who trust Him, Christ ever says, "What would ye that I should do unto you? Be it even as thou wilt." The same mysterious power lives in the swaying

branch, and in the veined leaf, and in the blushing clusters. With like wondrous transformations of the one grace, the Lord pours Himself into our spirits, filling all needs and fitting for all circumstances. Therefore for us all, individuals and Churches, this remains the prime command, With purpose of heart cleave unto the Lord. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Visible grace*:—Provide things honest in the sight of all men. Not only be honest, but let your honesty be seen. "A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid." "Show forth the praises of Him who hath called you." As Bengel remarks in connection with our text: "A gem should not merely be a gem; it should be properly set in a ring, that its splendour may meet the eye." **Exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.**—*Cleaving unto the Lord*:—The only rational religious belief is that goodness is almighty, and the great Being, who comprehends all goodness in Himself, our Father. We owe Him everything, for He hath both made and redeemed us, and we should cherish towards Him the devoted affection of a son to his father, such as was shown in the following story. A little boy, the son of Sir George Staunton, was with his father, during his return to England, on the deck of the ship *Lion*. The father, imagining that a French man-of-war was going to attack them, desired his son to go below. "My father, I will never forsake you," was the youth's spirited and affectionate reply. So, when God's way seems the path of danger, we should resolve to stand to it at all cost. *Determined purpose of heart*:—The Pastor Jacob of Oroomiah, Persia, writing to his son, in Manchester, narrates the following: "I have a young Mohammedan friend whose name is Koola Bak. For nearly a year and a half he has been coming to my house to hear the Word of God. On account of his being so Christ-like, some wicked people went and complained to their Great Moshtahed, or priest. He was taken to the Moshtahed's house and asked what was his faith. He replied, 'In Jesus Christ.' Upon hearing this the Moshtahed rose up in great rage and beat him with his stick on the head. He again asked him the same question three times. The young man gave the same reply each time. He was then bound upon a beam and beaten by three servants with switches until the blood gushed out of his back and feet. Shortly afterwards the young man came to my house with his bleeding body and told me all about it. He said to me: 'Pastor, I will not give up Christ, even if I am to be killed. I believe that He is my Saviour, and is able to deliver me from these wicked people, who try to torment me because of my belief in Jesus.' A few days after this incident took place, the Moshtahed sent a gift to the young man and asked his pardon. The next day the Moshtahed with his brother visited the young man's house, and they still try to win his heart, but he boldly said, 'No, it is impossible for me to forsake Jesus, in whom I have believed as my Redeemer.' So they left him and went their way." *Religious persistency*:—Barnabas was the "Son of Consolation." But exhortation is as needful as consolation, and he could stir up as well as comfort. He knew that it was not sufficient to begin well; it is the end that proves and crowns the whole. I. THE AIM OF THE EXHORTATION. Barnabas urges his hearers to cleave unto the Lord. The exhortation is urgently needed—1. Because there is a natural tendency in the human heart to cleave to inferior things. 2. Because He is the only one worthy of our regard. He is the only Teacher, Saviour, Helper, Protector. The only Comforter, for He is the God of all comfort. II. THE CHARACTER OF THE DUTY. "With full purpose of heart." This implies thoroughness and persistency. 1. Without the heart religion is a poor business. So in anything else. Unless the affections and purpose are enlisted a man enters upon his business concerns with listlessness and apathy. 2. Without the heart nothing else can be given. It is principle God looks at. Outward actions weigh but little with Him. But it is here "full purpose of heart." The whole soul is thrown into the work. It is not a divided heart. (*Homilist.*) *Religious steadfastness*:—I. We exhort you to this DECISION AND MANIFESTATION OF CHARACTER. "Cleave unto the Lord," consecrate yourselves to Him. II. We exhort you TO ADHERE TO THE FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS OF THE GOSPEL. "Cleave unto the Lord" in His personal character as revealed in the sacred Scriptures. III. We exhort you to cherish A SPIRIT OF CHARITY TO ALL WHO DIFFER. The difference of Christians on minor points proves the truth of the great ones on which they are agreed. IV. We exhort you TO PROMOTE THE WORSHIP OF GOD. Attend to private, to family, and to public worship. V. We exhort you to vigorous attempts TO RECOVER SINNERS. (*J. Liefchild, D.D.*) *Cleaving to the Lord*:—I. THE EXHORTATION. 1. It supposes those to whom it is directed to be already entered upon a religious course of life. 2. It requires the habitual exercise of all the graces of the Christian life; the constant performance

of every commanded duty. 3. It requires that we make an open and honest profession of our adherence to the Lord. 4. It requires that we persevere in our adherence to the Lord to the end of our lives. We must hold on our way, and wax stronger and stronger as we proceed. II. SOME MOTIVES AND ARGUMENTS. 1. That the same reasons which at first determined you to choose the ways of God, are equally forcible for inciting you to persevere in them to the end. 2. That all the bribes which can be offered, in order to seduce you from your adherence to the Lord, are vain, precarious, and unsatisfying. 3. What obligations you lie under to this Lord to whom you are exhorted in the text, to "cleave with purpose of heart." 4. That this duty, although difficult, is by no means impracticable. All necessary aid is provided for you, and ready to be conveyed to you as often as you shall ask it. III. SOME DIRECTIONS. 1. Labour to have your minds as richly furnished as possible with true Christian knowledge. 2. Besides the speculative knowledge of Divine truths, you must also labour to acquire an inward experience and relish of them. 3. If you would cleave with steadfastness unto the Lord, attend constantly to the inward frame and temper of your hearts. Make conscience of watching over your most secret thoughts. 4. "Be not high-minded, but fear." Remember what our blessed Lord said to His disciples, "Without Me ye can do nothing." A holy diffidence of ourselves is the true temper of a Christian, and will both serve to keep us out of the way of temptation, and teach us to act with the caution of men who perceive their danger and are careful to shun it. 5. Avoid, as much as possible, the fellowship of wicked men. 6. Beware of neglecting the instrumental duties of religion. (*R. Walker.*) *The subjects of Divine grace exhorted to cleave unto the Lord*:—I. THAT THE CONVERSION OF SINNERS TO THE LORD IS JUSTLY ASCRIBABLE TO HIS GRACE. II. THAT WHERE THE GRACE OF GOD IS ENJOYED IT WILL BE SEEN IN ITS EFFECTS. 1. All who profess to enjoy the grace of God should be careful thus to show it—On principles of prudence; that their own eternal salvation may be secured (2 Pet. i. 5–10). On principles of piety; that God may hereby be glorified (Matt. v. 16; 1 Pet. iv. 11, 12). On principles of benevolence; that their weak brethren may be strengthened (Heb. xiii. 13), and that their pastors may hereby be comforted (1 Thess. iii. 8; 3 John 4). As an incitement to holy diligence, on this generous principle, our text teaches us—III. THAT WHEN THE GRACE OF GOD IS SEEN IT AFFORDS PLEASURE TO WELL-DISPOSED MINDS. "When he saw the grace of God, he was glad"; and his joy was both pious and pure. 1. His joy on this occasion was pious. It was the joy of a saint excited by seeing the grace of God manifested, and sinners saved. He was glad, as "a good man," or a lover of mankind; because hereby many were benefited, being raised to a state of safety, happiness, and honour (Rom. v. 1; Eph. ii. 1–6); and the welfare of the civil state was also promoted (Prov. xiv. 32). He was glad, as a holy man; for he was "full of the Holy Ghost." Hence he was glad, because the felicity of angels was hereby augmented (Luke xv. 10). Christ was hereby most pleasingly satisfied (Isa. liii. 10, 11); and God was hereby glorified (Isa. lxi. 1–3). He was glad, as a faithful man; for he "was full of faith." Hence, he confidently expected the fulfilment of God's Word (Psa. ii. 8). He beheld in these converted Gentiles the earnest of Christ's universal dominion, and could exclaim with David (Psa. lxxii. 19, 20). 2. His joy on this occasion was pure. He was glad, though the subjects of this grace were Gentile strangers; it was not the joy of bigotry: and though he was not the instrument of their conversion, it was not the joy of self-complacency. 3. His joy on this occasion was exemplary; worthy of our imitation. Wherever the grace of God is seen we should rejoice: without bigotry, this is unchristian (Eph. v. 24), and without envy, for this is devilish (James iii. 14–16). Our text teaches us—IV. THAT CLEAVING UNTO THE LORD IS THE INDISPENSABLE DUTY OF ALL CHRISTIAN CONVERTS. 1. By the Lord is meant our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our Guide (Psa. xlviii. 14), our Sovereign (Matt. xxiii. 8), our Strength (Psa. xlvi. 1), and our Foundation (Isa. xxviii. 16). 2. It is the duty of Christian converts to cleave unto the Lord. Cleave unto Him—By habitual attention (Acts iii. 22, 23), by persevering obedience (Heb. v. 9; Psa. cvi. 3), by importunate prayer (Heb. iv. 16), and by entire dependence (1 Pet. ii. 5, 6; Jude 21, 22). 3. All Christian converts should thus cleave unto Him. All, of every age, of every religious attainment, and of every station in the Church (John xv. 5; Heb, iii. 12). 4. We should thus cleave unto the Lord "with purpose of heart." This should and must be the object of our deliberate choice (Deut. xxx. 19, 20), of our steadfast resolution (Josh. xxiv. 15), and of our incessant care (1 John ii. 28; Phil. iii. 16). Our text teaches

US—V. THAT AFFECTIONATE EXHORTATION IS CONDUCTIVE TO THE STEADFAST PERSEVERANCE OF BELIEVERS IN CHRIST. "He exhorted them," &c. Here we may observe—1. To whom this exhortation should be addressed. As cleaving unto the Lord is a duty required of all Christians, so we find all of every description exhorted in the oracles of God. Private Christians are urged to this (John xv. 4; Col. ii. 6); and public characters are also thus stimulated to exertion (1 Tim. iv. 16). 2. By whom this exhortation should be employed. It should be given—By all those to whom the care of souls is committed (1 Cor. xiv. 3; Col. i. 28), and by all private Christians in their mutual communications (Heb. iii. 13, x. 24, 25). 3. How this exhortation should be enforced. It should be urged by the consideration of our own total insufficiency (Jer. x. 23; 2 Cor. iii. 5), of Christ's all-sufficiency (Heb. vii. 25), of Satan's malice, who purposes and seeks to destroy us (1 Pet. v. 8, 9), of the dreadful evils to which apostacy would expose us (Heb. x. 38; Rev. iii. 11; 1 Chron. xxviii. 9), and of the blessings with which God is engaged to crown unfainting perseverance (Gal. vi. 9; 2 Pet. i. 10, 11). *Converts exhorted:*—Barnabas knew that it required quite as much "grace" to go on as it does to begin. And he knew how only they could secure it, by cleaving unto the Lord. I. THE IMPORTANCE OF A PURPOSE. When there are religious feelings, and convictions, the great thing is to gather them all up to some distinct object. This "purpose" must not be only of the deliberate intention of the mind, but a "purpose of the heart." But then feeling needs a focus. If you wish to keep a thought, turn that thought into action, else it would all evaporate. Give it an object, and it will live. The question then is, what fixed "purpose of heart" can we make for ourselves to-day? I advise you to determine—1. That henceforth it shall appear to all men "whose you are and whom you serve." 2. That your besetting sin—temper, or selfishness, or indolence shall be conquered. 3. That you will be more real and earnest in your private devotions. 4. That you will throw more love into daily life, and be more attentive to all home duties. 5. That you will exercise greater care, and more regularity, in your religious duties. 6. That you will undertake some new work for God; become a Sunday-school teacher, or a district visitor, &c. Now if you would live for any such purpose, you must be much in prayer. Put less trust in your own good intentions. Be looking up for sustaining grace, for the great gift of perseverance. II. THE GREAT PURPOSE OF CHRISTIAN LIFE IS TO CLEAVE UNTO THE LORD. 1. This means to be feeling that He is your very life; and to be always trying to make Him closer, and closer. It is God's word for marriage: "A man shall cleave unto his wife." 2. Only remember the power of this "cleaving" comes not from you who "cleave," but from Him who all the while draws and holds you to the "cleaving." He has "apprehended," *i.e.*, "laid hold of you," that you may "lay hold" on Him. 3. Meanwhile, be very jealous of anything coming in to separate you for a moment, for that moment that you are separated from Christ your soul dies! 4. But do not be content even with mere nearness. There must be oneness. If you are really a believer, you are one with the Christ, just as any member in your body is at this moment one with your head. And, oh! what life, strength, safety, heaven is here. Your life is in Him. Where you are, at this moment, He is. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *New disciples admonished:*—To cleave to the Lord is—1. To adhere to Him as the Revealer of the Truth, and to the Truth as revealed by Him. 2. To make Him the object of our constant faith. 3. To abide in His commandments. 4. To follow His example, who went about doing good and bore His Cross. 5. To abide in Him who is the fountain of grace and the Giver of the Spirit. 6. To cling to Him as our Portion and Happiness. (*J. W. Alexander, D.D.*) *Cleaving to the Lord:*—At the ocean-side, where cliffs jut out to the waves, certain molluscs may be found sticking tightly to the rocks. Each mollusc clings so tenaciously that the concussion of the waves cannot smite it off. The secret of its hold is that the mollusc is empty. If it were filled either with flesh or with air, it would drop off immediately. This beautifully illustrates the condition of every sincere, humble, conscientious believer, who has been emptied of self, and therefore clings, by a Divine law of adhesion, closely to the Rock of Ages. If he should become puffed with pride and self-conceit, or gorged with fleshly indulgence, he would yield to the waves of temptation and be swept away.

Ver. 24. **For he was a good man.**—*The feast of St. Barnabas the apostle: tolerance of religious error:*—The text says that "he was a good man, full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." This praise of goodness is explained by his very name,

Barnabas, "the Son of Consolation," which was given him, as it appears, to mark his character of kindness, gentleness, considerateness, warmth of heart, compassion, and munificence. His acts answer to this account of him. The first we hear of him is his selling some land which was his, and giving the proceeds to the apostles, to distribute to his poorer brethren. The next notice of him sets before us a second deed of kindness, of as amiable, though of a more private character. "When Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles, and declared how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus, in the name of Jesus." Next, he is mentioned in the text, and still with commendation of the same kind. How had he shown that "he was a good man"? by going on a mission of love to the first converts at Antioch. On the other hand, on two occasions his conduct is scarcely becoming an apostle, as instancing somewhat of that infirmity which uninspired persons of his peculiar character frequently exhibit. Both are cases of indulgence towards the faults of others, yet in a different way; the one, an over-easiness in a matter of doctrine, the other, in a matter of conduct. With all his tenderness for the Gentiles, yet on one occasion he could not resist indulging the prejudices of some Judaizing brethren, who came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Peter first was carried away; before they came, "he did eat with the Gentiles, but when they were come, he withdrew, and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch, that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation." The other instance was his indulgent treatment of Mark, his sister's son, which occasioned the quarrel between him and St. Paul. "Barnabas determined to take with them," on their apostolic journey, "John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work." He is an ensample and warning to us, not only as showing us what we ought to be, but as evidencing how the highest gifts and graces are corrupted in our sinful nature, if we are not diligent to walk step by step, according to the light of God's commandments. Are we sufficiently careful to do what is right and just, rather than what is pleasant? do we clearly understand our professed principles, and do we keep to them under temptation? The history of St. Barnabas will help us to answer this question honestly. Now I fear we lack altogether, what he lacked in certain occurrences in it, firmness, manliness, godly severity. I fear it must be confessed, that our kindness, instead of being directed and braced by principle, too often becomes languid and unmeaning; that it is exerted on improper objects, and out of season, and thereby is uncharitable in two ways, indulging those who should be chastised, and preferring their comfort to those who are really deserving. We are over-tender in dealing with sin and sinners. We are deficient in jealous custody of the revealed Truths which Christ has left us. We allow men to speak against the Church, its ordinances, or its teaching, without remonstrating with them. To be kind is their one principle of action; and, when they find offence taken at the Church's creed, they begin to think how they may modify or curtail it, under the same sort of feeling as would lead them to be generous in a money transaction, or to accommodate another at the price of personal inconvenience. Not understanding that their religious privileges are a trust to be handed on to posterity, a sacred property entailed upon the Christian family, and their own in enjoyment rather than in possession, they act the spendthrift, and are lavish of the goods of others. Undoubtedly, even the best specimens of these men are deficient in a due appreciation of the Christian mysteries, and of their own responsibility in preserving and transmitting them; yet, some of them are such truly "good" men, so amiable and feeling, so benevolent to the poor, and of such repute among all classes, in short, fulfil so excellently the office of shining like lights in the world, and witnesses of Him "who went about doing good," that those who most deplore their failing, will still be most desirous of excusing them personally, while they feel it a duty to withstand them. Such is the defect of mind suggested to us by the instances of imperfection recorded of St. Barnabas; it will be more clearly understood by contrasting him with St. John. Now see in what he differed from Barnabas; in uniting charity with a firm maintenance of "the truth as it is in Jesus." So far was his fervour and exuberance of charity from interfering with his zeal for God, that rather, the more he loved men, the more he desired to bring before them the great unchangeable verities to

which they must submit, if they would see life, and on which a weak indulgence suffers them to shut their eyes. He loved the brethren, but he "loved them in the Truth" (3 John 1). Strictness and tenderness had no "sharp contention" in the breast of the beloved disciple; they found their perfect union, yet distinct exercise, in the grace of charity, which is the fulfilling of the whole law. I wish I saw any prospect of this element of zeal and holy sternness springing up among us, to temper and give character to the languid, unmeaning benevolence which we misname Christian love. I have no hope of my country till I see it. Many schools of religion and ethics are to be found among us, and they all profess to magnify, in one shape or other, what they consider the principle of love; but what they lack is a firm maintenance of that characteristic of the Divine nature, which, in accommodation to our infirmity, is named by St. John and his brethren the wrath of God. Regarding thus "the goodness" only, and not "the severity of God," no wonder that they ungird their loins and become effeminate; no wonder that their ideal notion of a perfect Church is a Church which lets every one go on his way, and disclaims any right to pronounce an opinion, much less inflict a censure on religious error. But those who think themselves and others in risk of an eternal curse dare not be thus indulgent. Here, then, lies our want at the present day, for this we must pray—that a reform may come in the spirit and power of Elias. Then only can we prosper (under the blessing and grace of Him who is the Spirit both of love and of truth), when the heart of Paul is vouchsafed to us, to withstand even Peter and Barnabas, if ever they are overcome by mere human feelings, to "know henceforth no man after the flesh," to put away from us sister's son, or nearer relative, to relinquish the sight of them, the hope of them, and the desire of them, when He commands, who raises up friends even to the lonely, if they trust in Him, and will give us "within His walls a name better than of sons and of daughters, an everlasting name that shall not be cut off." (*J. H. Newman.*) *A good man:*—Has—I. A GOOD CREED. Divine truth is the basis of all holy and devoted life. A good man has just views of Deity, of the method of salvation, of the present life, and of that which is to come. II. A GOOD HEART. It is not possessed as natural to himself. The declaration with respect to the human heart is that it is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." We require, therefore, to have it renewed. And, hence, the promise under both Testaments is, that God will take away the heart of stone and give the heart of flesh—that is, He will give us new dispositions; He will reclaim us from our corrupt affections. Hence, therefore, we are said to be born again, to have received the Holy Spirit, of which Barnabas was full. III. A GOOD LIFE. The Christian's life is essentially right. It is governed by the fear of God; it is moved by love to Himself; and it is dedicated to the glory of His name. (*The Pulpit.*) *What a good man is, and how he becomes so:*—All words describing moral excellence tend to deteriorate, just as bright metal rusts by exposure, and coins become illegible by use. So it comes to pass that any decent man, with an easy temper, and a dash of frankness is christened with this title "good." The Bible is more chary. Christ rebuked a man for calling Him good, because he did so out of mere conventional politeness. But here we have the picture in the Scripture gallery, catalogued "He was a good man." Note—I. THE SORT OF MAN WHOM THE JUDGE WILL CALL GOOD. 1. Barnabas was a Levite of Cyprus. A Jew who had so come in contact with foreigners that many a prejudice was beaten out of him. We first hear of him as taking a share in the burst of brotherly love, so as to entail an after life of manual labour. Next, when the older Christians were suspicious of Saul, Barnabas, with that generosity which often sees deepest, was the first to cast the ægis of the protection of his recognition round him. In like manner here, when Christianity developed in a suspicious direction, Barnabas was sent, and being a "good man" he saw, and rejoiced in goodness in others. The new conditions led him to enlist Saul's services, to engage with him in missionary service, and then, without a murmur, to allow his junior colleague to take the first place. Then came the quarrel in which he lost his friend, and we hear of him no more. 2. Note the lessons. (1) That the tap root of all goodness is reference to God and obedience to Him. Not that nothing is good that is done without reference to God, but the noblest deed done without this reference lacks nobleness. (2) That the truest goodness is the suppression of self—a characteristic of the whole life of Barnabas. (3) That the further traits of character are pre-eminent in Christian goodness. All this man's virtues were of the meek and gracious sort, which make but a poor show by the side of some of the tawdry splendours which the vulgar world calls virtues. A thrush or a black-

bird is but a soberly clad creature by the side of paroquets, but the one has a song, and the other only a screech. So there is comfort for us commonplace people. We may be little violets, if we cannot be flaunting tiger lilies. 4. That true goodness does not exclude the possibility of falling. The Bible is frank in telling us of the imperfections of the best. Often imperfections are exaggerations of characteristic goodness. Never let gentleness fall away like badly made jelly into a trembling heap, and never let strength gather itself into a repulsive attitude. But remember that only One could say, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin." II. THE DIVINE HELPER WHO MAKES MEN GOOD. 1. This Helper is not merely an influence but a Person, who not only helps from without, but so enters that their whole nature is saturated with Him. 2. Strange language, but does not the experience of every man who has tried to make himself good show its necessity? Think of what is needed to make us good—the strengthening of the will which we cannot brace sufficiently by any tonic or support we know of; consider the resistance with which we have to cope from our passions, tastes, habits, occupations, friends, &c. You have got the wolf by the ears for a moment, but your hands will ache presently in holding him, and what then? Ah, you need a Divine Helper, who will dwell in your hearts and strengthen your wills to what is good, and suppress your inclinations of evil. 3. The great promise of the gospel is precisely this. The first word is "Thy sins be forgiven thee," the second, "Arise and walk." The gift of pardon is meant to be introductory to what Christ calls emphatically "*the* gift of God," the fountain of living streams of holy life and noble deeds. He who is good must surely delight in seeing us good, and must be able to turn us into His own likeness. 4. "Full of the Holy Ghost," as a vessel might be to its brim of golden wine. Does that describe you? Full! A dribbling drop or two in the bottom of the jar: whose fault is it? Why with that mighty rushing wind to full our sails should we be lying in sickly calms? Why with those tongues of fire should we be cowering over grey ashes? Why with that great tide should we be like dry watercourses? III. HOW THAT DIVINE HELPER COMES TO MEN. "Full of . . . faith." 1. No goodness without the Spirit, no Spirit without faith in Christ. If you open a chink the water will come in. If you trust in Christ He will give you the new life of His Spirit. 2. The measure in which we possess the power that makes us good depends on ourselves. "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." You may have as much of God as you want, and as little as you will. The measure of your faith will determine at once the measure of your goodness, and of your possession of the Spirit that makes good. Just as when the prophet miraculously increased the oil in the cruse, the stream flowed as long as they brought vessels, and stayed when there were no more; so long as we open our hearts for the reception the gift will not be withheld, but God will not let it run like water spilled on the ground. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The moral sympathies of a good man*:—It is interesting to distinguish the historic names of the Church, and to recognise the forms of greatness that we associate with them. As were Peter and Paul and John in the apostolic age—men distinctively practical, intellectual, and spiritual, so it has been in every age since. The Church has had its practical workers, men full of spiritual earnestness and power—its dauntless and fervid preachers, its Chrysostoms, Fénelons, Whitefields, Baxters, Wesleys; its apologists, its men of broad intellectual views, its teachers, its controversialists, its Augustines, Luthers, Pascals, Butlers, Chalmerses. And it has had its 'contemplative, spiritual men—men full of goodness, and practical solicitude, charity in them triumphantly reigning over knowledge, and tongues, and prophesying. Such were Bernard, Fénelon, Melanchthon, Fletcher of Madeley, Watts, and Doddridge. In this latter class we should assign a place to Barnabas. Note—I. THE EVANGELIST'S IDEA OF A "GOOD MAN." He evidently means more than that he was merely a good-natured man, and more than that he was simply a virtuous man. He was good in the sense in which the work was good; himself a converted, a spiritual man; good in the sense of being "full of the Holy Ghost and faith." In the highest and scriptural sense of the term, no man can be good who is unspiritual. A man's goodness must regard God as well as man; spiritual obligations as well as social ones. The most moral imperatively needs conversion; for what is conversion but the awakening in a man of the thought of God; the quickening in him of the love of God; the producing within him of sympathy with God; the restoration of him to the image of God; the begetting within him of a feeling of practical gratitude to God, which makes him do everything to please and to glorify God? A man may be very virtuous, and yet be utterly godless. As such he is only half a good man. The "faith" which is

attributed to Barnabas was his spiritual recognition and reference; he "walked by faith, not by sight"; lived ever "As in the Great Taskmaster's eye"; did all things with a spiritual reference, and to a spiritual end. A man can preach only as he believes, and he will preach vividly or dully, tamely or earnestly, in proportion as he believes. II. IT WAS IN VIRTUE OF THIS EMINENT SPIRITUAL GOODNESS THAT HE REJOICED IN THE WORK WHICH HE SAW GOING ON. It was contrary to his national and dispensational theories; it shocked many of his prejudices; his instructions were to discourage, if not prohibit it; but the spiritual sympathies of the saint were too strong for the notions of the theologian, for the proprieties of the ecclesiast, for the dignity of the commissioner. He sees the manifest work of grace; and who is he that he is to gainsay it. He is learning that our proprieties are not always God's methods; that God often chooses uncanonised ways and unconsecrated agents to do the mightiest things. The work appeals to the good man's heart; it touches his spiritual sympathies. He sees sinners converted, however irregularly; he "sees the grace of God, and he is glad." And should we, were we men of holier hearts, of stronger spiritual sympathies, have so much difficulty with our ecclesiastical theories and proprieties? If our piety were more fervent, we should more vividly appreciate the preciousness of men's souls, and the unspeakable blessing of their salvation; and in our joy over the fact we should scarcely care to ask who had done it. Wherever we saw a spiritual work done, there we should recognise God's worker, and rejoice over spiritual conversion by whomsoever effected. If we be good as Barnabas was good, we shall rejoice with his joy whenever we see what he saw. III. THE SPIRITUAL GOODNESS WHICH LED BARNABAS TO REJOICE IN THE GOOD THAT HAD ALREADY BEEN DONE, LED HIM ALSO TO CO-OPERATE WITH IT; AND THUS "MUCH PEOPLE WERE ADDED TO THE LORD." He found a work of conversion going on; and instead of contenting himself with mere commendation, he gave himself heartily to co-operate with these irregular men and their irregular work. He had energies to contribute, an influence to exert. Who was he that he should stand aloof when God Himself was working? If it be ours to work, in the mere peradventure that God will work with us, assuredly we may not without culpability withhold our effort when He is palpably working. Who but He can awaken solicitudes about salvation, and out of the sinner evolve a saint? And when these results are seen, we need be in no doubt whose work they are. And eagerly and fervently should we strive for the honour of working with Him. All good men do this. They will turn away from your strifes of doctrines and modes; but demonstrate your devoutness by your spiritual achievement, and then, just in proportion to their goodness, they will come and help you. IV. THE GOODNESS OF BARNABAS WAS THE CAUSE OF HIS SUCCESS. And so it will ever be. Men are not converted by demonstrations of the gospel, but by inspirations of it. Men are never reasoned into spiritual life; they are quickened into it. We must ourselves be what we seek to make others. We can raise them no higher than our own level. I am not faithful to Christ merely because I eloquently and urgently preach His gospel; He demands of me that I be what I preach—His "living epistle, known and read of all men." Learning may be desirable, eloquence needful; but piety is essential: it is the basis and power of all spiritual work. (*H. Allon, D.D.*) *Characteristics of the good man:*—A good man is—I. A CONVERTED MAN. "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." "There is none that doeth good, no, not one." These statements are not inconsistent with the fact, that there is a natural conscience in man, and that there are amiable feelings urging to noble and generous actions; nor can it be denied that, apart from the power of Divine grace, there is often a striking superiority of one man above another. But the qualities of unconverted men come far short of goodness; nay, they serve to show more strongly the wickedness of the human heart, which resists the dictates of natural conscience, and the admonitions of the Word of God. We must, therefore, be "transformed, by the renewing of our minds, that we may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." The eyes of our understanding must be enlightened, our affections must be fixed supremely on God. We must be dead to sin, that we may live unto righteousness. Till then, sin must have dominion over us. II. A MAN WHO BELIEVES IN CHRIST, AND MAKES OPEN AND STEADFAST PROFESSION OF HIS FAITH. Infidelity is obviously incompatible with true goodness; for it is the wilful deliberate rejection of the truth. But unbelief, in the sense of the refusal of a sinner to accept of Christ as his Saviour, is equally incompatible. How can it be otherwise? All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. A Saviour has been provided, and,

in the riches of the Divine beneficence, has been freely offered to men. Can there be any goodness in the heart which remains unmoved by love like this? Is there anything but the spirit of unholy rebellion in the breast of that man who refuses to comply with the first duty of a perishing sinner? No, a life of holy obedience must have its beginning in submission to the righteousness of Christ as the only ground of acceptance. And this faith we must openly and steadfastly profess. Believing with the heart unto righteousness, with the mouth we must make confession unto salvation. This is one of the evidences of the sincerity of our faith, the proof to ourselves, and the world around us, that our faith is a true and a saving faith, and not merely the cold speculative belief of the doctrine of Christ. III. A MAN OF PIETY AND DEVOTEDNESS. Who can deny that it is one of the first duties of man to love God, and to seek to please Him? He is the all-perfect Jehovah, the fountain of our being, and the source of all our happiness; one whom we are under the strongest obligations to love, and fear, and serve. If it be our duty to love and honour our fellow-men, much more it is our duty to love and honour God. This will appear still more evident if we consider that where there is no piety, the opposite dispositions must have the ascendency in our souls. If we do not love God, we must be at enmity with Him (Matt. vi. 24; James iv. 4). IV. A MAN OF ACTIVE AND ENLIGHTENED BENEFICENCE. The Second Commandment of the law is as essential to real goodness as the First. Love to men never fails to flow from love to God. Love is the fulfilling of the law; it completes the character of a true Christian. No gifts or endowments, however excellent, can compensate for the want of Christian love. But all beneficence is not goodness. There is the beneficence of sudden impulses; the beneficence which needs to be awakened by touching representations; the beneficence of the Pharisee, who doeth his alms before men to be seen of them; extorted beneficence compelled by the example of others—the beneficence of fashion or custom, not of religious or even moral principle. True goodness or beneficence is different from all these. It has its root in a renewed heart. It is constant and uniform—a habit not an act—an ever-flowing stream, not the effervescence of momentary feeling. A good man loves his fellow-men, and because he loves them he is earnestly desirous of promoting their real welfare. His "liberal mind deviseth liberal things." V. A MAN WHO ENDEAVOURS TO REGULATE HIS WHOLE TEMPER AND CONDUCT BY THE MAXIMS AND PRECEPTS OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. He recognises the law of God as the only rule of his life and conversation. The law is not made void, it is established, by faith. Other men are governed by the principles of the world, principles often decidedly at variance with the law of God, and the morality of the gospel. A good man steadfastly refuses to submit to their authority. VI. A MAN WHO EARNESTLY DESIRES THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE DIVINE GLORY, AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF HIS KINGDOM. "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself," &c. This desire is not confined to the duties of prayer and praise. The good man is actuated by a holy solicitude that every part of his conduct may be so entirely in agreement with the law of Christ, as to curb and restrain the wickedness of the ungodly, and to strengthen and encourage the hearts of true believers in the diligent pursuit and practice of true holiness. (*P. McFarlan, D.D.*)

Goodness, as illustrated in the character of Barnabas:—Mark—I. The good man AS DEPICTED BY THE WORLD. 1. There is the decent and orderly man. He is so regular in his attendance on the ordinances of the Church, so decorous in all his proceedings, that if you venture to ask whether, while he bears the form of godliness, he also manifests the power thereof, you are decried as uncharitable, and never to be satisfied. "What is goodness, if such a man as this is not good?" 2. Then comes the liberal, open-hearted, and benevolent man. If you examine whether his liberality may not be thoughtless profusion, whether his benevolence may not be a mere natural feeling, whether other parts of his conduct uphold or contradict the supposition of his goodness, you are encountered with declarations that a better man never existed; and are silenced with the perverted text, that "charity covereth a multitude of sins." 3. Then comes the industrious and frugal man—so laudably diligent in his business, so careful to provide for his family! If you intimate a doubt whether his labours exemplify any disposition beyond covetousness or mere worldly prudence, you are treated as a man determined to find fault, as one whom neither generosity nor frugality can please. 4. The next person is the cautious man. His object is never to give offence. He says civil things of every person; yet not so civil of any person as to excite the jealousy of another. He attaches himself to no party; but endeavours to induce all severally to regard him as well inclined to their cause, and yet, while his conduct is a tissue of time-

serving insincerity, he is generally allowed to be "a very good sort of man." 4. Another is the easy, good-humoured man. He is so pleasant, so harmless, so neighbourly! Every person whom he meets he appears delighted to see. It is thus that, possibly without possessing a single estimable moral quality, he obtains far and wide the denomination of as excellent a man as ever was born. 5. The last character is the "man of honour," who studiously practices whatever is creditable, and avoids whatever is discreditable, in the class of society in which he moves. Ask him why he shuns any particular practice. Does he reply, "Because it is sinful?" The expression is foreign to his lips. He answers, "Because it is mean, low, degrading, unbecoming a gentleman." Why does he pursue a specified line of conduct? Because it is acceptable to God? He thinks not of such a standard. He pursues it because it has the stamp of fashionable estimation. Destitute, it may be, of a grain of true religion, this man is regarded by multitudes as a model of perfection! II. The good man AS PORTRAYED IN SCRIPTURE. Barnabas—1. Was full of the Holy Ghost. The words describe him as sanctified by Divine grace, as being no longer of the world, even as Christ was not of the world, and as filled with the fruits of the Spirit, with all righteousness and godliness, with holy views, principles, tempers, desires, purposes, "which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God." 2. Barnabas was full of faith. His faith was sincere, cordial, warm, energetic, productive. It was not a cold and naked assent to the historical truth of the actions of Christ, such as he might yield to a true account of Pontius Pilate or of Judas. It was not a barren speculation dwelling in his head as a portion of abstract knowledge, like a curious principle in mechanics, or a subtle theorem in astronomy. It was faith in a Saviour. On that Saviour, to whom he owed all, he depended for all. To that Saviour he looked with assurance for strength and guidance. He knew in whom he trusted. His works were the fruits of faith, and his faith was manifested by his works. 3. "When he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad." He would have rejoiced had he beheld no more than the tranquillity and outward comfort of his fellow Christians. But the delight which swallowed up all other motives of joy was to behold the growing establishment of the Church of Christ; to behold sinners turning with abhorrence from their iniquities, and glorifying the Lord their Redeemer by newness of life. 4. "Exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." The joy of Barnabas did not waste itself in idle contemplation. His love of Christ constrained him to labour for Christ. His love of man impelled him to the assistance of man. How many sufferers previously (chap. iv. 36, 37) experienced from his compassion the comforts of food and raiment! He went about as a minister to mankind of those blessings, which exclusively confer complete and durable consolation. (*T. Gisborne, M.A.*)

Vers. 25, 26. **Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus for to seek Saul.**—*Saul brought to Antioch; buried talent called forth to its appropriate field of labour:*—How Saul had been employed all this time (chap. ix. 30) we have no means of ascertaining. We cannot well doubt that he would bring the claims of Christianity before philosophers and urge the proofs that Jesus was the Messiah in the synagogue; nor can we doubt that his labours would be in some degree successful. The work at Antioch required one like Saul, and in our age a telegraphic despatch would have summoned him; but then Barnabas had to go and find him. Notice—I. THE EMERGENCY WHICH HAD THEN OCCURRED IN THE CHURCH. Observe that—1. The ideas of Christians up to that time had been limited. It was a slow process by which the attention of the apostles was directed to the regions beyond Palestine, and even then their thoughts were directed to Hebrews. 2. The events at Antioch could not well be mistaken as bearing on this point. The gospel had been preached there to heathen with great power and success. 3. The name Christian was conferred and adopted just as this enlarged view of the nature of their religion was becoming the common view of the Church. II. THE AMPLE FIELD, ON WHICH THE TALENTS OF SAUL, NOW SUMMONED FROM OBSCURITY, MIGHT ACT. 1. Antioch itself. This Syrian capital, by its wealth, its commerce, its accessibility, its communication with the other parts of the world, its numbers, was one of the most important centres of influence; and we may readily understand, therefore, why he was called by Providence to labour there. 2. The world itself would be suggested as a field for which Saul was especially qualified, and which, in his call, he had been designated to occupy. The new idea was one which could not be confined in its operations to Antioch, for the principles which made it proper to preach the gospel there, made it proper to preach it everywhere. The events now occurring could not but suggest to a mind like Saul's the fact that

the whole world was to be visited by like influences of the Spirit of God. III. THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR CALLING TALENT FORTH TO ACCOMPLISH THE DIVINE PURPOSES. 1. Talent is found in one of these forms. (1) In preparation for the future. (2) In obscurity. (3) Employed in a purpose corresponding to the design for which it was created. (4) Perverted and abused. These forms may exist separately, or two of them may be combined. Thus talent in preparation, and as yet in obscurity, may be combined, for the occasion may not yet have arisen to call it forth. We have no reason to doubt that while Saul was in Arabia and in Tarsus he was preparing for his great work. 2. There is talent created in each age of the world, for all the purposes of that age. It is not developed from the past; nor is it the production of the mere laws of nature or hereditary; it is as much a new creation as would be the introduction of a new world. There was nothing in Stratford-on-Avon that could produce Shakespeare; nor anything in his father of which "Lear," and "Hamlet," and "Othello" could be the development. The mind of Shakespeare was as really an act of creation as the creation of a world. So with Johnson, Milton, Michael Angelo. These minds were made of such capacity, power, and adaptedness to a particular end, as God pleased; and were brought upon the earth at, when, and how He saw best. There is a difference between the Divine arrangements for the physical wants of the world, and for its mental and moral wants. In the former case, long before man was upon the earth, God had created all that the race would need in all its history. Mind, on the contrary, He brings upon the earth as it is wanted. At every period there is a class of minds needed to carry the world forward in its ordinary course—in working the fields already cultivated. As, however, the world's most marked advances are not by a steady ascent, but rather *per saltum*, so (when the time arrives for such a new elevation) God creates the mind or minds fitted to the occasion. Thus some great law-giver, poet, painter, soldier, philosopher. Such men as Moses, Cæsar, &c., lay the foundation for new epochs, and such "epochs" really constitute the history of the progress of the world. 3. Under this arrangement much talent may be hidden; much may be in a state of almost unconscious preparation. How little did Washington, amid the quiet scenes at Mount Vernon, how little Oliver Cromwell, on his farm, dream of the great part each was to act in the history of the world! The emergency came. There was enough for those great men to do, and God had endowed them with talent sufficient to do all that was needful to be accomplished in their age. 4. Emergencies do arise to call forth the talent which God has conferred. When liberty is endangered, when reforms are to be effected, when the world is to be prepared for some new and signal advance, then talent before hidden is brought forward to do its work. Such—in a more eminent degree than aught else—was the period when, after so long a preparation, and when "the fulness of the time was come," the Son of God was called from His obscurity in darkened Galilee. Such also—subordinate to that higher purpose, but still so marked in its character as to constitute a new epoch in the world's history—was the calling forth of Saul to act his part on the great theatre of human affairs. (*A. Barnes, D.D.*) **The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.**—*What the world called the Church, and what the Church calls itself:*—Nations and parties often call themselves by one name, and are known to the world by another. These outside names are generally given in contempt; and yet they sometimes hit the very centre, and so by degrees get to be adopted as an honour. So it has been with the name "Christian." It is never used in the New Testament by Christians about themselves. It occurs here in Agrippa's half-contemptuous exclamation, and in 1 Pet. iv. 16. Consider—I. THIS NAME GIVEN BY THE WORLD TO THE CHURCH, WHICH THE CHURCH HAS ADOPTED. 1. Observe the circumstances under which it was given. A handful of Jews from Jerusalem had come down to Antioch, and there they preached the gospel to heathen, and their success has for its crowning attestation that it compelled the sarcastic Antiochenes to find out a new name for this new thing; to find out a new label for the new bottles into which the new wine was being put. Clearly the name shows—(1) That the Church was beginning to attract the attention of outsiders. (2) That there was a novel element in the Church. The earlier disciples had been all Jews. But here is something that could not be called either Jew or Greek, because it embraces both. The new name is the first witness to the cosmopolitan character of the primitive Church. (3) That even these superficial observers had got hold of the right notion of what it was that did bind these people together. They called them "Christians"—Christ's men, Christ's followers. If they had called them "Jesuits" that would have meant the followers of the mere

man; but it is not Jesus the Man, but Jesus Christ, the Man with His office, that makes the centre and the bond of the Christian Church. 2. Plain lessons lie on the surface. (1) The Church should draw to itself the notice of the world not by advertising, and ostentation, and singularities. If you are live Christians it will be plain enough to outsiders. What shall we say of leaven which does not leaven, or of light which does not shine? Are the world's names for themselves enough to describe you by, or do you need another to be coined for you? The Church that does not provoke the attention of outsiders is not the Church as Christ meant it to be. (2) The clear impression made by our conduct should be that we belong to Christ. The eye of an outsider may be unable to penetrate the secret of the deep sweet tie uniting us to Jesus, but there should be no possibility of his overlooking the fact that we are His. He should manifestly be the centre, guide, impulse, pattern, strength and reward of our whole lives. Do you think that, without your words, if you, living the way you do, were put down into the middle of Pekin, the wits of the Chinese metropolis would have to invent a name for you; and, if so, the name that would naturally come to their lips would be "Christians"—"Christ's men." If you do not, there is something wrong. (3) It is a very sad thing when the world's inadequate notions of what makes a follower of Jesus Christ get accepted by the Church. The name "Christian" ran all over Christendom in the course of a century and a half, largely because it was a conveniently vague name. Many a man is quite willing to say, "I am a Christian," that would hesitate a long time before he said, "I am a believer"; "a disciple." II. SIDE BY SIDE WITH THIS VAGUE, GENERAL, OUTSIDE NAME THE MORE SPECIFIC AND INTERIOR NAMES, BY WHICH CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS AT FIRST KNEW THEMSELVES. 1. "Disciples," the name employed almost exclusively during the time of Christ's life upon earth, sets forth Christ as being the Teacher, and His followers His scholars, who learned at His feet. Now that is always true. He teaches us still by the record of His life, and by the living influence of that Spirit whom He sends forth to guide us into all truth. But that name is not enough, and so after He had passed from earth, it unconsciously and gradually dropped out of the lips of the disciples, as they felt a deepened bond uniting them to Him who was not only the Teacher of the Truth, which was Himself, but was their sacrifice and Advocate with the Father. And for all who hold the essentially imperfect conception of Jesus Christ as being mainly a Teacher, either by word or by pattern, it is worthy of consideration that the name of disciple was speedily felt to be inadequate to represent the bond that knit men to Christ. 2. Teacher and scholars move in a region which, though it be important, is not the central one. And the word that was needed next lifts us into a higher atmosphere. Believers, they who yield not merely intellectual submission to the dicta of the Teacher, but living trust in the Redeemer. We believe a truth, we trust a Person; and that trust is the one thing that binds men to God, and the one thing that makes us Christ's men. Apart from it, we may be very near Him, but we are not joined to Him. By it, and by it alone, the union is completed, and His power and grace flow into our spirits. 3. The name "saints" has suffered perhaps more at the hands both of the world and of the Church than any other. It has been by the latter restricted to the dead, and further restricted to those who excel, according to the fantastic, ascetic standard of mediæval Christianity. It has been used by the world with a bitter emphasis to mean a pretender to be better than other people, whose actions contradict his claim. But the name belongs to all Christ's followers. It makes no claim to special purity, for the central idea of the word "saint" is not purity, but separation. The New Testament idea of saint has in it these elements—consecration, consecration resting on faith in Christ, and consecration leading to separation from the world and its sin. And that must be the experience of every true Christian. All Christ's people are saints, not as being pure, but as being given up to Him, in union with whom alone will the cleansing powers flow into their lives and clothe them with "the righteousness of saints." 4. Brethren—a name much maltreated both by the insincerity of the Church, and by the sarcasm of the world. An unreal appellation which has meant nothing, so that the world has said that our "brethren" signified a good deal less than their "brothers." But the main thing about that name is not the relation of the brethren to one another, but their common relation to their Father. As society gets more complicated, as Christian people get unlike each other in education and social position, it gets more and more difficult to feel that any two Christian people, however unlike each other, are nearer each other in the very roots of their nature, than a Christian and a non-Christian, however like each other. It is difficult to feel

that but for all that it is a fact. And now I wish to ask you whether you feel more at home with people who love Christ, or whether you like better to be with people who do not. The duties of your position, of course, oblige each of you to be much among people who do not share your faith; but for Christian people to make choice of heart friends, among those who have no sympathy with their love to Jesus Christ, does not say much for the depth and reality of their religion. A man is known by the company he keeps, and if you deeply feel the bond that knits you to Christ, and really live near to Him, you will be near your brethren. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The name "Christian":*—I. WHEN it was given. 1. Not until twelve years, apparently, of most intense life, persecution, growth, did the Christians receive any abiding name, which serves to show us that God cares for things, not names. God makes the things, man gives the names; yet how much controversy is merely about names. 2. Not until after the disciples had become known among the Gentiles. The Jews would never have given us this holy name. II. WHERE. In Antioch. Which was—1. Beautiful. Situate on the Orontes, where it breaks through between Lebanon and Taurus; the scenery magnificent, itself splendidly adorned, and surrounded with groves and gardens. 2. Rich. The capital of Syria and the third city of the world; centre of traffic between east and west. 3. Pleasure-loving. The meeting-place between the lively Greek and self-indulgent Eastern, with every inducement and advantage for enjoyment. 4. Wicked. Antioch was exceptionally depraved. Rome was horribly bad; but when the satirist wished to say that Rome was made tenfold more corrupt, he wrote that Orontes had emptied itself into the Tiber. 5. Heathen. Here were the notorious groves of Daphne, where Apollo was worshipped with all magnificence and vice. III. WHY. That is not quite so certain; but we may safely say that it came about thus: The Antiochenes noticed some among them who differed from others. The beauty of the place they regarded with sober admiration; its riches and business they cared little for: they were industrious, used no trickery, abandoned many trades altogether, and did not grieve much if they lost their money; its amusements they shunned, and as for the sins of the place, they both avoided and rebuked them. Then the heathen were astonished, and asked, "Who has taught you this? Who has given you this new-fangled view of the beauty, wealth, pleasure, and sin (as you call it) of Antioch? Who has forbidden you to worship our gods?" To this the answer was ever, "Christ has told us that the world and its beauty pass away; but He has told us of a new heaven and earth far better. He has taught us to think but little of the world's wealth, for He has given us treasure in heaven. He has taught us to look for higher pleasures, and to beware of yours, lest they lead us to sin and death. He has taught us above all to know and hate sin, and not to give to your gods that which is His due. "So," the Antiochenes would say, "this is your God." "Yes," they would reply, "we are His, and cannot take the absorbing interest you do in the beauty, wealth, pleasure, sin, and idolatry of Antioch." Some among the heathen would believe, the rest would scoff and call them "Christians." (*R. Winterbotham, M.A.*) *The Christian name:*—1. At first sight this might seem to be a piece of information such as is to be met with in an old chronicle, or in *Notes and Queries*, and it probably was meant to correct the idea that the disciples were first called Christians at Jerusalem. But we have here much more than this. 2. The name of a man or society is not like a label, which may be detached from a piece of lifeless furniture; it is a factor of which account must be taken for good or evil. Men have borne names which they have felt to be a stigma—an active cause of discouragement and failure. Men have also inherited names which have lifted themselves into a fellowship with a past of high effort. And, in religion names have a mighty power of shaping thought and sympathy. This applies to the greatest of names—Christians. I. HOW CAME THE DISCIPLES BY THIS NAME? 1. It comes into view together with the first attempt to preach the gospel to the pagan world. The Jews would not have given it. They believed in a coming Christ, but rejected the true Christ. But His appearance was an entirely new and original idea to pagans, and the constant repetition of His name would suggest to the keen-witted Greeks to call the disciples Christians. 2. It is probable that the name was a nickname, meant to suggest that those who could do nothing but talk about their Christ were a set of fanatics to be laughed out of existence. The case was parallel to the feeling about Christ crucified at Corinth. II. THERE WERE OTHER NAMES BY WHICH THE DISCIPLES WERE KNOWN. 1. Before: Brethren, Disciples, Elect, Saints, Faithful. 2. After: Gnostics, men who had a knowledge of Divine things—Theophori, Christopheri (God bearers, Christ bearers), Nazarenes, and at

Rome especially, impostors, magicians, Galilæans, sophists, atheists, *Sarmentitii*, desperate men, who were indifferent to death; *Parabolani*, men who lived only to die, *Biathanati*, men whose garments smelt of the faggot, &c. 3. Since: Catholic, a name of commanding power, but this describes a quality, Christian, the substance of true religion; the one views it in relation to mankind, the other in its source and author; Catholic might be dissociated from Christ—Christian never. III. THE IMPORT AND GLORY OF THE CHRISTIAN NAME. The apostles highly prized it: James calls it "that worthy name"; St. Peter a name for which it is a glory to suffer. It is a great distinction—1. To be a learner in the one great school of truth. This is the very least that the name can mean, just as those who followed Plato were called Platonists. 2. To be in the service of such a commander as Christ. We know the feeling which attaches in our army to being in the best regiments; to be in the regiment led by Jesus Christ across the centuries, ought to satisfy a nobler ambition. 3. To be endowed with a new nature—that of Christ the Lord. Compared with this, how poor is "noble" birth! A Christian is a member of the aristocracy of heaven. IV. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE BEARERS OF THIS GREAT NAME. 1. It is a summons to unity. (1) Because it distinguishes the disciples from others it has been stigmatised as a badge of division. *Human*, it is contended, would represent a more adequate bond of brotherhood. But the aim of Christianity is to make one synonymous with the other, and the name is a pledge that it will one day do so. (2) This name is borne by millions of Christian worshippers who are divided widely from each other. But the name implies amid all their divisions the substantial loyalty of all to Christ. 2. It is a call to holiness. "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." Application: Let us remember this name—(1) In the morning. (2) At night. (3) In the hour of death. (*Canon Liddon*). *The Christian name*:—We may consider this name in various views; as a name of distinction from the rest of the world, who know not Christ, or reject Him; as a patronymic name, pointing out the Founder of the Christian Church; as a badge of our relation to Christ as His servants, His children, His bride; as intimating our unction by the Holy Spirit; as Christ was anointed by the Holy Spirit, or above measure, as a name of appropriation, signifying that we are the property of Christ and His peculiar people. But my present design confines me to consider the Christian name—I. As A CATHOLIC NAME, INTENDED TO BURY ALL PARTY DENOMINATIONS. 1. The name Gentile was odious to the Jews, and the name Jew to the Gentiles. The name Christian swallows up both in one common and agreeable appellation. He that hath taken down the partition-wall, has taken away partition names, and united all His followers in His own name (Col. iii. 11; Gal. iii. 28; Zech. xiv. 9). 2. It is but a due honour to Christ, the founder of Christianity, that all who profess His religion should wear His name; and they pay an extravagant compliment to his ministers when they take their denomination from them. Had this humour prevailed in the primitive Church there would have been Paulites from Paul, Peterites from Peter, Johnites from John, Barnabites from Barnabas, &c. Paul took pains to crush the first risings of this party spirit in Corinth (1 Cor. i. 12–15). But alas! how little has this convictive reasoning of the apostle been regarded. Not to take notice of Jesuits, Jansenites, Dominicans, Franciscans, &c., in the popish Church, where, having corrupted the thing, they act very consistently to lay aside the name, what party names have been adopted by the Protestant Churches, whose religion is substantially the same. To be a Christian is not enough nowadays, but a man must also be something more. But where is the reason or propriety of this? I may indeed believe the same things which Luther or Calvin believed: but I do not believe them on the authority of Luther or Calvin, but upon the sole authority of Jesus Christ, and therefore I should not call myself by their name, as one of their disciples, but by the name of Christ, whom alone I acknowledge as my only Master and Lord. 3. To guard against mistakes on this head I would observe that every man has a right to choose for himself in matters of religion. In the exercise of this right he will find that he agrees more fully with some particular Church than others, and thereupon it is his duty to join that Church; and he may, if he pleases, assume the name which that Church wears, by way of distinction from others; this is not what I condemn. But for me to glory in the denomination of any particular Church as my highest character, to lay more stress upon the name of a Presbyterian or a Churchman than on that of Christian; to make it the object of my zeal to gain proselytes to some other than the Christian name; to connive at the faults of those of my own party, and to be blind to the good qualities of others, or in-

vidiously to misrepresent or diminish them; these proceed from a spirit of bigotry directly opposite to the generous catholic spirit of Christianity. II. As a name of obligation upon all that bear it to be Christians indeed, or to form their temper and practice upon the sacred model of Christianity. To be a Christian, in the popular and fashionable sense, is no difficult or excellent thing. It is to be baptized, to believe, like our neighbours, that Christ is the Messiah, and to attend upon public worship once a week. In this sense a man may be a Christian, and yet be habitually careless about eternal things; a Christian, and yet fall short of the morality of many of the heathens. To be a Christian in this sense is no high character; and if this be the whole of Christianity it is very little matter whether the world be Christianised or not. But to be a Christian indeed is the highest character and dignity of which the human nature is capable. To be a Christian is—1. To depart from iniquity (2 Tim. ii. 19). What, then, shall we think of the profligate, profane Christians, that have overrun the Christian world? Can there be a greater contradiction? A loyal subject in arms against his sovereign, an ignorant scholar, a sober drunkard, a charitable miser, an honest thief, is not a greater absurdity, or a more direct contradiction. Therefore, if you will not renounce iniquity, renounce the Christian name. Alexander had a fellow in his army that was of his own name, but a mere coward. "Either be like me," says Alexander, "or lay aside my name." 2. To deny yourselves and take up the cross and follow Christ (Luke ix. 23). To deny ourselves is to abstain from the pleasures of sin; to deny our own interest for the sake of Christ. To take up our cross is to bear sufferings, to encounter difficulties, and break through them for His sake. To follow Him is to trace His steps and imitate His example whatever it cost us. These are the terms if you would be Christians. These He honestly warned mankind of when He first called them to be His disciples (Luke xiv. 25, &c.). What, then, shall we think of those crowds who retain the Christian name, and yet will not deny themselves of their sensual pleasures, nor part with their temporal interest for the sake of Christ? A Christian, without self-denial, and a supreme love to Jesus Christ, is as great a contradiction as fire without heat, or a sun without light, a hero without courage, or a friend without love. 3. To be a follower or imitator of Christ (1 Cor. xi. 1; 1 Pet. ii. 21; Rom. vii. 29; Phil. ii. 5). Conclusion: I might add that the Christian name is not hereditary, but you must be born anew of the spirit to entitle you to this new name; that a Christian is a believer, believing in Him after whom he is called as his only Saviour and Lord, and that he is a true penitent. You may hence see—1. That the Christian character is the highest in the world, it includes everything truly great and amiable. To acquire the title of kings and lords is not in your power; to spread your fame as scholars, philosophers, or heroes, may be beyond your reach; but here is a character more excellent, more amiable, more honourable than all these, which it is your business to deserve and maintain. And this is a dignity which beggars and slaves may attain. 2. That if all the professors of Christianity should behave in character, the religion of Christ would soon appear Divine to all mankind, and spread through all nations of the earth. It would be as needless to offer arguments to prove it Divine as to prove that the sun is full of light: the conviction would flash upon all mankind by its own intrinsic evidence. (*S. Davies, M.A.*) *The Christian name*:—I. What. All that the name has come to mean was quite unintended by the Antiochenes. But the question now is not what these ancient people meant, but what, after nineteen centuries of Christian literature and life, it has come to mean. Undoubtedly it comprehends—1. Faith in Christ. 2. Love to Christ. 3. Imitation of Christ. 4. Union with Christ, with all the effects which flow from these, such as obedience to Christ's will, loyalty to Christ's cause, fellowship with Christ's people, profession of Christ's principles, and the blessed hope of being with Christ for ever. Without each of these in a greater or less degree no man is entitled to the Christian name. II. Where. At Antioch. 1. An unlikely place, one would think. Why should the worshippers of physical beauty, the slaves of lust, the devotees of gain, the priests of a false religion, and the teachers and disciples of an agnostic philosophy care a straw about the followers of a crucified Jew whose teachings ran counter to all their desires, practices, traditions, and disbeliefs, much less trouble to give them a new name? But experience should teach us that people are not so indifferent as they seem. With every motive to ignore the Christianity of to-day, people are earnestly noting and talking about it. 2. Really a most likely place. Here Christianity stood out in marked contrast to all the Antiochenes had ever known. It was a new thing. Its positive belief,

purity, charity, brotherhood, stood in contrast with the prevalent scepticism, iniquity, and selfishness of the place. Light cannot but be seen in darkness, and of all places Christianity must have been most conspicuous at Antioch. It compelled attention, and the symptom of this attention was the name Christian. 3. The best place. No city in the world except Rome and Alexandria afforded such facilities for the dissemination of the knowledge of this name. Antioch was the Liverpool of the age. Let once a religious movement get well rooted in the great northern port, and all the world will soon hear of it. III. BY WHOM. 1. Perhaps by matter of fact men who wanted a word which they could use in current conversation and be universally understood when talking of this new movement. Just as when a name was required to describe the followers of Aristotle or Plato in ancient, and of Luther and Pusey in modern times, the convenient designations were Aristotelians, &c. 2. Perhaps by wits and scoffers, who gladly availed themselves of the opportunity of fixing the name of a crucified malefactor on fanatics whose tenets were only worthy of laughter or scorn. 3. Perhaps by admirers who saw a resemblance between the disciples and all that was known of Christ. IV. WHEN. When a new name was required to describe a new thing. Up till now all Christians were Jews, but even now there were such characteristics that marked them off from the rest of their race that a separate designation was required. When, however, Greeks came into the fold a distinctive name became imperative, and one was found which covered both Jew and Greek. V. WHY. Because the disciples were—1. Consecrated to Christ. 2. Always talking about Christ. 3. Ever seeking to secure disciples for Christ. VI. WITH WHAT RESULTS. The name—1. Gradually superseded every other name. 2. Still towers above every other name. All genuine Christians are glad to subordinate denominational distinctions. 3. Will eventually be the only name. (*J. W. Burn.*) *The disciples called Christians*:—I. Although every one admits that the appellative "Christian" is derived from our great Master Christ, there is considerable variety of opinion as to THE WAY in which it was so derived. 1. The view taken by one class of expositors is, that this appellative was first given in derision and contempt. 2. A second opinion is, that the title in question was first assumed by the Christians themselves, as a new and significant distinction. 3. But a more probable account of this matter is, that the name Christian was first adopted by Divine appointment and authority. (1) The word translated "called," in the text, is sometimes used in the sense of "to warn, or appoint by Divine authority." (2) The mere fact of the first use of the term "Christian" being recorded in so abbreviated and important a history as that of the Acts would argue that it was an event of much interest to the Church of Christ in all succeeding ages. (3) As it is mentioned in immediate connection with the teaching of Barnabas and Paul, it is not unreasonable to infer that those holy men instructed the disciples at Antioch not only to believe in Christ, but also to adopt His name. II. Having considered the derivation and meaning of the name, we must not inquire respecting THE CHARACTER; for it is one thing to be called a Christian, and another thing to be one. Suppose that, with the New Testament in our hand, we were required to give some account of one of those early Antiochian Christians; we should, without fear of contradiction, assert the following particulars:—1. That he was a man who received and believed the doctrines of the Lord Christ. 2. Our disciple at Antioch, one of those first called Christians, would place his confidence in the Lord Jesus as his Saviour, and in Him alone. 3. He would be one that yielded implicit obedience to the commands of the Son of God. 4. He would consider the Lord Jesus Christ as that perfect and illustrious example he was bound by every obligation to imitate. (1) Do Christians imitate the Lord Jesus?—then are they an inoffensive people; for He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. vii. 26). (2) Are Christians imitators of Christ? then are they a useful people; for He "went about doing good," and then "gave Himself a ransom for all." (3) Are Christians people who follow the example of the holy Jesus? then are they a holy and devout people; for He frequented the temple and the synagogue, to pray in public; and retired to the mountain's summit, to pray in private; and in that exercise sometimes wasted the hours of the night! III. It only remains to deduce certain CONSEQUENCES in which we have all an intimate and deep concern. 1. The first is, that no man can become a Christian, in the evangelical sense of the word, without the intervention of Divine mercy and power. 2. The next is, that as a religious designation, the term "Christian" is of itself quite sufficient; and that all sectarian additions are but proofs of the infirmity or depravity of men. On this subject I venture to advise—(1) That you esteem a

denomination as Christian, only as its members embrace the truth, imbibe the spirit, and obey the commands of Christ; and—(2) That you glory in the name of "Christian," and make no account of any other. 3. It is clear from what has been advanced, that to assume the name without sustaining the character of a Christian is a serious evil. No man can be so called without being eternally better or worse for it! 4. It is evident from the whole, that to be called a Christian, and to be one, is the supreme happiness of man! Oh the honour! to have that dear, that sacred, that exalted name, named upon us! Christians!—happy people! Innumerable, exceeding great and precious promises are theirs. Then why hesitate a moment to become an entire and decided Christian? To this high and unspeakable honour you are all invited; Oh, spurn not this mark of infinite mercy, condescension, and love! (*Jas. Bromley.*) *The Christian nickname*:—A father once planned a pleasant surprise for his son who was just beginning to think for himself. In a corner of his garden he wrote with his finger his boy's name in soft mould. The furrows he then sowed with seeds of cress. A few days after this, as was expected, the astonished lad came running in with the news that his name was growing up out of one of the flower-beds. Then, with the explanation immediately rendered, followed the lessons—that nothing comes by chance; that many mysteries can be traced out very easily by a little patient study; that it is possible for men to seem to do many things of their own accord, when really it is God who overrules even the powers of nature to His own glory; and that, noble and excellent a thing as it is to have a Christian name, it is always worth while to ask where it comes from, and what it actually means. Here is a use for the illustration at once. Our young people, coming into life, find the name of "Christian" meeting their eyes at every turn, almost as if it had grown up out of the ground of human history with no hand to plant the seed. I. WHERE WAS IT THAT THE NAME WAS FIRST RECEIVED? Twenty miles from the Mediterranean, just at the point where Syria joins Asia Minor, stood a town so magnificent that even the fastidious Greeks called it "Antioch the beautiful," and the Romans "the Queen of the East." But, as too often happens in this world, Antioch was as vile as it was beautiful. No man cared for God or for his fellow-man. II. WHO GAVE THE NAME? The Romans or the local inhabitants of Antioch under their sway. The term reads like the rest of Latin appellations. They called the followers of Herod "Herodians," of Vitellius "Vitellians," and so they easily invented the name of "Christians" from the name of Christ. Hence we see that in the beginning it was a mere nickname; probably they hissed it out hatefully, and pointed their fingers at the man who gloried in a crucified Leader. All we need to say, however, is that the beautiful city is to-day lying in unsightly ruins; and if any one were to ask what Antioch was, the answer would be, the town where "the disciples were first called Christians." That nickname preserves Antioch from being forgotten. III. WHAT DOES THE NAME MEAN? One who goes after Christ as His Redeemer and Pattern. Change only one of the letters, and we have the whole significance; a Christian is a Christ-man. And this includes these things at the least: one who has learned about Christ; one who trusts to Christ for pardon; one who resembles Christ in his life; and one who gives to Christ his entire heart in a lasting love. 1. The first of these it might be assumed we all have already. Those person would be called heathen who had never been told of Jesus' life and death. 2. But, most of all, we need to see that we are sinners; then we shall perceive how gracious God was in sending His only Son to die for us; and then we shall be ready to accept Jesus Christ as our Saviour. 3. Then, to be a Christian means that one shall grow like the Saviour. God has given us four portraits of Him in the Gospels. These we can study constantly. 4. Then we are to give our hearts to Christ in a loving service. We are to go about doing good, as He did. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *What is it to be a Christian*:—1. The Divinity of Christ is the object of the Christian's worship. 2. The condescension and atonement of Christ are the objects of the Christian's gratitude and trust. 3. The life and teachings of Christ are the subjects of the Christian's example and belief. 4. The reign of Christ is the object of the Christian's confidence and joy. 5. The return of Christ is the object of the Christian's expectation. "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." (*Homiletic Monthly.*) *Christian life*:—The history of Christianity at Antioch is on a small scale the history of Christianity in the world. Study the growth of one tree, and you will have a knowledge of the laws which regulate development in the vegetable world. The flowers that bloom to-day obey the same laws as did those of Paradise, and the Churches of to-day spread themselves after the same fashion as did that of Antioch. It is of the first

importance, then, that we should know all that the name Christian means. I. CHOICE. Choice does not rule everywhere. We did not choose whether we would have life, parents, name, country, or not. And there are some things connected with Christianity which may be put in the same list—Christian land, books, thoughts, facts, &c. We are not Christians because we live among these circumstances, any more than a man becomes a horse by being put into a stable, any more than a sheep's clothing makes a sheep. Doubtless there are thousands who believe that baptism makes them Christians, just as Pagans believed that, by going through certain rites, they obtained the favour of the gods. But the New Testament teaches that Christianity is to be chosen. There must be first a willing mind—not a mere non-rejection of Christianity, but a clear acceptance of Christ. There is something inspiriting in this. Christ appeals to our manhood. He does not treat us like children to be led by the hand, nor compel us to a kind of religious slavery, but teaches us to stand erect in our humility. II. OBEDIENCE. Authority is essential to all life. Natural life must be regulated by well known rules, which we did not invent, but which we found invented for us. So with spiritual life and communion. We may be improving their outward forms and adapting them to the changing culture of the age. But we must build on the same foundations, and progress on the same principles as the earliest Christians did—in one word, bow to the authority of Christ. The Church has suffered from the usurped authority of kings, parliaments, bishops, mobs; but the Church's true Head is Christ. Alas for the Churches, they have too often lived as though the Head were a mere *caput mortuum*. But the Head of the Church is a mind that thinks of its difficulties and trials; it governs a hand that can guide it in all its devious paths; it moves a will that can defend it, and has a mouth by which the law of God can be made known. III. SEPARATION. One of the reasons why Christians were so much hated was that they stood aloof from the common enjoyments of life. But this was inevitable, for the festivities and customs of Greece and Rome were so leavened with idolatry and sin that indulgence in the one involved complicity with the other. The early Christians consequently were in danger of asceticism, and were tempted to confound what was innocent with what was sinful. Society, thanks to Christian influence, is not now so corrupt. And yet our danger lies in too much laxity and indifference. Depravity has not been charmed away, and there is no less peril in the world's friendship to-day than there was eighteen hundred years ago. If, then, we would do good service in the world we must separate from its evil. The hope of the Church is in its clean hands and pure heart. Separation from all known evil is the mark alike of the Christian soul and the Christian community. IV. WILLINGNESS TO SUFFER for Christ (1 Pet. iv. 16). (*S. Pearson, M.A.*) *What constitutes a Christian*:—A friend of mine was staying at a farm in the South of Scotland. The district was supposed to be very religious; and one afternoon, while sitting in the dining-room, my friend and the hostess fell into a conversation about Church affairs. The lady was quite well informed of the difference between these two great branches of the Presbyterian Church, the Free and the Established; but when her visitor asked if there were many real Christians in the parish, she only stared in blank amazement as she replied, "Why, we are all Christians." "But," continued her friend, "it is true Christians I mean, not merely nominal Christians, but men and women who have really trusted Christ with their souls, and are trying to convince and persuade their fellows to do the same." But the distinction between real and nominal Christians seemed too subtle for her, and all she replied was, "But we are all Christians, we were all born Christians!" Her guest, however, was determined, if possible, to bring home the difference to her, and mentioning a man well known in the locality for his drunken and disorderly habits, asked, "Would you call K—— a Christian?" "Yes, I suppose he must be." "Then there is G——," mentioning a gentleman equally well known for his godly and philanthropic life, "would you call him a Christian?" "Yes!"—the "yes" came more heartily this time. "Then both these men are Christians. There is no difference between them." "Oh, yes, there is a difference." "Then what is that difference?" But she would not attempt to define it. She wished to keep that comfortable delusion that we are all Christians, whose principal Christian duty is to go to church on Sunday and put a penny in the plate. It is from such lukewarm, nominal Christians that the Church must shake herself loose before she can take her true place as a militant force against the powers of evil. (*H. Hamilton.*) *Nominal Christians*:—To what sort of a character should we attach the name of Christian; what life is it deserves

that? The medals given to the Indians at the treaty of Red River were supposed to be of silver, but were really of a baser metal. Said an Indian chief, striking his in such a way that the deceit was apparent, "I think it would disgrace the Queen, my mother, to wear her image on so base a metal as this." *What is it to be a Christian:*—A little child was once asked what it was to be a Christian, and she wisely answered, "It is just to do what Jesus would do if He was a little girl and lived at our house." *A Christian by profession and practice:*—The Christian man is to be something like a physician. You know we call a physician a professional man. Well, how does he profess? There is a large brass plate on his door and a big bell, and everybody knows what the brass plate and the bell mean. That is part of his profession. What else? How does he profess to be a physician? He goes into company, and his dress is like anybody else's. You do not see a box of lancets hanging at his side; you do not observe that he is dressed in any peculiar costume. He is a physician, and he is always a physician; but his profession is carried on by his practice. This is how a Christian's profession is to be carried on, by his practice. The man is a physician professionally, because he really does heal people and write prescriptions and attend to their wants. I am to be a Christian in my actions, my deeds, my thoughts, my words. Therefore, if anybody wants a Christian, I should be known by my words and my acts. When we used to go to school, we would draw houses, and horses, and trees on our slates, and we remember how we used to write "house" under the house, and "horse" under the horse, for some persons might have thought the horse was a house. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *What constitutes a Christian:*—Four things are necessary to constitute a Christian. 1. Faith makes a Christian. 2. Life proves a Christian. 3. Trials confirm a Christian. 4. Death crowns a Christian. *What is a Christian:*—A young convert arose in the prayer-meeting and said, "A few days since the foreman of my room came to me and said, 'Henry, are you a Christian!' I replied, 'Yes, sir, I am. At least I am trying to be. I look to the Lord for strength and grace!' And then I could think of nothing better to say, so I thought I would ask him a question; so I said, 'Mr. Smith, are you a Christian?' He replied, 'I go to church!' Then I didn't know what to say. But a few days before this conversation a boy of about twelve years old came into the shop and asked for work. When the foreman told him he had none for him, he told a pitiful story of the sickness of his father and mother. The foreman then asked him if he had ever worked in a jeweller's shop, and he replied, 'No, sir, but I have worked next door to one!' So, when I could not think what to say to my foreman, this came into my mind, and I said, 'Mr. Smith, do you remember the little boy who came in here the other day and said he once worked next door to a jeweller's shop?' 'Yes.' 'Do you think that working next to a jeweller's shop made him a jeweller?' 'No.' 'Do you think that going to church makes you a Christian?' Who does not see that the answer of this young convert razes to the earth all the refuges of our dear friends away from the Saviour, who have become accustomed to substituting fallacies for reasons, and good deeds of their own for faith in Christ's blood and New Testament obedience? Many who are deferential and reverential in the presence of the gospel's proclamations say that, while such a way as it prescribes is doubtless proper for most people, they must be allowed to present, as the ground of their hopes, their uniform kindness to Christian ministers, their constant readiness to aid in their support, their presence and devout behaviour in church service, their compassionate and self-sacrificing ministrations to the unfortunate, their honourable business dealing, and their high regard, generally, for the rights of men. These are grand things. True Christianity is very far from discarding them; it insists upon them. But with equal vigour it protests against their substitution for the "faith which works by love." This is evidently working "next door to a jeweller's shop." (*Christian Age.*)

Vers. 27–30. **And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.**—*Fruit from the Gentiles:*—**1.** The relation between the old Church at Jerusalem and the new at Antioch was that which St. Paul, writing under parallel circumstances, described in Rom. xv. 27 (*cf.* 2 Cor. ix. 12–15). It was a becoming acknowledgment of the vast debt under which all the world must lie to the Jew, but it was no repayment of it, when rich Antioch sent bread to starving Judæa. Jerusalem sent prophets, Antioch sent back corn. Agabus appears once again (chap. xxi. 10), and again as a predicter of disasters. This is the more noticeable that prediction was not the usual function of the prophetic order of the apostolic

Church. They were men whom the Spirit had gifted with persuasive speech, and insight into truth. We have lost the name, but the thing remains. 2. The prediction of Agabus had a practical design. He foretold the dearth that the Church might act upon it, and on the hint they acted. The reign of Claudius was one of disaster; in the opening year it was Italy which suffered from the failure of crops; in the fourth, Palestine; in the eighth and ninth, Greece; in the eleventh, Italy again. It was to the second of these dearths that Agabus pointed which occurred in A.D. 45–46. We are here on sure chronological ground, and know that the want was so great that many were starved to death. A new convert to Judaism, the Queen of Adiabene, was so struck with the condition of things that she sent to Alexandria and Cyprus for supplies; and her son also, as Josephus tells us, contributed great sums of money to the same object. 3. On such occasions it was usual for the foreign synagogues to remit aid, as at this hour numbers of indigent Jews in Jerusalem are sustained by the charity of their European compatriots. The Church at Antioch, however, did not contribute through the synagogue, and in this separate assistance there is the first historical recognition of the fact that church and synagogue had parted company; that to be a Christian cut off a Jew from the charities of his own people; and that henceforth the tie of fellow-Christian was to prove a stronger bond betwixt Jew and Gentile, than any other which bound Jew to Jew or Gentile to Gentile. A new force had entered into humanity, the name of Christian had already begun to dissolve ancient unities and to reconcile ancient feuds and to construct on the ruins of race hatreds a catholic society. 4. It is true to this day that Christianity plants in genuine Christian hearts a brotherhood which can cross the barriers of nationality. When the Reformation revived the primitive faith, the newly-formed Churches of Germany, Switzerland, England, &c., were brought into close and friendly relations. They exchanged famous teachers, sheltered one another's confessors, shared each other's fortune, and leagued their political influence for their common good. The Evangelical Churches of our own day have shown a similar readiness to succour feeble and struggling foreign congregations. If ever that decaying virtue called patriotism is to lose itself in a more cosmopolitan charity, it must be on a Christian, not on a socialistic, basis. It is sad to see the best hearts of Europe groping after the foundations of a new civil order in which all men shall be brothers while they cast off the name of One in whom alone the principles of love and freedom and authority meet. It is sadder still to see a Christian Church so rent by animosity that instead of demonstrating to distracted peoples where to find the true secret of brotherhood, it rather repels from Christ those who are most passionate for peace and fellowship. But when Jerusalem shall not envy Antioch nor Antioch vex Jerusalem, when Churches that are poor in this world are rich in faith, and those who are rich in this world are "ready to distribute," then will men learn that to be a Christian is to be free of a universal commonwealth whose citizens are all equal and all loving. 5. The Gentile Church made its gift more precious by sending it through its most honoured members. It is notable that just before we part with the mother Church, we hear for the first time of its being ruled by presbyters (ver. 30). This official name, the most venerable and Biblical of all ecclesiastical distinctions, frequently recurs, at first associated with apostles at Jerusalem, and afterwards with deacons or alone in the Churches of Ephesus, Crete, Philippi, &c. (*J. O. Dykes, D.D.*) *Early Christian beneficence*:—I. THE WANT PREDICTED. The prophets' functions were twofold: to forth-tell, *i.e.*, to utter the present truth in forceful and convincing language, and to foretell future events. The latter entered largely into Old Testament prophecy, rarely into the New. The office has survived, and the former and more important function is discharged by the Christian ministry; but what has become of the latter? That the future should be an utter blank, that the Church should live from hand to mouth, that Christians should be mere opportunists, is dead against the doctrine of the Divine presence in and leadership of the Church. What had become of Christianity, not only in great crises, but in its normal developments, if it had lacked "seers," "men who had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do"? Inspired prediction has ceased, and men can no longer tell with minute circumstantiality what a century may bring forth. But men are endowed with sagacity, prudent forethought, keen foresight, and in politics, business, &c., often make their calculations with the nicest accuracy, and lay plans which only extraordinary contingencies frustrate. It is this faculty that the great Head of the Church now consecrates and employs—when the Church places them at His

disposal which, alas, is not always the case. It is the duty of Christians to be on their watch tower and to look out for advantages, and not only within the citadel economising resources or strengthening fortifications, *e.g.*, a town Church should anticipate the migration of the surrounding population to the suburbs, and make timely provision for future extension. If, however, it is content with its own immediate work, and with the supply of its present needs, it may find itself, as many a city Church has done, utterly stranded. Again, the home Church should ever keep its eye on emigration to our colonies. How many descendants of Christian people have grown up practically heathen from the neglect of this! Once more, as regards ecclesiastical buildings—churches, schools, &c.—there should always be room for expansion, or, lacking accommodation, adults or children will go elsewhere or go nowhere. Lastly, to recur to the text, how requisite it is that wise and timely provision should be made for the necessities of the poor. The poor we have always with us, and we know from bitter experience that their wants are augmented in winter. Yet we allow winter to come, and when the evil is on us, there is a terrible spasm of effort to collect money, hold sewing meetings, open soup kitchens, &c. How much better to make timely provision in the summer when resources are more ample, and when we might encourage the poor themselves to "put by for a rainy day." II. THE WANT MET. 1. In the spirit of brotherhood. "Disciples . . . brethren." They were people of different races, and the Christians at Antioch had been regarded with none too much of charity by the Church at Jerusalem. This, however, was unnoticed. It was enough that "brethren" were in trouble, and "disciples" could relieve them. There were poor at Antioch no doubt; but Christians had not then learned to confine their benefactions to their own communities. How many rich Churches with few or no poor need this example! 2. Universally. "Every man" did something. It is an unhealthy state of things when contributions are confined to the more opulent of a congregation. Christians sadly need teaching the privilege as well as the duty of giving. 3. Conscientiously. "According to his ability." (1) Not according to some arbitrary rule. Tithing in many cases would be far more than the poor could afford, but far less than the rich. (2) Not according to mere inclination. This fluctuates, and at one time impels a man to be unjust to himself and at another unjust to others. (3) Not according to urgent solicitation. Agabus asked for nothing. (4) But according to ability at the time. 4. Delicately. "By the hands of Barnabas and Saul." A gift is enhanced by the medium through which it passes. If you cannot give yourself, see that your gifts are conveyed by those who will not make it disagreeable to receive them. 5. Wisely. To the elders of the Church, who best know the cases to be relieved, and can distribute economically and kindly. (*J. W. Burn.*) *Practical Christianity*:—1. It is impossible for us to read this record without being struck with the spirit and devotion which stamped the character of Divinity upon the religion in connection with which it is shown. It was one of the remarks made by a heathen author in those days, "See how these Christians love one another." Men looked to their opinions, and could not accept them—to the peculiarities of their religion, and were offended by them. But there was an argument which these Christians could adduce, which an unbeliever could not impugn; it was a positive, practical, evident demonstration of the power of God. 2. The history is soon told. Light loves to radiate. For a long time Christian light was centred in Jerusalem, but there came a time when God chose to disperse that central light. Men, imbued with Christian faith and love, were scattered abroad; and among them were some who went as far as Antioch preaching the Word. Christianity is catholic; is also reflex in its operation: it is not one of those lights which fall upon a non-reflecting surface. It is intended that God should shine upon individuals, and that individuals in their turn should shine upon each other. "Let your light so shine before men," &c. Christian light had come from Jerusalem to Antioch, and these men of Antioch necessarily sought for some opportunity of showing their gratitude. They could not send them light, for this they had, perhaps, in a more perfect form than themselves. But they were rich, and the others were poor; for the Christians at Jerusalem had beggared themselves by their liberality in times past. And so, when the occasion arose, the men of Antioch made a bold and a noble determination that "every man, according to his ability, should send help to the saints in Judæa." Not that they passed resolutions merely; nor that they went through that parody of benevolence that you find in public meetings, where you shall find men hold up their hands in accordance with some proposition that they never intend to carry

out. The men of Antioch determined to do; and as they determined they did. I. THE OCCASION WHICH PRODUCED THIS LIBERALITY. The destitution assumed two features—1. It was predicted. There was no exhibition of harrowing details—no picture of wide-spread distress—held before the men of Antioch. It was a thing to be. Nevertheless, these men acted upon it as though it were, and prepared to meet it. What does this teach us? (1) The simplicity of their faith. They had nothing objective to look to which told them of the existence of distress. They looked, perhaps, at the state of the soil, at the state of the atmosphere, at the circumstances of times past; but there was nothing to create apprehension. All was quiet, except the voice of prediction; and God, who seeth not as man seeth, told them that the famine was coming. And what did they do? Other men might have stood by in silent expectation, or have derided the prediction, but these men took prophecy for fact. In these days, probably, when men walk by sight in place of by faith, they would have said, "Wait till the calamity comes." No, said these men; it has come. "Come where? There is no trace of it!" God has predicted it, and in the simplicity of their faith that was enough. (2) A positive refinement of benevolence. There is a certain vulgarity of benevolence. In these days we have to place before men a picture of calamity, to come down to statistics, to state the absolute startling facts. But these men looked not for facts. They were prepared to act upon the intimation, and they required no appeal to their feelings; they took the fact as given at their hands by God. 2. It was universal. The Jewish historian tells us, it was over the entire world, and that multitudes died on account of it, and therefore these men of Antioch were included in it. What might have happened then? They might have said, When that dark calamity falls, it will touch ourselves; we shall come to the time of high prices, of scant food, of short employment; let us therefore be wise now in the principles of political economy, and lay by for our own destitution. No. Notwithstanding that they themselves stood on the very threshold of the disaster, they passed a resolution which they carried out into action. II. THE MOTIVES BY WHICH THESE MEN WERE PROBABLY ACTUATED. 1. The smallest and lowest of the dictates of humanity. There are feelings within feelings, and circles within circles, and humanity is not the less practised because Christianity is received. You shall find it among heathen nations. It was one of the noblest sayings of antiquity, "I am a man, and hold nothing that concerns human kind to be strange to me." Those men of Antioch were men. They felt for others. It was not simply that the men at Jerusalem were Christians—they were men, and because they were men, it was in the first place that they determined to help them. 2. But there are principles not built upon the mere instinctive and natural feelings—a love to men, on account of their being brother-Christians. The disciples determined to send relief to the brethren. These men had never looked upon each other face to face, nor exchanged a thought. What then? Sons of God in Jerusalem—sons of God in Antioch—members of the same family of Christ looked upon each other as brethren! We oftentimes ask ourselves the meaning of the expression, "The communion of saints." You have an exhibition of it here. Did not the men of Jerusalem feel, "We have sent light to Antioch"? And did not the men of Antioch feel, "We are going to return it after our poor fashion"? What is all that but communion? There is such a link in the natural world, where you shall see the loadstone drawing to it the particles of iron that approach to it, imparting the same quality to the particles which it touches, and thereby drawing these particles the one to the other. And it is the peculiarity of Christian truth, to bind believers the one to the other. Why? Because, first of all, they have been bound to Christ. 3. Gratitude. The very best of blessings which one people could confer upon another, had been by the men of Jerusalem conferred upon the men of Antioch. They had sent to them their spiritual things; it was no wonder that they should reap their carnal things. 4. The love that they bore to Christ, and which constrained them to love one another. And it is that principle, after all, that tells. "He that loveth God will love his brother also." III. THE MODES IN WHICH THEIR BENEVOLENCE WAS MANIFESTED. We have oftentimes heard the charge of want of judgment brought against Christians. "They have all things but common sense." Now, look at the steps taken by the men of Antioch. The distribution of their charity was marked by three features. 1. Universality and proportion. "Every man" was expected to feel for the brethren, and to show that feeling by contributing according to his means. It was not one of those things which a certain class or section was to take upon them. Now, why need we adopt

house-to-house visitation, but because there are multitudes in this world who are content to stand by, and to see others bear the burden, and push it from themselves. Eighteen hundred years ago, that was not the course taken by the men of Antioch. There was no working upon the passions of people and constraining them to give. It was a simple method of giving in proportion to means. The matter was thus left to each man's conscience to say what his ability was. Look at thy means. See whether, in the midst of thine affluence, comfort, and family expenditure, thou mayest not knock off something that is not absolutely necessary, and bring it to the rule of thine ability. Ask thyself not what thou wishest to do, not what thou mayest be seen to do, not what others are doing; but give in proportion to thy means. Is it not a righteous principle?—a principle recognised in Scripture—"Upon the first day of the week let every one lay by according to his ability." Is it so? If so, then must you learn a lesson from these poor, enthusiastic Christians in Antioch. 2. Promptitude. They did not trust to second impressions, or to second suggestions; and wisely. Upon hearing of a great deal of distress, our first emotions are generous; our second emotions are narrowed. At first, there is a burst of feeling; we draw out our purses, and almost pour out their contents. Second thoughts however come; but these men of Antioch would not trust themselves to second thoughts. No, said they; we had better act at once, before the blessed influence has left us. They put it out of their own power—out of their own hands. (*Dean Boyd.*) *Apostolic philanthropy*:—Van Lennep tells us that among the Nestorian Christians dwelling in the fertile plain of Ooroomia, Persia, charity assumes an almost apostolic form; for it is their yearly practice to lay by a certain portion of their crops in order to supply the wants of their brethren living among the rugged mountains of Koordistan, whose food often fails them altogether, or is carried away by their more powerful enemies. Deeds of charity are highly extolled in the Koran, but the Mohammedans ignore these precepts, so the value of such acts by the Christians is more particularly felt where the rulers take no interest in works of public utility. *The law of brotherhood*:—The Irish famine (1847) touched the hearts of outside and distant peoples to a sentiment of their common humanity which was never stirred in them before to such fine issues. In America this fellow-feeling pervaded the whole population, North and South, black and white, bond and free. The very slaves in the South, at their rude cabin meals at night, thought and spoke of the hungry people somewhere beyond the sea, they knew not in what direction. And they came with their small gifts in their great hands, and laid them among the general contributions, each with a heart full of kindly feeling towards the suffering. Never was there such a rummaging in cellars, garrets, wardrobes, and granaries in the United States for things that would be comfortable to the hungry and needy. . . . The barrels and bags of flour, wheat, and Indian-corn, the butter, cheese, and bacon sent from the prairie farmers of the Western States, were marvellous for number and heartiness of contribution. From a thousand pulpits a thousand congregations of different creeds were invited to lend a hand to the general charity in a few earnest and feeling words about the Universal Fatherhood of God and the Universal Brotherhood of Men. (*Elihu Burritt.*)

CHAPTER XII.

VERS. 1–19. **Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the Church.**—*Herod the king*:—The previous life of this prince had been full of strange vicissitudes. The son of Aristobulus and Bernice, grandson of Herod the Great, brother of the Herodias who appears in the gospel history, named after the statesman who was the chief minister of Augustus, he had been sent, after his father had fallen a victim (B.C. 6) to his grandfather's suspicions, to Rome, partly perhaps as a hostage, partly to be out of the way of Palestine intrigues. There he had grown up on terms of intimacy with the prince afterwards known as Caligula. On the marriage of Herod Antipas with his sister, he was made the ruler of Tiberias, but soon quarrelled with the tetrarch, and went to Rome, and, falling under the displeasure of Tiberius, as having rashly given utterance to a wish

for the succession of Caligula, was imprisoned by him, and remained in confinement till the death of that emperor. When Caligula came to the throne he loaded his friend with honours, gave him the tetrarchies first of Philip, and then that of Lysanias (Luke iii. 1), and conferred on him the title of king. Antipas, prompted by Herodias, came to Rome to claim a like honour for himself, but fell under the emperor's displeasure, and was banished to Lugdunum in Gaul, whither his wife accompanied him. His tetrarchy also was conferred on Agrippa. Coins are extant, minted at Cæsarea, and bearing inscriptions in which he is styled the Great King, with the epithets sometimes of Philo-Cæsar, sometimes of Philo-Claudios. At the time when Caligula's insanity took the form of a resolve to place his statue in the temple at Jerusalem, Agrippa rendered an essential service to his people, by using all his influence to deter the emperor from carrying his purpose into execution, and, backed as he was by Petronius, the Governor of Syria, was at last successful. On the death of Caligula, Claudius, whose claims to the empire he had supported, confirmed him in his kingdom. When he came to Judæa, he presented himself to the people in the character of a devout worshipper, and gained their favour by attaching himself to the companies of Nazarites (as we find St. Paul doing in chap. xxi. 26) when they came to the temple to offer sacrifices on the completion of their vows. It would seem that he found a strong popular excitement against the believers in Christ, caused probably by the new step which had recently been taken in the admission of the Gentiles, and fomented by the Sadducean priesthood, and it seemed to him politic to gain the favour of both priests and people, by making himself the instrument of their jealousy. (*Dean Plumptre.*) *James, Herod, and Peter:*—How strangely our prayers are sometimes answered! James and John had prayed that they might sit, the one on the right and the other on the left of the Lord when He came to His kingdom. And now the cup and the baptism came to James in the form of a terrible and disgraceful martyrdom. May I covet the best gift, not the most conspicuous position. May I keep in remembrance that they at the front fall first. But may I not shrink from the front if it be the will of the Lord to assign me that position. "Peter was kept in prison." Kept in prison! All work suspended, and apparently all usefulness at an end. Peter, the most active of them. What does the Lord mean? This question comes up so often in Christian experience. To suffer James to be killed and Peter to be imprisoned would not be our way of propagating the Church. Now, I pray that I may never be scared for the cause of Christ. For my personal comfort let me learn from Peter's case that the Lord may not always keep me out of the hands of the enemy, but He will keep those hands from destroying me. I may see the two soldiers to whom I am chained, but not the ones that in secret are pouring out prayers for me. Oh, the unknown helpers! The unseen forces of the universe are stronger than the visible agencies. (*C. F. Deems, LL.D.*) *The martyrdom of James:*—One might have expected more than a clause to be spared to tell the death of a chief man, and the first martyr amongst the apostles. I think the lessons of the fact, and of the slight way in which the writer of this book refers to it, may perhaps be most pointedly brought out if we take four contrasts—James and Stephen, James and Peter, James and John, James and James. Now, if we take these four I think we shall learn something. I. First, then, JAMES AND STEPHEN. Look at the different scale on which the incidents of the deaths of these two are told; the martyrdom of the one is beaten out over chapters, the martyrdom of the other is crammed into a corner of a sentence. And yet, of the two men, the one who is the less noticed filled the larger place officially, and the other was only a simple deacon and preacher of the Word. The fact that Stephen was the first Christian to follow his Lord in martyrdom is not sufficient to account for the extraordinary difference. The Bible cares so little about the people whom it names because its true theme is the works of God, and not of man; and the reason why the "Acts of the Apostles" kills off one of the first three apostles in this fashion is simply that, as the writer tells us, his theme is "all that Jesus" continued "to do and to teach" after He was taken up. Since it is Christ who is the true actor, it matters uncommonly little what becomes of James or of the other ten. What is the reason why so disproportionate a space of the gospel is concerned with the last two days of our Lord's life on earth? What is the reason why years are leaped over in silence and moments are spread out in detail, but that the death of a man is only a death, but the death of the Christ is the life of the world? James sleeps none the less sweetly in his grave, or, rather, wakes none the less triumphantly in heaven because his life and death are both so scantily narrated. If we

"self-infold the large results" of faithful service, we need not trouble ourselves about its record on earth. But another lesson which may be learned from this cursory notice of the apostle's martyrdom is—how small a thing death really is! Looked at from beside the Lord of life and death, which is the point of view of the author of this narrative, "great death" dwindles to a very little thing. We need to revise our notions if we would understand how trivial it really is. From a mountain-top the country below seems level plain, and what looked like an impassable precipice has dwindled to be indistinguishable. The triviality of death, to those who look upon it from the heights of eternity, is well represented by these brief words which tell of the first breach thereby in the circle of the apostles. II. There is another contrast, JAMES AND PETER. Now this chapter tells of two things: one, the death of one of that pair of friends; the other, the miracle that was wrought for the deliverance of the other from death. Why should James be slain, and Peter miraculously delivered? A question easily asked; a question not to be answered by us. We may say that the one was more useful for the development of the Church than the other. But we have all seen lives that, to our poor vision, seemed to be all but indispensable, ruthlessly swept away, and lives that seemed to be, and were, perfectly profitless, prolonged to extreme old age. We may say that maturity of character, development of Christian graces, made the man ready for glory. But we have all seen men struck down when anything but ready. Only we may be sure of this, that James was as dear to Christ as Peter was, and that there was no greater love shown in sending the angel that delivered the one from the "expectation of Herod" and the people of the Jews, than was shown in sending the angel that stood behind the headsman and directed the stroke of the fatal sword on the neck of the other. James escaped from Herod when Herod slew him, and could not make him unfaithful to his Master, and his deliverance was not less complete than the deliverance of his friend. But let us remember, too, that if thus, to two equally beloved, there be dealt out these two different fates, it must be because that evil, which, as I said, is not so big as it looks, is not so bitter as it tastes either; and there is no real evil, for the loving heart, in the stroke that breaks its bands and knits it to Jesus Christ. The contrast of James and Peter may teach us the equal love that presides over the life of the living and the death of the dying. III. Another contrast is that of JAMES AND JOHN. The close union and subsequent separation by this martyrdom of that pair of brothers is striking and pathetic. By death they were separated so far: the one the first of all the apostles to "become a prey to Satan's rage," the other "lingering out his fellows all," and "dying in bloodless age," living to be a hundred years old and more, and looking back through all the long parting to the brother who had joined with him in the wish that even Messiah's kingdom should not part them, and yet had been parted so soon and parted so long. Ah! may we not learn the lesson that we should recognise the mercy and wisdom of the ministry of death the separator, and should tread with patience the lonely road, do calmly the day's work, and tarry till He comes, though those that stood beside us be gone. IV. Lastly, JAMES AND JAMES. In his hot youth, when he deserved the name of a son of thunder—so energetic, boisterous I suppose, destructive perhaps, he was—he and his brother, and their foolish mother, whose name is kindly not told us, go to Christ and say, "Grant that we may sit, the one on Thy right hand and the other on Thy left, in Thy kingdom." That was what he wished and hoped for, and what he got was years of service, and a taste of persecution, and finally the swish of the headsman's sword. Yes! And so our dreams get disappointed, and their disappointment is often the road to their fulfilment, for Jesus Christ was answering the prayer, "Grant that we may sit on Thy right hand in Thy kingdom," when He called him to Himself, by the brief and bloody passage of martyrdom. So let us leave for ourselves, and for all dear ones, that question of living or dying to Him. Only let us be sure that whether our lives be long like John's, or short like James's, "living or dying we are the Lord's." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Herod vexes the Church*:—1. The scene changes. After intimating that the door was open among the Greeks, the historian shows us that it was shut among the Jews. By His apostles as well as in His own Person Christ came to His own, and His own received Him not. 2. The king who appears here was mild in his natural temper, but fond of popularity. The persecution was not of his own motion, but to please the Jews, as was the case with Pilate. 3. Keeping Judas out of view—this is the first breach in the apostolic circle. The Church had learned to walk by faith, and even the fall of an apostle will not crush them now. In the case of James, the Lord shows that He will not always interfere to

protect His servants, and in the case of Peter that He will sometimes, lest the spirit should fail before Him. This first apostolic martyrdom marks a law of the kingdom, and illustrates the Master's word, "My kingdom is not of this world." Not an inch of territory will Christ maintain for Himself by the sword. 4. Observing that no Divine power was put forth, either to protect James or to avenge him, and finding that one murder procured him favour, Herod determined to perpetrate another. Peter was imprisoned, but the remainder of the king's wrath it pleased God in this instance to restrain. "Peter was kept in prison, but prayer was made," &c.—a remarkable antithesis. Man proposes, but God disposes; and the prayer of faith reaches the Disposer's hand. James was suddenly seized and taken off, but there was time to pray for Peter. God opened the door of opportunity through Herod's desire to keep all quiet till after the passover; the Church eagerly entered that door. 5. Peter meanwhile was sleeping, and his sleep brought as much glory to God as his wakefulness, although he had sung psalms till the rafters rang again. He slept in Gethsemane through weakness of the flesh: he sleeps here through the strength of his faith. How sweet to lie down every night ready, if the Lord will, to awake in heaven! (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *Herod and Peter*:—I. HEROD'S PERSECUTION. 1. "Now about that time"—we know that troubles never come alone. A time of famine was prophesied (chap. xi. 28). Famine might kill slowly; Herod would find a quicker way! How well it would have been when Herod "stretched forth his hand" to have kept it there! Such would be our way. God's thought has a wider compass, and He needs more time for the exemplification of His purpose. 2. "He killed James the brother of John with the sword." This was not a Jewish method of killing people. But what is crime if it cannot be inventive? What if a king cannot take a short cut to the consummation of his purpose? Beheading is quicker than stoning! The wicked cannot wait. They need no further condemnation. Justice can wait. "Though hand join in hand the wicked cannot go unpunished." 3. Having performed this trick of cruelty, Herod proceeded further. That is the natural history of wickedness! It gathers momentum as it goes. You cannot stop with one murder. You acquire the bad skill, and your fingers become nimble in the use of cruel weapons. Murder does not look so ghastly when you have done it once. How many people have you murdered? Murder is heart-breaking; life-blighting; hope-destroying! "He proceeded further." The one glass needs another to keep it company. Crimes do not like solitude; and so one crime leads to another. If you can do one sin, the whole life is lost. We are not thieves because of a thousand thefts; we are not liars because of a thousand lies; we find our criminality in the opening sin. Therefore, what I say unto one, I say unto all, "Watch"! 4. "Because he saw it pleased the Jews." There are those who like to see you play the fool and the criminal, but what will they do for you in the critical hour? All the while Herod thought he was king; in reality he was a slave. Sometimes the judge has been the prisoner. Sometimes the conqueror has been the loser. Herod lived upon the popular pleasure. Therein he tarnished his crown, and sold his kingdom, and lost his soul! II. PETER'S DELIVERANCE. In ver. 5 there is a pitched battle. Read it: "Peter therefore was kept in prison:" there is one side of the fight; after the colon—"but prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him." Now for the shock of arms! Who wins? Prayer always wins. You can only be of a contrary opinion when you take in too little field. There is no action of any importance that is bounded by a single day. Such prayer as this is irrepressible. The prayers you could keep down if you liked will never be answered. This prayer was answered by a miracle, in which observe—1. Last extremities (ver. 6). Have we not been in that very same darkness, when we were to be injured, or impoverished, not seven years from date, but the next day? Have we not taken up the pieces of the one loaf and said, "This is all"? So far, then, you have no difficulty about the miracle. 2. Appearances dead against us. Thus—two soldiers, two chains, and the keepers keeping the door before the prison! These were compliments to Peter! The devil cannot avoid paying us compliments all the time he is trying to destroy us. Why all this arrangement about a man like Peter? Why all these temptations addressed to a man like one of us? It is a reluctant but significant tribute to the character whose destruction is contemplated. Have not appearances been dead against us? No letters, no friends, no answer to the last appeal, no more energy, no more hope, the last staff snapped in two. So far the miracle is true. 3. Unexpected deliverers. Have we no experience here? Is it not always the unexpected man who delivers and cheers us? "But a certain Samaritan came where he was," that is the whole history of human deliverance in

one graphic sentence. "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." "It is always darkest before the dawn." All our life properly read is a chain of unexpectedness. Deliverance shall arise from an unthought-of quarter! 4. Spiritual transport (ver. 11). Have we not sometimes taken down our harp from the willows and struck it to some new tone of joy and gladness and hope? Peter did not understand this miracle at first. He thought he saw a vision. "And when Peter was come to himself he said"—that is the point we must wait for. We are not "ourselves" just now. Our eyes are dazed by cross lights, and we cannot see things in their right proportion, distance, and colour. Do not let us imagine that we are now speaking final words or giving final judgments. Innumerable visions float before my wondering eyes. The righteous are trodden down; the bad man has a plentiful table. The little child is torn from its mother's arms. What is it? When we are come to ourselves we shall know and praise the Lord, whose angels have been our ministering servants! (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Herod and Peter*:—I. THE VALUE OF SMALL ACCURACIES IN THE EXPRESSIONS OF THE INSPIRED HISTORY. Paley places the first verse among his evidences of Christianity, because Herod is called "the king." For he declares that there was never a period, for more than thirty years previously, nor was there ever subsequently at Jerusalem one who wielded such authority as entitled him to the name of monarch. No one except this Herod, and he only during the last three years of his life, could have been properly called "the king." II. HOW LITTLE THE NEW TESTAMENT MARES OF THE MARTYRDOM OF EVEN THE BEST OF MEN. Only two words in the Greek describe James's execution: "killed—sword." The Bible does not dwell upon the deaths of Christians so much as upon their lives. Whitefield used to remark, "You will have no dying testimony from me, you must take my living witness for my blessed Lord." III. THAT THERE IS A LIMIT SET TO THE WICKEDNESS OF THE WICKEDEST OF OPPOSERS (ver. 3). Herod was a time-server and a trimmer. His political motto is found in "It pleased the Jews." He thought he had made a hit when he slew John's brother. But even in that crime he only helped to fulfil a prophecy of Christ (Mark x. 39). So Herod "proceeded further"; but all he was suffered to do was "to take Peter." There he had to pause before a higher power. The all-wise God permits sin to move on for a while, but He may be trusted to interpose when the time for restraining wrath arrives (Psa. lxxvi. 10). IV. THAT PRAYER IS THE WELCOME INSTRUMENT OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN SEPARATED FRIENDS (ver. 5). A friend when I was abroad sent me a letter with a triangle in it. At the top of it he wrote "the mercy-seat"; and drew for the base a rough wavy mark, which he meant for the ocean; then he wrote his initials at one angle and mine at the other. He felt that I knew that the shortest path to those we love is around *viâ* heaven, where our faithful High Priest is to receive our petitions. V. THAT TRUE RELIGIOUS TRUST IS ALWAYS TRANQUIL AND UNDISMAYED (ver. 6). Peter must have understood that he was now in the power of a wild bad man. He could not expect to fare any better than did James. But evidently he was not in the least troubled. This old fisherman meant to have as easy a night of it as was possible with the poor accommodations. He took off his outer garments and sandals before he lay down, as was his habit anywhere. And now think of it: while Herod in the palace was uneasy, and the soldiers wide awake, and the outsiders getting ready for "no small stir" (ver. 18), and the disciples holding an agitated prayer-meeting, and an angel on the errand of relief, so that it seems to us as if the whole exterior world was disturbed, Peter went quietly into a sweet good sleep as usual. We have no record of his experiences, but we conjecture he said over the old psalm (Psa. xxxiv. 7). VI. AN AFFECTING ILLUSTRATION OF THE UNHURRIED EXERCISE OF GOD'S PATIENT POWER (ver. 8). The angel had nothing to fear there in the prison, and he knew Peter could take all of time and care he needed without danger. It was not necessary that he should dress in the dark; the messenger from heaven lit up the room for him, and calmed him with tranquil words of direction; and the apostle put on his shoes and his loose garment before he started. The chains had already been removed so cautiously that they made no clanking. There was no hurry nor confusion; when God takes care of a man, He takes good care. How calm God is in the heavens where He reigns; and how little He respected the ingenuities of Herod (Psa. ii. 4). We have no wonder that Peter afterwards quoted Isaiah's words with a fresh turn of interpretation after such an experience (1 Pet. ii. 6). The only thing Herod could do the next morning was to kill his own soldiers; Peter was out of his reach. Why are we so troubled? How calm is the service of such a Saviour as ours (Isa. xl. 22). VII. IF PEOPLE ARE SURPRISED BY ANSWERS TO PRAYER, IT IS BECAUSE THEY DO NOT "CONSIDER." Peter's conclusion (ver. 11) is in edifying

contrast with the petulant rebuke which Rhoda received from the Christians (ver. 15). He had "considered the thing" (ver. 12). That must be the reason why he was not "astonished" as they were (ver. 16). Rhoda was not "mad," only "glad." A clearer mind was never known than Peter had, only he had now and then to "come to himself," and get his bearings. The one grand conclusion is found well phrased in the remark of Christian in "Pilgrim's Progress." After some days of useless suffering, he suddenly exclaimed, "Why, I have all along had in my bosom a key called Promise, which is able to open any door in Doubting Castle!" What is the reason any one now is afraid of the power of Giant Despair? (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *A short-lived triumph*:—We have here a royal persecution in its beginning, progress, and end. We see it in its success, failure, and punishment. We have before us a whole career, in its pride and its humiliation, its triumph and its discomfiture, its short-lived arrogance and its frightful dismay. That is the aspect of the chapter towards them that are without. Its aspect towards the Church within shows what danger, anxiety, and death itself is to the Christian; enough to bring out great graces and to exercise faith and patience, but not enough to make a single true heart doubt where safety, strength, victory lie. Let us look—I. ON THE DARK SIDE OF THIS PICTURE. There is a king stretching forth his hands to vex certain of the Church. 1. His first act of aggression was directed against an apostle. "He killed James the brother of John with the sword." Such is the short record of the first and only apostolical martyrdom of which we have any record in Scripture. Far more was told of the martyrdom of the deacon Stephen. Such is the character of the Scriptures. One thing is dwelt upon and another briefly told. Simplicity, naturalness, undesignedness, absence of rhetorical trick and stage effect, this we notice throughout, and we think we can see it to be of God. Thus one of the chosen witnesses passed away early from his work to his reward. It was scarcely fifteen years, I suppose, since he had first heard that word which had changed him from a fisherman into a fisher of men. He had been one of the favoured few in various striking occurrences of the Saviour's life and ministry. He had been one of two brothers, who, in days of ignorant zeal, had proposed to call fire from heaven upon a Samaritan village, and who, again, in days of a no less ignorant ambition, had asked to sit on His right hand and on His left hand in their Master's glory. Boanerges, sons of thunder, He had named them, in days when the impetuosity of nature had not yet been checked by the influence of grace. But now this was past; past too the mighty transformation of Pentecost, and the devoted years of the ministry which that day had opened. To him, first of the brothers, is that prophecy fulfilled, "Ye shall drink indeed of My cup," &c. And see how lightly the inspired record passes over that great transition. Not one word of the circumstances. No death-bed scene, no dying testimony, save indeed that best of testimonies which the death itself afforded. He had given his life in one sense; now he gave it in another. Nothing is made of it. He did his duty; and to him, as a matter of course, belonged the recompence of the reward. 2. The fate of the next destined victim is widely different. He too seems to be marked out for martyrdom. The appetite for blood is ever whetted by its indulgence. It was a crowded time in Jerusalem: strangers from all parts of the world flocked together to the festival; and the spectacle of an apostle's execution was to be their pastime in the intervals of religious duty. Such is religion when it is once possessed and saturated with bigotry, fanaticism, and party zeal! All seemed to promise well and surely for the persecutor and his people. Peter then was kept in the prison: by night and by day he is the one care of sixteen armed men. Surely nothing can elude such vigilance? So might man well judge. There is one, there is but one, impediment, which brings us to—II. THE BRIGHT SIDE OF THE PICTURE. 1. "But there was fervent prayer going on by the Church unto God concerning him." Is there not great meaning in that little word "but"? The Church below was calling in a help, not of man, to counteract man's design. Little would Herod or his friends account of that; but He who neither slumbers nor sleeps has Israel in His keeping, and let no man presume to say, apart from Him, what one day or one night may bring forth! 2. The last night is come, but not gone. Peter sleeps, while the Church prays: it is their time for action, it is his for repose. "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength"; "Cast all your care upon Him, for He careth for you." What if his martyrdom is to follow close upon that of James, and they who were so lately partners in a fisher's calling, and have since been associated in a noble ministry, are to be speedily reunited in a blessedness not of this world—"lovely and pleasant in their lives, and even in their deaths not divided"? 3. "And, behold an angel of

the Lord stood near," &c., &c. God does nothing in vain: He begins where man must end, and ends where man can begin. Deliverance achieved, reflection follows. "He comes to himself," and to the right conclusion. 4. And whither shall he now betake himself? He knows the deep anxiety with which the Church of which he is a pillar must have regarded his imprisonment; so he bends his steps first to one of the homes of the Church. His knock brings to the door a maiden of the household; not at once to open—for they were hard and evil times, and peril might lurk in the admittance of a stranger—but to hearken to the voice which should tell its errand and report upon it to those within. The voice which calls to her is one well known. She had heard it often, we doubt not, leading the devotions of that pious home: she knew it at once for Peter's, and for very joy ran in before she opened. Her tidings were incredible. "They said, It is his angel"; one of those ministering spirits who have in their charge the heirs of salvation, and who, in the character of the angels of Christ's "little ones, do always behold the face of His Father who is in heaven." But no; there is no mistake here, and no apparition; the angel's office is ended, and Peter himself, in flesh and blood, is seen, when they open, to stand before the gate. Silencing with a motion of the hand their eager and wondering exclamations, he tells his own story and bids them, while he departs elsewhere for security, to carry the report of his miraculous deliverance to James, the Lord's brother, and to the brethren at the headquarters of the Church. III. THE NARRATIVE WOULD BE INCOMPLETE WITHOUT A RECORD OF THE END OF THE PERSECUTOR AND HIS INSTRUMENTS. 1. Just as when the faithful three were thrown into the furnace, "the flame of the fire slew those men" who acted as his executioners; even so the activity of Peter was fatal to the soldiers to whose charge he had been consigned. Disappointed rage must have its victim. If it cannot be an apostle, it must be an apostle's keeper. But the retribution ends not there. 2. Herod himself goes down from Jerusalem to Cæsarea. There was at this time a feud between him and the people of Tyre and Sidon. They were ill able to part with his friendship, and came to him therefore imploring reconciliation. This was the crowning point of Herod's triumphs. With an ambition glutted with success, and a vanity inflated by flattery, he appeared gorgeously arrayed. Flattery ran on into impiety, and they all with one accord shouted, "It is the voice of a God, and not of a man." This cry was the signal of the Divine punishment. "Immediately an angel of the Lord smote him," &c. Conclusion: 1. The chapter before us is an epitome of all history. In it the world and the Church are arrayed on opposite sides, the hosts of God and of Satan being marshalled for the encounter. On the one side there is kingly power, on the other poverty and insignificance; but the one calculates without the Divine arm on which the other depends. For a time the one succeeds, in the end the other wins. Herod is eaten with worms, but the Word of God grows and multiplies. 2. The practical lesson is to learn the power and practise the grace of that effectual fervent prayer which availeth much. (*Dean Vaughan.*) **And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.**—*James' noble end, or "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints"*:—I. BEFORE MAN—a melancholy death. 1. Bloody and cruel: the noble head of the apostle falls under the sword of the executioner. 2. Premature and sudden: he quits this earthly scene before effecting anything important in his apostolic calling. 3. Without glory and quiet: he departs uncelebrated by the world, unpraised even by the Word of God. II. BEFORE GOD—a noble end and a beautiful death. 1. He had fulfilled his vocation here below: not how long, but how we live, is the chief matter. 2. He dies in the service of His Lord and preaches as powerfully by his death, as his fellow disciples do by their word. 3. He hastens towards his heavenly destination, whilst he as the first among the brethren receives the martyr's crown, and is honoured by sitting where he desired at Christ's right hand. (*K. Gerok.*) *The bleeding James and the rescued Peter:* or, God leads His people—I. BY MANY PATHS. 1. James' short hour and Peter's long day of work. 2. James' sad end and Peter's glorious deliverance. II. TO ONE END. 1. Both promote the kingdom of God—James by his death and Peter by his life. 2. Both carry off the crown of life—James after a short contest, Peter after a long service. (*Ibid.*) *The martyrdom of St. James*:—As the apostle was led forth to the place of execution the person who had accused him was so touched with the courage and constancy which he displayed, that he repented of what he had done, came and fell down at his feet and earnestly begged pardon of what he had said against him. St. James tenderly raised him up, kissed him and said to him, "Peace be to thee, my son, and the pardon of all thy faults." At this, his former accuser publicly professed himself

a Christian, and so both were beheaded at the same time. (*Clement of Alexandria.*) *Early death*:—1. This is one of those incidents in sacred story which had we lived in the apostolic age would have moved our wonder if it did not shake our faith. The Church is yet in its infancy, and already a chief pillar is moved, leaving the edifice deprived of what was certainly one of its best supports and fairest ornaments —one, in fact, of its twelve precious foundations. What token was there here of Divine love watching over a Divine institution? How shall such a dispensation be reconciled with what we believe of the power, and wisdom, and mercy, and justice, and love, and truth, and faithfulness of God? 2. On the Festival of St. James, we never can do amiss if we refresh our memories by recalling the events of the apostle's life. And this is soon done. Originally a disciple of the stern Baptist, and therefore a man of no common earnestness, James was brought to Christ by the report of his brother John—and therefore was the fourth to become a member of the apostolic band. Subsequently, we are shown his former call to apostleship. On him, with his brother, our Lord bestowed the title "son of thunder"; and (no unapt illustration of the name!) the two proposed to call down fire from heaven on the inhospitable Samaritans. But subsequently there is nothing characteristic recorded of St. James, with the single exception of his ambitious desire for a chief place in the kingdom of Messiah. He was indeed highly distinguished on other occasions—as when he was made a witness of the raising of Jairus' daughter, and yet more of our Lord's transfiguration. Again, he was with our Lord during His agony, and lastly, he was one of the four who heard His prophecy on the Mount of Olives. But of the characteristic events of his life none are recorded—save his call; the token of a fiery spirit alluded to; his ambitious aspiration; and his death. 3. When we say something similar of other members of the apostolic body and rehearse the meagre chronicle of the recorded lives of the other apostles, we all secretly feel that their unrecorded history must have made full amends, by its fulness and variety, for the scantiness of the gospel record. Thomas in India; Matthew in Ethiopia; Andrew in Scythia; Philip, Bartholomew, and the other James—the life must have been most varied, and doubtless was most eventful. But in the case of James we know that this was not the case. His history brings home to us the familiar phenomenon of a precious life early shortened—a burning spirit suddenly quenched—a large and a brave heart, which was willing to do and to dare all in his Master's service, early laid to rest; the goodly promise of his youth and early manhood all unfulfilled—the work which he longed to do left unaccomplished—a legacy of tears left to friends and kindred; a subject of wonder and perplexity to all. 4. I do not pretend to have anything of importance to say on this difficult problem. (1) The uses of bereavement to the survivors have been often insisted upon. No doubt it is a salutary medicine—just as salutary as it is inexpressibly bitter and repugnant to the natural taste. In this way we speak of the death of children especially; but the wonder is greater when men of grand promise are taken away in their prime, especially at any great crisis of affairs. We are more perplexed at the sight of a John Baptist imprisoned at the end of a year's ministry, a James beheaded before his ministry on a great scale had begun. Add that the first was slain at the instigation of a dancing girl, and the other at the caprice of a cruel tyrant—and the wonder is complete. "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" Will not the wrath of heaven fall on the head of the guilty? Rather—Why was not this prevented, and the life prolonged to the full term of years allotted to man? (2) But do we not, in all our reasonings on this and similar subjects, confine our regards much too exclusively to this world?—think of time and its concerns, too much; the things of eternity and of God, too little? Since, however, this life is inappreciably short in comparison of the life to come—and the concerns of this world inconceivably petty if contrasted with the concerns of the next; we should, in our meditations on the subject now before us, never fail to give a considerable place to the possible share which the concerns of the other life may have in determining the affairs of this. What shall we say, then, of the deaths of the young and the promising—nay, of those whose promise has begun to ripen into performance—so reasonably as this; that it would certainly appear that they were wanted elsewhere? that their appointed work in another world could no longer be kept waiting for them? that they had done quite enough here below to warrant their removal; and that therefore, and only therefore, they were removed? (3) Shall we not, too, further open our hearts to the comfortable thought that the race, however brief, may yet have been fully run? that the spirit may have been perfected, although in an incredibly short space of time? that the allotted work may have been accom-

plished, although the bud of life has scarcely yet expanded into a blossom? and that wondering angels may have already carried away the subject of so many tears to the enjoyment of an imperishable crown? (*Dean Burgon.*) *The quiet disciples of the Lord, how they yet bear testimony for Him:*—1. Though not by shining gifts, yet by the meek and quiet spirit which is precious in the sight of God. 2. Though not by mighty deeds, yet by patient suffering and holy dying. 3. Though not in the annals of the world's history, yet in the brotherly circles of the children of God. (*K. Gerok.*) *Times of trial testing times:*—Then is tested—I. THE SINCERITY OF FAITH IN SUFFERING AND DEATH (vers. 1-3). II. BROTHERLY LOVE IN WATCHING AND PRAYER (ver. 5). III. SPIRITUAL PEACE IN REST AND WAITING (ver. 6). IV. THE POWER OF GOD IN RESCUING AND HELPING (vers. 7-11). (*Florey.*) *The weapons of the Church in the contest against its enemies:*—1. Inflexible courage in witnessing. 2. Quiet patience in suffering. 3. Unwearied perseverance in prayer. (*Leonhard and Spiegel.*) *Lessons for the Church:*—The Church—1. May expect to be attacked by its enemies so long as it has any. 2. Often has had to sustain the loss of leaders who seemed to be almost indispensable. 3. Has had to learn that God will not always interfere to save his servants from death—that one's death may be of more service than his life. 4. Often has had to suffer from those who attacked it simply to curry favour with others. 5. Has been taught that many a seeming calamity has turned out to be a blessing signally manifesting the glory of God. 6. Has found that prayer is its best weapon in fighting with persecution. 7. Has found through prayer that God could overcome the enemies whom it was too weak to encounter. (*S. S. Times.*)

Ver. 5. **Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him.**—*In and out of prison* (children's sermon):—1. There is more than one way of getting into prison. (1) If you were a minister, and some prisoner wanted you to speak to him about his soul, you might get in to him. (2) If you wanted to see inside you could get an order from the Home Secretary. (3) If you were so unhappy as to have a friend there you might see him at stated times. (4) You might become a prisoner yourself by breaking the good laws of the country: but there was a time when our laws were bad, and people were imprisoned for doing right. This was the case with John Bunyan, and with Peter. 2. There are several ways of getting out of prison. (1) Some break out themselves—but this would be impossible to those who like Peter were not only behind strong walls, but chained to a soldier. (2) Friends break in and take them out—but this involves the risk of their being killed, and many prisoners would prefer to remain rather than this should occur. (3) The Sovereign sends a pardon and lets them out. Now Peter knew that he could not break out, and that his friends were not strong enough to take him out, and that Herod was not good enough to let him out. So his friends went to a greater King, who told one of His angels to take him out. 3. The angel found Peter asleep. When night has come it is the proper time to go to sleep. If you have done no wrong, and have finished your work you can go to sleep very well. You feel that your father is in the house, and he will take care of you. Now Peter knew that his head might soon be cut off, yet he could sleep comfortably, because he felt that his Father was in the prison with him, and that if Herod did kill him he would go to heaven. Now notice—I. WHAT THE ANGEL DID FOR PETER. He came into the cell, and the soldiers could not prevent him any more than they could the angel from rolling away the stone from the Saviour's tomb. He filled the prison with light so that Peter could see; then he had to wake Peter up. When you have gone to sleep very tired you have to be shaken before you can awake. So Peter had to be struck by the angel, and then when he was a little awake he lifted him up as though he were a little child. Then Peter's chains fell off. II. WHAT PETER DID FOR HIMSELF. He put on his clothes and shoes. When a boy is able to dress himself his father will not do it for him. Neither will God or His angels do for us what we can do for ourselves. And when a child is old enough to walk his mother will not carry him. So the angel, who might have carried Peter and set him down among his friends, told him to walk. III. WHAT THE IRON GATE DID FOR THE ANGEL AND PETER (ver. 10). There are two ways to open a gate—by using a key, or by breaking it open as Samson did. But Peter did not unlock the gate, nor did the angel break it open. It opened as if it knew that God wanted to let the angel and Peter out. This is what we call a miracle. Let us see what we can learn from the story. 1. That you may pray people out of trouble. When you pray for any one you carry him to God upon your mind. If your brother

were ill you could carry him in your arms to the doctor, or you might tell the doctor about him. When Jesus was on earth many were carried to Him in the arms of others; but some, like the Syro-Phœnician woman's daughter, were carried upon the mind. This is what Peter's friends did. And so we may carry any one whom we love to God when they are far away and we want them blessed. 2. How strong a power prayer is. It was stronger in this case than Herod and his prison and his soldiers. And it is stronger now than sin and Satan. (*W. Harris.*) *Peter prayed out of prison:*—It is not the perseverance but the fervency of this prayer which is really in the mind of the writer. The margin of the Authorised Version, and the text of the Revised, concur in substituting for "without ceasing," earnestly; and that is the true idea of the expression. I. Now, the first thought that suggests itself to me is based on the first word of our text, that eloquent BUT. It brings into prominence the all-powerful weapon of the unarmed. Peter was kept in prison, and we know all the elaborate precautions that were taken in order to secure him. But he was lying quietly asleep. There were some people awake; the Church was awake, and God was awake. Peter was kept in prison; but what vanity and folly it all was to surround him with soldiers and gates and bars when this was going on. "Prayer was made earnestly of the Church unto God for him." On the one side was the whole embodied power of the world, moved by the malignity of the devil; and on the other side there were a handful of people in Mary's house, with their hearts half broken, wrestling with God in prayer; and these beat the others. So they always do, but not always in the same fashion. No doubt there were plenty of prayers offered for James, but he was killed off in a parenthesis. Let us remember, too, that this is the only weapon which it is legitimate for Christian people to use in their conflicts with an antagonistic world. To stand still unresisting, and with no weapon in my hand but prayer to God, is a strong impregnable position which, if Christ's disciple takes up, in regard of his individual life, and of the Church's difficulties and enemies, no power on earth or hell can really overcome him. The faith that keeps itself within the limits of its Master's way of overcoming evil is more than conqueror in the midst of defeat, and that life is safe, though all the Herods that ever were eaten of worms should intend to slay. II. Further, notice THE TEMPER OF THE PRAYER THAT PREVAILS. I have already said that the true idea of the word of my text is earnestness, and not of perseverance or persistence. The author of the Book of the Acts, as you know, is the evangelist Luke; and he uses the same words as descriptive of another prayer: "Being in an agony He prayed the more earnestly," he says about the Master in Gethsemane. The disciples, when they prayed for their brother, were fervent in supplication. Ah! if we take that scene beneath the olives as explaining to us the kind of prayer that finds acceptance in God's ears, we shall not wonder that so much of what we call prayer seems to come back unanswered upon our heads. Air will only rise when it is rarefied; and it is only rarefied when it is warmed. And when our breath is icy cold as it comes out of our lips, and we can see it as a smoke as it passes from us, no wonder it never gets beyond the ceiling of the room in which it is poured out in vain. I daresay—for they were but average people after all—they prayed a deal more fervently to get Peter back amongst them because they did not know what they were to do without him than they prayed for the spiritual blessings which were waiting to be given them. But still they prayed earnestly; and if you and I did the same we should get our answers. And then, remember that, of course, this earnestness of petition is of such a kind that it keeps on till it gets what it wants. Although the word does not mean "without ceasing," it implies "without ceasing," because it means "earnestly." A man that does not much care for a thing asks languidly for it, and is soon tired. And this is how many people pray: they ask for the thing and then go away, and do not know whether God ever gave it them or not. But others, who really want the blessing, plead till it comes. These good people were praying the night before the execution; no doubt all day long they had been at it, and nothing came of it. The night fell, they continued, nothing came of it. But, according to the story, the answer came so late that Peter had barely time to get to the Christian home that was nearest before daybreak. And so at the very last possible moment to which it was safe to defer Peter's deliverance, and not a tick of the clock sooner, did God send the answer. He does in like fashion with us many a time: and the great lesson is, Wait patiently on Him. Rest in the Lord, nor faint when the answer is long in coming. III. And now the last point that I would suggest does not lie so much in my text itself as in its relation to the whole inci-

dent. And it is this—THAT FERVENT PRAYER HAS OFTEN A STRANGE ALLOY OF UNBELIEF MIXED WITH IT. You remember the end of the story, so life-like and natural; how Rhoda in her excitement leaves Peter standing at the door in peril, whilst she rushes into the house to tell everybody what had happened. Then, while they are arguing inside, as to whether it is Peter or his angel, see how Peter keeps on hammering at the door. "Peter continued knocking." There we see the whole nature of the man in that graphic phrase. How true to nature is what was going on inside! The people that had been so fervently praying for the answer could not believe it when they got it. The answer stood, waiting outside, to be admitted, and they could do nothing but discuss whether it was Peter's angel or his ghost. And through all our lives there will be more or less, in varying proportions, of this strange alloy of fervour with coldness, and of faith with wavering unbelief, and in our most believing prayers a dash of unpreparedness for the answer when it comes. There is another thing that may be suggested, and that is that we should, if I may so say, *expect* to get more than we *expect*, and believe that however large may be our anticipations of what God will do for us if we trust ourselves to Him, the answer when it comes will be astonishing even to our widest faith. "He is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Peter in prison:*—He was imprisoned unjustly, and therefore it was no prison to him, but a sanctuary with God's light irradiating it. Peter saw and heard more here than others do in palaces. There are a thousand prisons in life. He is in prison who is in trouble, in fear, in conscious penitence without having received the complete assurance of pardon; he is in prison who has sold his liberty, who is lying under condemnation, who has lost his first love. But whatever our prison is God knows it, can find us, can make us forget our outward circumstances in inward content, can send His angel to deliver us. Peter had been in prison before, and had been miraculously delivered. Fools never learn wisdom; for the people who had shut him up before had seen that you cannot really imprison a good man. His influence increases by the opposition that is hurled against him; goodness turns hostility into nutrition. Who can put an apostle into such a position as Jeremiah was thought to be occupying? You can put his body there, but his soul is swinging around the horizon, and his heart is among the singing angels. You cannot imprison the soul. But a man may lose the liberty of his spirit, and when he gives up the key of his soul he is already in perdition. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Peter in prison; the weakness of Satan:*—Every chapter in Church history develops the old decree that enmity should exist between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. This is the underlying spring of all the commotions, anarchies, persecutions, and wars of the ages. But the "old serpent" assumes no serpentine nor supernatural form in carrying out his aims, but the form of a man—here the form of a malignant and servile king. "On thy belly shalt thou go." Note what Satan cannot do. I. RENDER UNAVAILING THE INTERCESSIONS OF THE GOOD (ver. 5). It would have been easier for Herod to have controlled the winds of heaven than to have neutralised the prayers of these poor people. Satan was mighty in Pharaoh, but a few of the oppressed ones prayed and their deliverance came. He was mighty in Nebuchadnezzar, but God's people prayed and were rescued from his demon grasp. II. DESTROY THE PEACE OF A GOOD MAN (ver. 6). Think of the place—a dark, filthy cell. Think of his position—linked to two wretches from whose nature he must have recoiled with horror. Think of those who watched—sixteen soldiers. Think of the time—the night before execution. Yet Peter sleeps; which suggests—1. A gracious providence. "He giveth His beloved sleep." Sleep is one of God's choicest gifts. How it drowns our cares, re-strings the harp of life, binds up our energies afresh. What more did Peter want than sleep? Had he the most comfortable chamber in Herod's palace could he have had more than sleep? 2. An approving conscience. A condemning conscience would have kept sleep away. Peter knew that he was engaged in the right work. 3. A sense of security. He had no fear about the future. He had committed himself to the care of Heaven. "God is our refuge and strength." III. HINDER THE VISIT OF ANGELS TO GOOD MEN (ver. 8). The Bible teaches not only the existence of angels, but their ministration. Note—1. The ease with which an angel does his work. The walls, gates, &c., presented no obstruction. The chains fell off without effort, and Peter led through his guards without a struggle. God's greatest agents work quietly. 2. The extent to which an angel does his work. Only what a good man cannot do for himself. Peter could tie on his sandals, &c., but could not snap his chains. IV. CANNOT PREVENT THE FRUSTRATION OF HIS OWN PURPOSES

(ver. 11). That Herod's purpose was frustrated is seen—1. In the deliverance of Peter. This deliverance was—(1) Consciously Divine. "I know of a surety." (2) Very wonderful. The disciples were incredulous. 2. In the progress of truth. "Go show these things unto James," &c. What an impulse this fact must have given to the new cause! 3. In his confusion (vers. 18, 19). Satan's plans may be very subtle in their structure, vast in their sweep, imposing in their aspect, and promising in their progress; but their failure is inevitable. They must break down, and their author and abettors must be everlastingly confounded. Take heart, ye children of the truth; as soon as God's day comes "there will be no small stir" amongst God's enemies. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Peter in prison, sleeping between two soldiers*:—A beautiful picture of—I. CHRISTIAN FAITH, which in prison and in the horrors of death lies sleeping like a child in the bosom of God. II. DIVINE LOVE, which stands with its eyes open over its sleeping and bound children day and night. (*K. Gerok.*) *Peter's passion, and the Church's compassion*:—1. When the devil draws his sword, he flings his seabbard away; and though he strike not, yet he hath it always ready. It was already dyed in the blood of James (ver. 2); and now he strives to latch it in the sides of St. Peter also. 2. These words present unto us the true face of the Church militant: one member suffering, and all the members suffering with it; St. Peter in chains, and the Church on their knees. Though they cannot help him, yet they will pray for him; and they will pray for him, that they may help him. I. PETER'S PASSION. 1. His imprisonment. A prison one would think were not a fit place for St. Peter. Will God suffer this great light to be confined, and this pillar to be shaken with the storms of persecution? Shall he who was to teach and govern the Church now stand in need of the prayers of the Church? It is a common sight to see Herod on his throne, and St. Peter in prison. But in this world it matters not where he is confined who is already out of the world. St. Peter lost not his peace with his liberty, nor was he a saint less glorious because he was in prison. Imprisonment and persecution are not only good, but blessed (Matt. v. 11), as our Saviour says. 2. The motives which induced Agrippa to keep him in prison. You may perhaps imagine that zeal for religion drew his sword. We read indeed that Herod was "a great lover of the Jews" and their religion, but it was not this. Religion may be the pretence, but the cause is his crown and kingdom. It was to please the people who could make his throne secure. But as Seneca says, "He that strives to please the people, is not well pleased himself with virtue: for that art which gains the people, will make him like unto them." If Herod will please the Jews, he must vex the Christians, and be as cruel as a Jew. II. THE CHURCH'S COMPASSION. 1. And you may know them to be Christians by this (Matt. v. 48). And therefore Tertullian tells us that amongst the heathen, professors of Christianity were called *Chrestiani*, from a word signifying "sweetness and benignity of disposition." Is St. Peter in prison? they are not free. Is he in fetters? their compassion binds them in the same chains: and though he alone be apprehended, yet the whole Church doth suffer persecution. For it is in the Church as in Pythagoras's family, which he shaped and framed out unto his lute: there is—(1) "An integrity of parts," as it were a set number of strings. (2) "An apt composition and joining of them together." The parts are "coupled and knit together by every joint" (Eph. iv. 16); even by the bond of charity, which is that virtue which couples all together. And then—(3) Every string being touched in its right place and order begets a harmony. 2. But compassion will not rest in the heart, but will publish itself. If you see it not active in the hand, you shall hear it vocal in the tongue (Psa. cxix. 131). It will pour forth itself in prayer. The prayers of the Church are the best weapons. This prayer was—(1) The prayer of the whole Church. (2) It was "instant and earnest." For "Fervent prayer availeth much." Otherwise, if it be faint and heartless, it is but breathed out into the air, there to vanish; it is lost in the very making, and, like a glass, in the very blowing falls to nothing; yea (which is worse), it is turned into sin. We may think perhaps that it is a great boldness thus to urge the Majesty of heaven; but we much mistake the God we pray to. He loves to be entreated; He commands us to be urgent. We must knock, and knock again. Though He hear not, we must call till He do hear; and though He open not, we must knock till He do open (Matt. xi. 12). Thy hunger will make thy meat the sweeter; and thy frequent prayer will not only obtain, but enlarge thy soul and make it more capable of that good which thou dost long for. (*A. Farindon, B.D.*) *Peter asleep*:—Peter was in his cell, and if we could borrow the jailer's lantern and visit that dungeon, we should find a "quaternion of soldiers" watching the manacled apostle. Two of them are in the

cell and two are before the door. If the prisoner escapes, the guards must pay the forfeit with their lives. This is stern Roman law. The keepers, therefore, are wide awake. Perhaps some of the leaders in this wicked persecution are awake and busy in preparation for the *auto-da-fé* on the morrow. Around at the house of Mary, the mother of John surnamed Mark, are a company of God's people who cannot close their eyes on that eventful night. They are holding a prayer-meeting and entreating God to interpose and spare their brother "Great-Heart" from his cruel doom. It was the right sort of prayer, for the Greek word describes them as straining in supplication; for they realise that this is their last resort. But, in the meantime, where is Peter? Lo, he is fast asleep! The children of heaven are awake to pray for him; the children of hell are awake to destroy him. But the heart for which other hearts are throbbing dismisses its own anxieties, and falls asleep as quietly as a tired child on its mother's breast. There were many things to keep him awake during that doleful night; there was a far-away wife, and perhaps a group of children up in that home on the shore of Galilee, and he might have worried his parental heart about them. John Bunyan, when in prison for Christ's cause, tells us that "this parting from my wife and children hath often been to me in this prison as the pulling of my flesh from my bones. Especially from my poor blind child, who lay nearer my heart than all I had besides. But I must venture you all with God, though it goeth to the very quick to leave you." So did the heroic apostle venture all with God. Family, home, labours for Christ, the welfare of the Churches, and his own life, were all handed over into God's keeping, and he, like a trustful child, sinks to rest in his Father's arms. So God "giveth His beloved sleep." Here is a lesson for us all. How did the apostle attain that placid serenity of spirit? As far as we can understand, he attained it by keeping his conscience void of offence, and by anchoring his soul fast to God. An uneasy conscience would never have allowed Peter to cover himself under the sweet refreshment of slumber. Troubled child of God, go look at that most suggestive scene in that Jewish gaol. Paul knew that his martyrdom was just at hand, but he had made Jesus Christ his trustee, and he felt no more uneasiness than he did about the rising of to-morrow's sun. Both those men were just what you profess to be, no more and no less; they were Christ's men. They had no more promise than you have, and no other arm to rely on than you have. In this world, so full of difficulties and diseases and disasters, there are a great many anxieties that make people lie awake. "To-morrow morning I will go and draw that money out of that bank," says the uneasy merchant, who has heard some suspicions of the bank's solvency. Distrust of our fellow-creature's honesty, or truthfulness, or fidelity is sad enough, but a Christian's distrust of his Saviour and his Almighty Friend is a sin that brings its own punishment. Half of the misery of life comes from this very sin. There was a world of truth in the remark of the simple-hearted nurse to the mother who was worrying over her sick child: "Ma'am, don't worry; you just trust God; He's tedious, but He's sure." (*T. L. Cuyler.*) *Peaceful sleep at night*:—Dr. Alexander was often heard to say in substance as follows: "Clergymen, authors, teachers, and other persons of reflective habits lose much health by losing sleep; and this because they carry their trains of thought to bed with them. In my earlier years I greatly injured myself by studying my sermons in bed. The best thing one can do is, to take care of the last half-hour before retiring. Devotion being ended, something should be done to quiet the strings of the harp, which otherwise would go on to vibrate. Let me commend to you this maxim, which I somewhere learnt from Dr. Watts, who says he had it in his boyhood from the lips of Dr. John Owen: Break the chain of thoughts at bedtime by something at once serious and agreeable. By all means break the continuity, or sleep will be vexed, if not even driven away. If you wish to know my method of finding sleep, it is to turn over the pages of my English Bible without plan, and without allowing my mind to fasten on any, leaving any place the moment it ceases to interest me. Some tranquilising word often becomes a Divine message of peace." (*Lady Bountiful's Legacy.*) *Peril and prayer*:—I. DANGER. Peter might say, "There is peril for me." 1. Intimated in the sayings of our Lord (John xvi. 2; xxi. 18, 19). Has the dark day at last come? 2. In the race now on the throne. The race of Edom. In the Old Testament always hostile to the Church. Well did the Herods sustain the traditions of their race. Herod the Great sought to kill Christ; his son slew the Baptist; and his son had just put James to the sword. In this connection note a striking providence. The family was at this time numerous; in a century scarcely a descendant remained; and like many a petty Asiatic dynasty, might have passed into oblivion. But God set them

on a hill, brought them into contact with the Divine kingdom and the King. So brought under this central light, all their dark deeds become illuminated for the warning of all time. They knew not the part they played. Our relation to the kingdom of God should be our chief concern. We may then leave fame and all other results to Him. 3. In the man's motives. Everything depended on his pleasing the Jews. He had imperilled the favour of Caligula by resisting the contemplated outrage of erecting the emperor's image in the temple. Claudius was now emperor, and to stand well with him it was necessary to secure the favour of the people. The opportunity now was to strike a fatal blow at Christianity. 4. In the deeds of Herod already done. The persecution of the Church, the murder of James, one of the inmost three. Distinguished service no exemption from suffering. 5. In the respite given. For some unknown reason it was intended to make Peter's trial solemn and public. Strict regard, therefore, was paid to the traditional law that no feast day could be a day of judicial trial. Sentence was therefore deferred till after the Passover. In the motive and deliberateness of the respite read certain doom. 6. In the character of the imprisonment. No chance of escape. Peter had been delivered before; now extra precaution. 7. The last night had come. Lessons: 1. In direst extremity the Lord's people may be at peace. Note—(1) Peter's conscience is at rest. A step between him and death; but asleep. (2) He expects no deliverance. No watching! Delivered, he will believe his deliverance to be a dream (Psa. cxxvi. 1). 2. Man's extremity is often God's opportunity. For the highest illustration, see Rom. v. 6. II. HOPE. Observe the "but." The might of prayer is set against the power of Herod. 1. Time was given for prayer. Contrast with the case of James. 2. The prayer was special. They wanted one thing. No vague generalities. 3. Earnest—stretched out, strained—prayer at white heat. Same word is used of Christ's prayer in the garden, and in James v. 16. 4. Ceaseless. One prayer would not suffice. As the imprisonment went on prayer went on. For the style of the prayer, read chap. iv. 24–28. 5. Rose with the terror of the exigency. In the dead of the night, as the last hope was dying away, "many were gathered." 6. Courageous. Nothing could have been more obnoxious to the government than this act, if discovered. 7. On a large scale. Perhaps as many were gathered as the house could hold; some in one room, some in another. 8. Grounded on the words of the Lord Jesus. One disciple would remind of one promise, another of another, *e.g.*, "Ask, and it shall be given," "Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name," "If two of you shall agree." We know some who were present. None so notable as Saul (cf. chap. xi. 30, with xii. 25). The late persecutor now praying for the persecuted! Knocking! Perhaps the emissaries of Herod! Away Rhoda! See! III. DELIVERANCE. Supernatural, yet how simply told. IV. SURPRISE. Perhaps Peter knew of this prayer-meeting, and so wended his way thither. Note here—1. The genuineness of the history. An impostor would have made the disciples welcome the answer to their prayer. The history makes them astounded. Which is truest to the deepest things of life? 2. Truth oft mingles with superstition in the best minds. "His angel." It is true that for every one there is an angel guardian (Matt. xviii. 10). It is not true that he can assume the form and voice of the person guarded. 3. The grace of expectation does not always accompany the spirit of prayer. It does sometimes (1 Kings xviii. 42–44). 4. Deliverance came at the very last moment (ver. 18). (*H. T. Robjohns, B.A.*) *A prayer-meeting in apostolic times*:—I. THEY CONFINED THEIR EFFORTS TO PRAYER. II. THEY CONTINUED IN THIS EFFORT. They must have had strong faith. III. THEY REAPED THE BENEFIT. The answer—1. Filled them with amazement. 2. Was superabundant. 3. Was speedy. (*Stems and Twigs.*) *The story of a prayer-meeting and what came of it*:—I. THE CHURCH SUFFERING. The name of Herod is to the Christian Church almost all that Ahab is to the Jewish, and Peter comes before us in these earlier chapters of the Acts as another Elijah—the prophet of fire. Herod stretches out his hand to vex certain of the Church, which must have been driven to its wits' end. Stephen had already been stoned, and almost all the leading men had been scattered. And now the Apostle James is slain. The trembling Church clings about Peter. And now Peter is carried off to prison; and Herod is going to put him to death as soon as the Passover is over. How the hearts of the Christians must have sunk down within them, sick with helplessness! Oh these dreadful times, when it seems so hopeless, so useless to do anything more; the conflict is so unequal! II. THE CHURCH PRAYING. Then comes a blessed "but." "But prayer was made without ceasing." Though every other door be shut, this one is ever open. We have seen in our day what has been called an attempt to go back to primitive custom in the Church. We can do nothing

better, if only we go back far enough. I find no controversy about vestments, no going to law about attitudes, no mystery of the mass, but I find prayer constant, everywhere. The primitive Church was born in a prayer-meeting, and in the prayer-meeting she renewed her strength. The prayer-meeting is the thermometer of the Church—it tests what degree of warmth there is. The prayer-meeting is the barometer of the Church, and points us to showers of blessings or to seasons of drought. The Church's warming apparatus is in the prayer-meeting room. The light that is in the Church comes in that way. A praying Church is a mighty, prosperous, resistless Church. He helps the Church most who sets himself to make the prayer-meeting most largely a success. Let us turn to this company. "I don't see any hope whatever," says one; "if we had only somebody of influence to plead with Herod, but we all are so poor. And then there are all these rulers and Pharisees urging him on." Then says some simple soul timidly, "I think we had better pray about it." But nobody noticed it. Then another sighs: "Herod has declared his purpose, and the Jews will take care to keep him up to it." "No hope," says another bitterly; "Peter is inside that iron gate and those stone walls, chained to soldiers and watched by sentries! Poor Peter! there is not a chance for him." "I think we had better pray," says the simple soul again, more urgently. "Really, brother, do be practical! Whatever can prayer do in a case like this?" ask they all impatiently. "What can it not do?" says the simple soul. "Ah, but you see God works according to law," says another very solemnly. That silences them all. The simple soul doesn't know what law means; most likely none of them do. They only think of it as something very dreadful indeed that shut Heaven's door and left Peter hopelessly in prison. And so Peter might have perished and the Church have died out—all because God works by laws! But now there is a familiar knock, that told of an earnest and resolute man. "Ah, here is Brother Faith," says the simple soul, looking up brightly. "Well," says Faith, "what are you going to do?" "Have you got anything to propose?" at last one asks doubtfully. "Yes," Faith answers, "I happen to know One who has great influence with Herod, and could get him to change his mind about this matter. And besides that, He has the key of that iron door, and He can open it. And as for the soldiers, they are bound to do His bidding. I think we had better speak to Him." "Who can do that but Cæsar?" they ask in a tone of disappointment. "And however are we to get at Cæsar? Besides, there is no time to communicate with him." "No," says Faith, "I mean One here in Jerusalem, our Heavenly Father." "But God works according to law." "True," says Faith, "and isn't this a mighty, deep, abiding law, that 'like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him'? And is not this a law, that 'if we know how to give good gifts unto our children, our Father shall much more know how to give good gifts to them that ask Him'? I believe in law," says Faith, "but I believe at the back of all law, its source and strength, is the heart of our Father God. He can help us, and He will. Let us pray." And without more ado Faith knelt down, and one by one all followed and they began to pray. Oh Faith! verily thou hast logic and philosophy and common sense and the promises and everything on thy side—for thou hast God. As they pray on they get to the very heart of God. Was not this poor trembling Church the very Bride of God's dear Son, for whom He had lain down His life? What then? If God had given His Son for their sakes, could He withhold His help? Oh Herod! you cannot succeed against this. This little company has got hold of Omnipotence. III. LEAVING THE COMPANY LET US SEE HOW IT FARES WITH PETER. Poor Peter! the sentence has gone out that to-morrow he must die, amidst every condition that should afford his enemies a gloating triumph. Little wonder if we find him cast down, beset with grief and fear. But look, here he lies, asleep. Well, what else should he be doing? Of old he slept because the flesh was weak; now he sleeps because his faith is strong. Ah, it is the very climax of faith when it has learnt to sleep. Many a man can fight the good fight of faith, who cannot sleep the good sleep of faith. Now suddenly the dungeon is illuminated as with the glory of the Lord. Then Peter saw the angel, he felt the fetters loosened, and forth he went. Then the angel was gone, and Peter stood under the starry heavens—free. At first his thoughts went up to God to thank Him for His great deliverance. Then his thoughts went away to the little company that had met in prayer for him. He found the door shut! The prison gate fell back before him; but here were they, praying that Peter might be fetched out of prison, and they had forgotten to leave their own front door on the latch for him. The only place that Peter found impassable was the house of his friends! Have we not heard of the little maiden who

when the church met to pray for rain took her big umbrella with her; and when the congregation came out to find their prayers answered, they almost forgot to be thankful in their concern about their dresses and bonnets, whilst she went safely sheltered on her way? When you begin to pray, let faith set the door of expectation open. So is it that many go on praying for forgiveness, and they forget to go to the door to see if the Saviour is there. Many are praying for the peace and joy of the indwelling Christ, and lo! He Himself is standing without knocking and waiting if they would but open unto Him and let Him come in. Poor Peter! it seemed a cold reception for him, standing there and knocking thus. Eventually Rhoda, hearing some one, creeps timidly to listen. They were times of peril, and all kinds of dreadful things might happen; and fearfully she asked who it was. It was Peter. And in very joy, without staying to open the door, she ran in and carried the good tidings—"Peter is come." "Nonsense," said one, "you are mad." Ah, they were a little like us of to-day, it seems. "But I am sure it is he: I heard his voice," persisted the damsel. Then said one and another rather frightened—"It is his ghost." It is wonderful what people will believe in sooner than believe in answers to prayer. Then the company crept timidly to the door. Yes, there was Peter himself, and he told them how the Lord had sent an angel and delivered him. Then they saw why this mystery of Peter's imprisonment had been permitted—that they might prove the mighty power of prayer. And Peter went forth beyond the reach of Herod. But a little time after, Herod was smitten by the angel of the Lord. Do let us believe in God, and let there be no limit to our faith, since there is no limit to the power and goodness of our God. We have access to the same God; let us make much use of it. If Herod be dead, his successors are still very much alive. There are many rulers of public opinion who do stretch out their hands to vex the Church. Others are there whose lust hates that which condemns their indulgence. Our power to triumph over our foes is in our power to pray. What hosts are there who lie away from the reach of the gospel! How can we get at them? Amongst us there are old besetting sins, that are riveted upon wrist and ankle, binding men and women in a miserable bondage, making them useless to the Church—avarice, ill-temper, worldliness, lukewarmness, prejudice, pride. Their gold is under lock and key, and it wants a strong angel of the Lord to loosen it. They are shut up in an inner dungeon of indifference or laziness, bound by the opinion of those about them, as Peter was by the chains of the soldiers. What can we do? Let but prayer be made without ceasing of the Church unto God; and rulers shall be powerless for mischief, and prison doors shall be opened, and again it shall be recorded, "The word of God grew and multiplied." (*Mark Guy Pearse.*) *Release from prison as an answer to prayer:*—An aged woman came to one of our chapels bowed down with sorrow. Her husband was constable of the village and consequently responsible for the conduct of the people. A murder had been committed in the village, and news of it had reached the ears of the magistrate. The murderer had escaped, the magistrate was very angry, and said he would punish the constable instead of the murderer, as is often done in some parts of China; but he was an old man, so the magistrate took his son instead, and everybody said that unless the murderer could be found he would lose his head. So she had come with her heart almost breaking to know if Ah-kying, the native helper, could assist her. He told her that to go and plead with the magistrate for her son would be useless; but he could pray to God for her; that God would hear and answer prayer, and help her if they prayed to Him. The mother said she would gladly pray to God if she knew how. So they knelt down together. Ah-kying told the Lord all her trouble, asked God to deliver her son, and also that both mother and son might be saved from eternal death. She returned to her home, told her husband and neighbours how this Christian had prayed to God, and how confident he was of his prayer being speedily answered. Day after day passed, and still no news of the poor prisoner; but one afternoon, just as hope was beginning to die away, she saw coming towards the house her son, alive, set free from prison. He could not understand it himself, for he had not the least expectation of being released. That morning the magistrate had sent for him, had him beaten, then set him at liberty. Great was the joy at his return. The mother told him about Ah-kying's prayer, and for weeks they walked about eight miles to the chapel to worship the God who had answered prayer, and saved the son from death. (*W. Rudland, Missionary in China.*) *Continuance in prayer:*—During my recent visit to Italy, when in the hotel, I desired the attention of the waiter, and observing the button to be pressed, I applied my thumb as instructed,

but no waiter appeared; I repeated the experiment several times, with no better success. Presently another visitor entered, and, hearing my desire, asked if I had rung the bell. I told him I had, without success. "Ah," said he, "you do not understand; I have been here before," and placing his thumb upon the button, he kept it there till the waiter appeared. That is how we must pray: keep up continuous application until the answer arrives. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Prayer and protection*:—In the year 1793, when Ireland was in a state of rebellion against England, some discontented spirits in county Wexford thought that now was a favourable opportunity to vent their spleen upon the small settlement of Moravians dwelling in that district. They had long threatened to make an end of them, and when would they get a better chance? The Moravians expected some such attack, and resolved to trust not to their own strength or weapons, but in God. They gathered in their chapel, and with earnest prayer besought Him to be their shield in the time of danger. The attacking party drew near; they had expected to meet with opposition, and were prepared for butchery and the wildest excesses, but instead of that they beheld those whom they had come to slay on their knees before God. They heard the earnest prayers for protection, and stranger still, for forgiveness and pardon for their intending murderers. When their song of praise rang out in the still air there was not one in all that ruffianly band who would have raised a hand against these sweet singers; they felt powerless to harm them. They stayed all that day in the settlement, then with one accord departed, without having injured a single individual or having stolen a single article. So the Lord looked after His own, and did help and protect those who had put their trust in Him. (*J. McGregor.*) *Safety through prayer*:—In 1872 a missionary in the city of Cadareita, Mexico, made it a special subject of prayer that the Lord would open the way for the return of himself, his wife and child to the States for a little season, the circumstances seeming to indicate this as a duty. The needed means were provided, but the country was in a state of revolution, and his friends tried to dissuade him from going, as General Cortinas would probably cross their path, who was a murderous man and regarded as having a special hatred for Americans. He determined to go forward, however, trusting to Divine protection, and they started for Matemoras, some three hundred miles distant, two hired men and their wives accompanying them, the brethren "promising to pray daily for their safety." "The third morning, after commending ourselves as usual into the care of our covenant-keeping God," he relates, "we started on our journey, and soon espied the troops of General Cortinas two miles distant, marching toward us. We again all looked to God for protection, and then went on until we met the advanced guard, who commanded us to halt and wait until the general came up. Riding up to our company with the salutation, he asked whence we came and whither we were going; he then asked the news from Nueva Leon. After replying to his question, the missionary inquired if the road was safe between his party and Matemoras. He replied, 'Perfectly; you can go on without any fear, and as safely as you would in your own country'; then bidding us good morning, he rode on, not even inquiring about or examining any of our baggage." Upon reaching Brownville, Texas, friends pronounced the conduct of General Cortinas as truly a miracle, for they "could not have believed him capable of such kindness to Americans so in his power." *Answered prayers* (text and Philem. 22):—The two passages cover the entire subject. Here are prayers of the same kind as when a mother asks God to restore her sick child, or a Church asks a beloved officer to be spared. I. THE SIMILARITY IN THE TWO CASES. The circumstances are almost identical. In both cases the Church pleads for the life of an apostle from the hands of a blood-thirsty tyrant, and in both cases the prayer is answered. Learn—1. The region into which prayer may enter. Men say this is only the personal, inward, and spiritual. To pass from ourselves to affairs of human government and laws or to nature is vain. The examples here are against these statements and show that prayer has a voice in the action of our fellows, in the arrangements of life, and in the laws of nature. 2. Prayer has direct results therein. Good-humoured sceptics say, "Pray for others as much as you like that they may be delivered from nature's laws, and from human wrong—it may do you good in the way of deepening your sympathies, but outward results are impossible." But we see here that through the prayers of the Church Peter and Paul are restored to liberty. 3. Prayer does not always receive the answer desired. Peter and Paul were in prison again, and without doubt the Church prayed for their release. The apostles were released indeed, but by death, not to earthly toil but to heavenly rest. It is a misrepresentation that the Church teaches

that the good asked for is always given. Christians pray not with a desire to impose their will upon God and His universe. When the answer is not given according to their desire, they are content to believe that it is in respect of things they would not have desired could they have known as God knows. 4. Yet prayer is a mighty power in the affairs of men—a mighty weapon in the hands of the Church. How unequal the forces; Herod or Nero, with prisons and soldiers, and on the other side a few weak men and women bowed in prayer. Yet note which wins. 5. The Church is resistless for the purposes of her great mission when fully armed with the power of prayer. A king once led forth his steel-clad chivalry to place a despot's yoke upon the neck of a free people. Just before the battle he saw their ranks bending to the ground. "See," he cried, "they submit already." "Yes," said a wise counsellor, who knew them better; "they submit, but it is to God, not to us." And in a few hours the king and his army were scattered. Let the Church, as she stands face to face with opposing forces, submit to God in prayer and every foe will be vanquished. II. THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE TWO CASES. The same answer is given, but in different ways. In the first case there is direct Divine interposition, in the other nothing miraculous.—Paul pleads his case, is adjudged innocent and set free. Learn—1. The blessedness of the man who lives and moves in an atmosphere of prayer, around whom cluster as guardian forces, the petitions of the people of God. 2. The exalted privilege of being identified with the visible Church. Men may speak lightly of it, but is it a light thing to be remembered by thousands in their prayers? III. THE RELATION OF THE ONE CASE TO THE OTHER. The one explains the other. A miracle teaches us that God is everywhere working, and that the ordinary operations of nature are but the veil behind which He screens Himself, and which in the miracle is for the moment removed. Learn—1. Not to expect supernatural operations in answer to prayer. 2. To recognise God in the natural, and to accept the answer when it comes in the ordinary course of events. It is a miserable condition of mind that sees God in the rescue of Peter but not in the rescue of Paul. (*W. Perkins.*) *The liberating power of prayer*:—Mr. Elliot, who laboured as a missionary among the American Indians, was eminent in prayer, and several instances are recorded of remarkable answers having been given to his petitions. The following is striking:—Mr. Foster, a godly gentleman of Charlestown, was, with his son, taken by the Turks; and the barbarous prince, in whose dominions he was become a slave, was resolved that, in his lifetime, no captive should be released; so that Mr. Foster's friends, when they had heard the sad news, concluded that all hope was lost. Upon this, Mr. Elliot, in some of his next prayers before a great congregation, addressed the Throne of Grace in the following very plain language: "Heavenly Father, work for the redemption of Thy poor servant Foster. And if the prince who detains him will not, as they say, dismiss him as long as himself lives, Lord, we pray Thee, kill that cruel prince; kill him, and glorify Thyself upon him." In answer to this singular prayer, Mr. Foster quickly returned from captivity, and brought an account that the prince who had detained him had come to an untimely death, by which means he had been set at liberty. "Thus we knew," says Dr. Cotton Mather, "that a prophet had been among us." *Peter prayed out of prison*:—Learn from the narrative—I. THE TRUE UNITY OF THE CHURCH. Paul tells us that when one member suffers, all the members suffer with it, and here we see how the assault made on Peter affected all the saints in Jerusalem. They felt regarding him as Luther felt regarding Melanchthon when, with amazing boldness, the reformer told the Lord that he could not do without his Philip. They had in him not an interest of benevolence alone but one of identity. Peter's extremity was their extremity. So let one child in a home be smitten all the members are deeply affected. Let some public spirited patriot be stricken, and the whole nation feels the blow. But even more keenly the Christian feels the affliction of a brother in Christ. There is nothing which merges relationship into identity so thoroughly as the gospel. In Christ we are all one; and so each feels the other's woe. And then Christ feels with us; "in all our affliction He is afflicted." This is the true brotherhood. Better than all secret lodges, or mystic grasps, or talismanic passwords is this union with Christ. The Church ought to be the most helpful and loving society in the world; and if it were there would be no craving among men for some other association to meet their needs. II. THE POWER OF EARNEST, BELIEVING UNITED PRAYER. The answer in this case was long delayed. The last night had arrived, yet they continued, and lo! at the darkest hour the dawn broke. Here is an example for us. We are not warranted to expect such answers as this, yet God would sooner work a miracle than suffer His faithfulness to fail, or let His

cause be put back. For the resources of the universe are at His command, and it is equally easy for Him to answer prayer through the ordinary operations of His providence, or through bringing new causes into operation. What we have to remember is that He is the hearer of prayer. Did we do so there would be more definiteness, directness and business-like purpose in our petitions. Is it not a fact that when we have concluded our devotions it would often puzzle us to tell what we have been praying for? And then when we have asked for certain things, we have become discouraged because we have not had an immediate answer. Why are God's answers delayed? It may be because we are desirous of sharing in the glory of the answer; or because God wishes to mature patience and faith; but in any case if we were more definite and continuous we should see more frequently the results. They tell us of the fixed laws of nature; but who dares maintain that He who fixed those laws cannot use them for the purpose of answering His people's prayers? There are postal laws in this country; but are the facilities for answering letters open to all but those who made them? And yet men who are using the laws of nature every day to help their fellows—*e.g.*, medical men—will deny to their Author the same liberty. Nay, more; if I do not post my letter may I not telegraph for a message-boy and send him on with an immediate answer? And am I breaking postal laws to do that? Yet I may send my little liveried messenger, but God may not send an angel! III. WHILE EARTHLY GLORY FADES THE WORD OF GOD ENDURES FOR EVER. Like a foam bell on the stream Herod dazzled men's eyes for a moment with the reflection of the sunlight; and then like it too, he burst and disappeared —while "the Word of God grew and multiplied." (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *The deliverance of Peter*:—1. A triumph of Divine power. 2. A reward of apostolic fidelity. 3. A fruit of intercessory brotherly love. 4. An overthrow of proud tyrannical rage. (*K. Gerok.*) *The deliverance of Peter*:—From the narrative learn the following lessons — I. IF EVER OUR ENEMIES GET HOLD OF US, THEY WILL HOLD US AS FAST AS THEY CAN. Herod was not content with ordinary means of keeping Peter in custody. He was too great a prize to be lost. Mark you, if by any fault of our own we ever fall into the hand of our enemies, we need expect no mercy from them. And if without fault we be delivered for a little season into their hands, whoever may be spared, the Christian never is. Men will forgive a thousand faults in others, but they will magnify the most trivial offence in the true follower of Jesus. Nor do I very much regret this, for it is a caution to us to walk very carefully before God in the land of the living. The Cross of Christ is in itself an offence to the world; let us take heed that we do not add any offence of our own. It is "to the Jew a stumblingblock"; let us mind that we put no stumblingblocks where there are enough already. "To the Greek it is foolishness"; let us not add our folly to give point to the scorn with which the worldly-wise deride the gospel. We pilgrims travel as suspected persons through the world. Not only are we under surveillance, but there are more spies than we reck of. II. WHEN A CASE IS PUT INTO GODS HANDS, HE WILL MANAGE IT WELL, AND HE WILL INTERFERE IN SUFFICIENT TIME TO BRING HIS SERVANTS OUT OF THEIR DISTRESS. Peter's case was put into God's hands. Well, we can leave it there. But it is the last night! Yes, but just at that last and darkest hour of the night, God's opportunity overtook man's extremity. A light shone in the dungeon. Peter was awakened. God never is before His time; nor is He ever too late. But see, there is Peter asleep! doing nothing! Well, and the best thing for him too, for the case was put into God's hands. Suppose Peter had been awake, what could he do? Had he been fretting and troubling himself, what good could he have done? Sleep on, blessed slumberer! Well might Herod envy thee. Thy spirit is free; and it may be that in thy dreams thou art rejoicing "with a joy unspeakable, and full of glory." When the case is taken into God's hands, and you and I feel that we can do nothing for ourselves, we may take sleep, and while we sleep, His watchful eyes do keep their ceaseless guard, and at the right time deliverance comes. III. WHEN GOD COMES TO DELIVER HIS PEOPLE, ALL THE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH SEEM TO GO AGAINST THEIR DELIVERANCE SHALL ONLY TEND TO SET FORTH THE MORE HIS GLORY. What contempt He puts upon chains, &c. I know of nothing that seems to illustrate more God's splendid triumph over man's cunning than the resurrection of Christ. So, Christian, rest assured that everything that looks black to your gaze now, shall only make it the brighter when God delivers you. IV. NO DIFFICULTY CAN EVER OCCUR WHICH GOD CANNOT MEET WHEN HE MAKES BARE HIS ARM. The chains are gone, the warders are passed, but there is that iron gate. You get fretting for months about the iron gate, as those holy women did for hours, who went to the sepulchre and said, "Who shall roll us away the stone?"

There was no stone to roll away! And when you go to this place, you will find that there is no iron gate there, or it will open of its own accord. Oh, how often have we had to wonder at our own folly. V. THE OMNIPOTENCE OF PRAYER. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The deliverance of Peter*:—We obtain here a pleasing view of—I. THE DEEP AND TENDER SENSE OF BROTHERHOOD WHICH PERVADED THE EARLY CHURCH. This is one of the best gifts which the gospel brought to men. It is indeed the primary, unique element of the human race as a special, distinct creation. Sin struck a disastrous blow at this distinguishing principle. If reclamation should ever come for the race, this principle must be called into life again. Men must be taught not only to know God as a Father, but each other as brothers. And so we perceive that Christ made this brotherhood the basic element of His kingdom. How beautifully did the early Church display this principle! How closely were they joined together! How generously they sold their property for the common good! Out of the fruitful soil of loving brotherhood sprang up the intense concern of the whole Church for Peter. It is the true cement which binds Christians of every name and country together in an indissoluble bond. It is the only sentiment of sufficient power to arouse the Church to carry the gospel to the millions yet lying in the shadow of death. II. THE CHURCH IN THE ATTITUDE OF PRAYER FOR AN IMPERILED BROTHER. 1. It was a praying Church. When they had returned from the ascension, they all continued with one accord in prayer. When they would select one to fill the place made vacant by Judas, they prayed. When they had received three thousand souls into the Church they continued steadfastly in prayers. When Peter and John returned after their first arraignment, the whole company lifted up their voice to God. As the result of this habitual prayerfulness "they were filled with the Holy Spirit," "they spake the Word with boldness," the multitude of them that believed "were of one heart and of one soul," "and great grace was upon them all." 2. By the habit of prayer the Church was prepared for trying emergencies (ver. 5). Here was a great emergency. Through this dreary week prayer was their constant occupation. They had no carnal weapons, no distinguished friends at court, no treasures to offer as a ransom; but there was a Power above the might of kings, standing ready to be invoked; and to this Power they made their appeal. 3. They prayed in concert. All hearts were touched, all minds agreed. 4. They prayed unceasingly. Through the long week, amid the distractions of the crowded city, with the danger of a bloody persecution, they prayed. There was no relaxation of energy, no manifestation of doubt, no giving over of entreaty. The vision of their father Jacob wrestling at Mahanaim may have risen before them, or the thought of the unbroken vigils of their Master may have come to strengthen them. Three potent elements met and mingled in their prayer: namely, their sense of need, a present God, and the undoubting conviction that He was able and willing to help. Could it be less than unceasing? 5. They prayed to the point. It was all for Peter. Self was forgotten. There were no diffuse and rambling petitions, no grooved sentences or highflown expressions, or dull repetitions, certainly no prescribed form. They could not run wide of the mark: "Hear us for Peter in his lone prison." 6. To God direct they spoke. No appeal to angels; no mention of Mary, no saint is thought of as a helper, not even Stephen, or the saintly James, fresh in heaven from his baptism of blood. No living man is called on to help; no message is sent to Herod. They cast themselves on God nakedly. The case is urgent, and the mighty Presence alone filled the scene. III. THE ISSUE. The festival-week is over. The day is fixed to bring Peter forth to his doom. It is the morrow. But the Church is still praying. One place of meeting is full. Most likely all the places of assembly were similarly attended. Peter was asleep in his cell, chained by each arm to a soldier. There is no thunderstorm, no earthquake. No jailer is bribed to release Peter. An angel is in the prison. He aroused Peter. Peter followed him and was free. (*W. G. Craig, D.D.*) *Peter's deliverance from chains, an image of our gracious deliverance from the chains of sin*:— I. THE SEVERE IMPRISONMENT. 1. The chains. 2. The keepers. 3. The sleep. II. THE MERCIFUL DELIVERANCE. 1. The messenger from heaven with his joyful light and awakening voice. 2. The awakening with its fears and joys. 3. The first walking, with its hindrances and aids—walking as in a dream through the first and second watch, and the iron gate. III. THE GLORIOUS LIBERTY. 1. The firm standing on one's own feet. 2. The joyful reception by the brethren. 3. The impotent rage of the world. (*K. Gerok.*) *The security of God's servants*:—The true servant of God—1. Can rest in peace even when seemingly in the power of those who intend to take his life. 2. Is never fully in the power of his enemies. God never irrecoverably surrenders him. 3. Has

celestial messengers sent to his comfort and deliverance. 4. Is cared for, not only in great, but also in small matters. 5. Though for the while not recognising the fact, yet soon will be sure to see that God has helped him in every deliverance from trouble. (*S. S. Times.*) *Aspects of sainthood*:—On the whole narrative we note —1. The saint's tribulation. Peter in prison—various sorts of prisons. 2. The saint's treasure. Peter slept—peace of heart. 3. The saint's power. Prayer in Mary's house. 4. The saint's deliverance. God interferes. 5. The saint's duty. Peter must gird himself and bind on his sandals, and cast his garment about him and follow the angel. *Divine interposition*:—This old-world story is full of encouragement and instruction for the men to-day. It teaches—I. GOD KNOWS ALL ABOUT HIS CHILDREN. Beyond the bare fact of Peter's arrest, the disciples were in profound ignorance. The secrets of the Roman prison-house were well kept. But God kept watch over Peter, knew in what cell he was confined, the names of his guards, and just where, when, and how to send His angel. Peter had no occasion to feel solitary or forsaken. God's children are never alone. The shipwrecked sailor adrift on a spar in mid-ocean; the traveller lost in the trackless desert; the pauper dying in the attic with no friend to speak a word of comfort—all these, if they are God's children, are cheered by His presence. Human experience is so full of enforced solitudes that this is the most precious of all truths. Our recognised afflictions are not the hardest to bear. The tears we shed in secret, the disappointments of which we never speak, the sorrowful hearts which we hide under smiling faces—these are the things that test and strain the fibre of manhood. It greatly helps us to bear troubles like these, to remember that God knows all about them. II. GOD KEEPS HIMSELF INFORMED ABOUT HIS CHILDREN IN ORDER TO HELP THEM. He kept watch of Peter in order that, when the right time came, He might deliver him from prison. He keeps watch of you and me that, when our need is too sore for our unaided strength, He may put the right hand of His omnipotence underneath the burden. Providence is pro-VID-ence—the foreseeing and arranging that precedes helpful doing. Men have too mechanical an idea of life. Our common blessings are supposed to come in what we call the "order of nature." The farmer who rejoices in a bountiful harvest says: "It was because the seed was good, and the soil was good, and the season was propitious, and I spared no pains." True, but back of all these recognised conditions was God, giving the seed its vitality and the soil its fertility, &c. III. WHEN GOD HELPS HIS CHILDREN HE EXPECTS THEM TO HELP THEMSELVES. It was possible for God, in working a miracle for Peter's deliverance, to have wrought out every item of it. But that is not the Divine method. There were some things which the apostle could do for himself, and only what he could not do for himself was done for him. In the Divine economy of the universe there is no provision for idleness. Prayer is not such a power as allows men to fold their hands, and expect results which they might secure by the proper use of means. Frederick Douglass says: "When I was a slave, I prayed earnestly for freedom and made no attempt to gain it, and I got no response; but, when I began to pray with my legs, my prayers began to be answered." Men pray for a revival of religion, and make no attempt to secure it by more consecrated lives and more earnest effort, and the revival does not come. If anything comes, it is a temporary surge of emotion, as fatal as it is evaneseent. Pilgrimages to Lourdes, and the modern "faith-cure," are only different phases of the same mischievous delusion. Prayer and effort are designed to go hand-in-hand. We are "workers together with God," and, so long as we are idle, the heavens keep silence. IV. WHEN GOD MOVES IN BEHALF OF HIS CHILDREN NO OBSTACLE IS TOO GREAT FOR HIM. Humanly judging, how many and what insuperable difficulties stood in the way of Peter's deliverance! But how easy for God to do that which was impossible for man! He had but to will it, and the keepers were helpless and asleep. He had but to command it, and chains melted like wax in the heat of His word. He had but to say it, and every door opened wide. And yet how apt men are to limit the range of their petitions to the things which it seems to them can be done, and have no heart to ask God for what seems too hard for them. Our philosophies of prayer often ignore the fact that Omnipotence is at the head of the universe. The scientist argues the futility of all prayer, because inflexible laws of nature block the way. As though God were not more than nature, and His assurance, "Ask and ye shall receive," as much a factor in the conduct of the universe as gravitation! We have nothing to do with probabilities. The hand that holds all worlds is able to work beyond our thought. (*Sermons by the Monday Club.*) *Divine deliverance*:—What can we learn from this story which may do something more for us than

even promoting the spirit of confidence towards God in time of distress or perplexity? The answer is to be found in that figure of Scripture which describes sinners as slaves and captives, tied and bound with the chain of sinful habit (2 Pet. ii. 29). And therefore they need that Deliverer who is sent (Isa. lxi. 1). The tyrant enemy of the soul plans its destruction, and takes his measures for keeping it fast in the dungeon of sin, bound with strong fetters of passion and habit to evil associations and bad companions, that he may make it his victim when he pleases. And now see how in every particular of St. Peter's captivity and deliverance we may find the picture of our own souls while under the dominion of sin, and of the steps by which our deliverance is accomplished. In the four quaternions, we have the same image of the incessant siege laid to the soul in its four main parts of human nature—the emotions, the understanding, the memory, and the will, as is figured in Psa. xci. 5, 6, where the four Hebrew divisions of daily time into evening, midnight, morning, and midday, each with its special risks and troubles, are signified. And then for the two chains: we know them but too well; the chain of aggressive overt acts, the chain of neglected duties. Any evil habits to which we have become wedded, any dangerous companions with whom we needlessly associate—these are the warders to whom we are linked by the same fetters of inveterate custom, which we are powerless to break. And so, like the apostle, we resign ourselves to laxity and inaction, typified by the loosened belt, cast-off cloak, relinquished sandals, heavy slumber. Then it is, in our worst need, that our succour comes. 1. The first token of the angelic presence was that "a light shined in the prison." So the light of God's Word, while lighting up the conscience, and revealing the foulness of the sins which defile the heart, shows us also Him who can save us from those sins. The bane and the antidote are both set before our eyes together, and we can choose which we will. 2. Next comes the personal call, the direct summons to the individual conscience, "Arise up quickly"—the one note of haste in the whole transaction. Quickly, for the need is urgent, the deadly peril imminent, life itself is at stake, and there is no time for dawdling. The angel "smote Peter on the side." A blow, a shock, some sudden chastisement or calamity, is frequently needed before man, dead asleep in sloth and sin, can be roused to a sense of his condition. But that we may know that the smiting hand is friendly there follows at once, "and raised him up." This denotes the action of Divine grace, not quitting the sinner till he is fully roused, and made capable of exertion; for we read further that "his chains fell off his hands." That is, the first grade of conversion is the sudden breaking away from evil habits and bad companions. 3. But next we find the invariable law of Divine action for and on man observed. God does that part of the work which we cannot do; He expects us to do the part within our own powers and opportunities. To be ungirded meant idleness, relaxation, self-indulgence. And therefore our Lord counsels his disciples (Luke xii. 35); and his apostles repeat the injunction (Eph. vi. 14; 1 Pet. i. 13). That is, check and restrain yourselves, discipline your powers and passions, prepare yourselves for active work. And the sandals point yet further that this work must take us, so to speak, out of doors, in the service of a charity which, though it may begin at home, may not stop there; which shall go where it is needed, whether for word or work (Eph. vi. 15). The cloak denotes a further advance in effort, implying that we may have to journey some distance and encounter inclement weather, to undergo some personal inconvenience, in the discharge of our duty. And there may be this additional sense, that as the wide cloak covers the whole person, so the whole purpose and will of the now active worker should be engaged in his occupation (Isa. lix. 17). Then comes the most important precept of all, which prescribes not the act only of exertion, but the manner: "Follow me." Only so far as the teacher through whom God's message has reached the sinner is himself a follower of the Lord is his example to be taken for a pattern; but the path of the saints who took Him for their Guide and Model is the only road out of the prison of sin, and into the open air of life and freedom. But the obstacles in the escaping captive's way are not even yet overcome. Two wards or stations of posted sentinels lie beyond the part of the prison from which he has thus far been rescued, and must needs be gone through. First comes the purgative way, the process of abandoning old evil habit; the "Cease to do evil" (Isa. i. 16); the path pointed out by the Psalmist (Psa. cxix. 9); the counsel of the Baptist (Luke iii. 13, 14). Next is the illuminative way, the way of light, in which we learn more of God's will, and advance from mere passive blamelessness to active holiness; the "Learn

to do well" (Isa. i. 17); of which is written (Prov. iv. 18). And beyond this is the third and final stage of the unitive way (Jer. l. 5); the road which brings us to Christ Himself, and makes us one with Him (1 Cor. vi. 17). Through these first and second wards, then, the converted sinner must pass, and so reach the iron door, which keeps the foulness and sin of the criminal prison from overflowing into the streets of the holy city; as it is written (Rev. xxii. 15). What is this door, then, that is at once the bar against sin and the issue to happiness and freedom? What but He who has said (John x. 9)? for (Eph. ii. 18). No obstacle awaits us there, if only we have followed in the appointed path; for the gracious words succeed (Acts xii. 10); another way of expressing what He has said to all of us (Matt. vii. 7), and again, to every soul that strives, even feebly, to do His will (Rev. iii. 8). This is the one and only way of access to the city, that New Jerusalem which is the bride, the Lamb's wife, and which has the glory of God. But when that one street, that way that leadeth unto life, has been traversed, forthwith the angel departs from the pilgrims he has hitherto guided, since they have no further need of his services. Once within the holy city, they cannot go astray, for all her streets lead to the throne of God; once in sight of the beatific vision, they want no lesser help, "for in the light of the King's countenance is life" (Prov. xvi. 15). (*R. F. Littledale, LL.D.*)

Vers. 7–10. **And behold the angel of the Lord came upon him.**—*The tender offices of angels towards the saints of God*:—It enhances the moral dignity of the Christian that he should have such exalted beings in constant attendance upon him. It seems to bring God nearer to us, to bridge over the measureless void between the finite and the infinite, to feel that in sickness or in sorrow, or in mental darkness, they are present with us who have just come from God's presence. The hand supports us which a moment before had been tuning to lofty melody the harps of God. They bring themselves to our doors, that we may have a bright and hallowing presence in our houses and among our children; they are witnesses in the place of our holy assemblies; they stand as weeping friends stand by the bedside of the departing righteous, while in the end of time they shall arrest the ministers of desolation in their world-wide havoc, saying, "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of God on their foreheads." So near, so loving, so constant are the tender offices of angels towards the saints of God. No worship do we offer them; they will have none. They ask only to be loved by us as guardian friends, to be honoured by our consistent walk, to be thought of as humble servants of the Lord Jesus, "sent forth to minister unto them who shall be heirs of salvation." (*D. Moore, M.A.*) *Angel visits in the night*:—1. When we climb to some mountain height, and look forth upon the broad landscape in the blaze of the bright moon, it seems as if our earth were the universe, and the sun were a single globe of fire hung in the heavens to give it light. When we stand upon the deck of the ship in mid ocean it seems impossible that there can be anything else but the sun and the sea. When we look up to the silent sky at night, it seems as if the bright array of stars were only camp-fires kindled on the plains of heaven to guide some wanderer through the solitudes of earth. When we go down into the depths of the cavern it seems as if we were alone in the universe, and when we mingle with the multitude it seems as if man and earth were everything. All these natural and uninstructed impressions conspire to narrow the range of our thought, and shut us up to the occupations of man alone. It is, therefore, a salutary disclosure that we are not the only actors in the busy scenes of daily life. There is no solitude where we may not have the unseen companionship of beings that think and feel and work more mightily and constantly than ourselves. 2. And these invisible partners of our toil, and sharers of our spiritual life, have sometimes stepped forth from behind the curtain to show us that we may have witnesses of our conduct when we think ourselves most alone. And these celestial visitants have shown themselves better acquainted with human history, and better able to do our work, than we ourselves. They have defeated great armies, overthrown populous cities, sent forth and arrested the pestilence. They have rested under the shadow of oaks at noon, as if weary, eaten bread, as if hungry, received hospitality, as if coming in from a journey, guided and protected travellers, rolled away the stone from the tomb, kindled the fire of the altar, clothed themselves in garments that shone like the lightning, and appeared in so common a garb as to be taken for wayfaring men needing lodgings for the night. It gives us a higher and truer estimate of our own place in the

great commonwealth of intelligent beings, to find that we are objects of intense interest to the inhabitants of other worlds. It enlarges the range of our thought, and lifts our desires and aspirations above all earthly and perishable things, to know that our present habitation is only one little province of a universe of worlds; and that this mighty empire is bound together by ties of intelligence, co-operation, and sympathy, to its utmost extent. 3. The deliverance of Peter shows that these mighty visitants have little regard for the pomp and splendours of earthly state. Suppose a prophet had said the day before that on that night a mighty being from the central province in God's great empire would visit Jerusalem, and only one man in all that city would be honoured by receiving that celestial messenger—could any have guessed that that man would be found in prison? There were many other persons besides Peter, many other places besides a prison for an angel to visit. But the angel did not show himself in the palace of the king. He did not enter the temple. He did not address himself to the pilgrims at the feast. The one man, whom that mighty servant of God had come to see, was shut up in stone walls, asleep on a stone floor, bound with iron chains, &c. If the very chain with which Peter was bound were now kept in Jerusalem, every intelligent traveller would wish to see it. And not necessarily from any superstitious regard, but from the feeling that Christian faith and suffering consecrate everything they touch. If the cell were preserved any intelligent traveller would think it something to remember and to tell of, that he had entered that cell. So much consecration do rude homes and vile dungeons derive from the faith and toil and suffering of the servants of God. Let love to Christ become the law and the life of everything we do, and then the place where we toil, and the home where we rest, will become as attractive to angels as the dungeons where the martyrs suffered. 4. Peter slept so soundly that only the sound of the angel voice, and the touch of the angel hand could awake him. A man with a good conscience can sleep on a very hard bed, and in the midst of very great danger. The anxieties and perils of life and the dread of death would not weary and wear us out so much if we went to our daily duties with such high and happy faith in God as martyrs have shown in the prison and the flames. If we fully believed that God has given his angels charge over us to keep us in all our ways, we could fulfil our day of duty without fear, and we could gratefully accept such sleep as God gives to his beloved when the night comes. I know the doctors say that sound sleep comes of a good digestion. And while I do not deny that, I know another—that a good digestion depends greatly upon a good conscience. To be in the best health of both body and mind, we must be at peace with God. And it makes very little difference how humble or exalted the chamber in which we lie down to rest, if we have done our duty well, and trust wholly in Him who giveth His beloved sleep. The sleep that renews the life, and restores the soul, and gives a foretaste of heavenly rest, is the sleep which God gives to them that love Him. The time is not far distant when the sleep of death will steal upon us all. What strange and bewildering joy it will be to be waked from that last sleep by the touch of an angel's hand! What surprise it will be to the soul to find itself able to obey that command, "Rise up quickly," and to follow the angel-guide to the paradise of God! 5. The care with which Peter was kept was a confession that even Herod was afraid of him. And we have much reason to be obliged to the king for making the guard so strong; just as the sealing of the stone and the setting of the watch over the sepulchre of Jesus, only helped and confirmed the demonstration of His resurrection; just as we may well thank the proud and passionate Voltaire for saying he was tired of hearing that twelve men established Christianity throughout the world, and he would yet live to hear it said that one man had banished Christianity from the face of the earth. We may count ourselves debtors to the remorseless criticism which has exhausted the resources of learning and industry in the endeavour to shake our confidence in the sacred records, for all its efforts have only served to lay bare the everlasting foundations on which our faith rests. We may be thankful for the bigotry which determined to crush out the spirit of Christian liberty. 6. Peter was accustomed to see miracles; and yet I do not wonder that he was bewildered, and thought he had seen a vision that night. If we try to imagine the circumstances, we shall the better understand his feelings. At last he has time to think. The bewildered man begins to come to himself. He recognises the place. And so God's angel shall come in the appointed time to deliver the disciple of Jesus from the prison of the flesh. And oh, how much more glorious than the change which so bewildered the mind of the apostle! We try in vain to express in words the

blessed bewilderment of the happy soul in the first moment of waking from the sleep of death to the life of heaven. It is here that we sleep and dream. The great reality of life is yet to come. Here the soul is bound, like Peter in the prison, with two chains—one the burden and sorrow of life, the other the fear of death. Faith in Christ alone delivers us from the double bondage. Faith in Christ alone can prepare us to be waked by the touch of the angel of death, and to see ourselves surrounded with a greater light than shone in the prison of the apostle when his angel deliverer said to him, "Arise, follow me." (*D. March, D.D.*) *The ministry of angels*:—I. With JAMES they were employed to convey his soul to glory. II. With PETER they were instruments to deliver him from bonds. III. With HEROD they were agents of God's vengeance. **The iron gate.**—*Difficulties giving way*:—This incident may be used to illustrate certain important truths. I. THAT MATTER IS THE SERVANT OF SPIRIT. Matter is found in diverse forms. But we can only win the use by conquest. Take iron as a sample. It is stored up in the earth. Its discovery an era. From that moment man rose in power. What countless uses are now made of iron! And as with iron, so with other materials: everything has its use. There have been great discoveries in the past, there may be greater in the future. But mark our responsibilities. We are the heirs of all the ages. If "much given," "much required" (Luke xii. 48). Such is the law; always, matter should be made subordinate to the good of man: the lower should serve the higher. II. THAT DIFFICULTIES GIVE WAY BEFORE MEN THAT ARE MOVING IN THE PATH OF DUTY. The ministry of angels still goes on. They are for us, and not against us; and often, in ways unknown to us, they may be employed for our good. Be this as it may, the release of Peter shows us how we too may obtain deliverance. First, we must put ourselves under the guidance of God, and at His call we must go forward bravely, without faltering (Psa. xxxvii. 5). Difficulties are a test. They show what spirit we are of. Difficulties are a challenge; they appeal to our manhood; courage mounteth with occasion. Difficulties are an education. It is not ease, but effort that makes men. "Our antagonist is our helper," said Burke. III. THAT, WALKING UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF GOD, OUR PATH SHALL EVER BE TOWARD WHAT IS HIGHER. Peter and the angel. So ever—Onward; from darkness to light; from restraint to liberty; from the presence of the evil to the companionship of the saints; from fear of death to glory, honour, and immortality in the city of God. How striking the contrast in the case of Herod! His pride had a terrible fall. An angel was sent to him; but in judgment. The oppressor is dealt with differently from the oppressed. Dr. Watts says: "Death to a good man is but the passing through a dark entry, out of one little room in his Father's house into another which is fair and large, lightsome and glorious, and divinely entertaining. Oh! may the rays and splendours of my heavenly apartment shoot far downward, and gild the dark entry with such a cheerful gloom as to banish any fear when I shall be called to pass through." (*William Forsyth, A.M.*)

Vers. 12-25. **And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark.**—*John Mark*:—1. Two names are here, one Jewish, the other Roman; the latter adopted at first as a secondary one, and gradually superseding the former, just as "Joses" grew into "Barnabas," and "Saul" became universally known as "Paul." Thus we have "John, whose surname was Mark"; but later always "Mark" or "Marcus," the Jewish name being entirely gone. 2. The scenes of this man's youth are not difficult to imagine. His father is never mentioned, but his mother is of note in the Christian community. She has a house commodious enough to receive a number of its members when they desire to meet. She has servants; the name of one of them we know, "Rhoda," or "Rose." There would meet, on various occasions, the choicest spirits of the early Church. Barnabas was Mary's nephew, and would often be her guest. Peter must have been an intimate friend. We find traces of these connections in the Epistles. "Marcus, sister's son" (or rather cousin) "to Barnabas," is the designation given to him in Colossians, and in Peter's first Epistle he is called "Marcus my son," no doubt in the spiritual sense, as Timothy stood related to Paul. Mary was a devout and courageous woman, ready, even when Herod's sword was loose, with a welcome for all who loved the Lord. It was a fine moral atmosphere for a youth to breathe: a godly mother, praying friends, missionaries and martyrs and apostles coming and going there; and a bracing one withal, with frequent winds of fierce opposition raging around. Something it must have been to be a son in the house to which Peter came that

night, and to have been in the company when cousin Barnabas introduced Saul of Tarsus. But, so far, we have proceeded mainly on conjecture. Mark's recorded history begins about the year A.D. 44, the era of the earliest mission to the heathen. 3. When Barnabas and Saul were set apart for this work, it was settled that Mark should accompany them as their "minister," or servant. It was the excellent custom of the older evangelists to associate the younger with them; just as Moses chose Joshua for his assistant, and Elisha "poured water on the hands of Elijah." The design was to inure them to the discipline of the missionary life, and to instruct them in its duties. It was the squire learning to win his spurs in the Christian chivalry by attendance on the knight who had won them already. And what could be more suitable, or full of promise, than that Mark should serve his first campaign under Barnabas. 4. But what sudden change is this, occurring when that missionary journey has been but a little while begun? "John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem." Short words, but how significant and disappointing! After witnessing the awful judgment on Elymas, and the glorious conversion of Sergius Paulus; after seeing how Paul could smite, and how Barnabas could heal; after feeling some thrill of holy emulation in his own bosom, does he now give up the Christian work? What motive can have turned him back? Matthew Henry says, "Either he did not like the work, or he wanted to go see his mother." A fit of home-sickness, in fact! Perhaps also Paul, himself so hardy and self-sacrificing, was a little impatient with the young man, and treated him with an outspoken severity not pleasant to endure. Mark was no traitor, for his heart was true at bottom; but he was at present a coward, too soft to suffer hardship, and he had forgotten to count the cost. A failure, it would seem; a hand taken from the plough; a ship, scarcely out of dock, and already stranded on the shore! What a sorrow to that noble mother to see her son return like this; better he had been borne home dead upon his shield than have cast it away in dishonourable flight. 5. Five years must be supposed to pass. Barnabas and Paul have accomplished their journey, and returned. The great conflict with the Pharisaic party at Jerusalem has been fought out. The two missionaries are panting to be at work again. And of all men, who should appear, applying to accompany them, but the deserter Mark? Paul has never seen him since that unhappy parting at Perga; and he does not mean to be deceived a second time. Barnabas must do as he thinks right, but Paul will rather break their own old companionship, and go by himself. Then Barnabas will break it too. Barnabas takes the more hopeful, more indulgent view; he has probably heard better things of his young cousin. The decision of the "son of consolation" is to give him another chance. "And so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus." How often has that "other chance" been the making of a man! 6. Another blank occurs here. We lose sight for ten years of Barnabas and Mark. Barnabas may be dead; and Mark appears again, and, singularly enough, in the Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon. But can it be the same man? Another stamp is set now upon his name by the very hand that was once ready to brand "deserter." Surely our stranded ship floats again! Our fallen brother has lifted himself up, with heaven's help, and is on his own feet, pressing forward with as stout a heart as the bravest. Barnabas was right; there was a true heart in the man after all. 7. We turn to the first Epistle of Peter, and Mark is now at Babylon; what an indefatigable traveller he has grown, and what a heart has he for labour! And he is found with aged Peter, his father in the faith. Presently Paul is writing again; it is the last of all his letters, the second to Timothy. His friends have left him; he is cold, and he is ill, and, with all his steadfast faith in the Divine support, he craves for a little human sympathy. Therefore let Timothy, if it may be, come quickly from Ephesus, where he is, bringing cloak and parchments, and his own filial care; and let him bring also some other tried and trusty brother, as a second source of consolation. Who, then, shall the chosen one be? "Take Mark, and bring him with thee"; a "profitable man," the very man for a minister, a servant, a friend! Mark, the runaway? Even him; for years have passed since then, and the timid stripling has become the resolute and energetic veteran. 8. One further reference remains, a large and a long one; for it is a whole book of Scripture—"the Gospel according to Mark." All the early traditions agree in attributing this to Mark, as the scribe and interpreter of Peter. And thus the image which remains is not that of the fugitive youth, but of the missionary, the faithful companion of the chief apostles, and one among the four evangelists. 9. On the northern coast of Devon there spreads a bay, along which the sea comes tide after tide, washing a broad

beach of tiny shells; but you may search the shore for hours, and find no perfect specimen: the shells are broken. I can conceive many a disheartened traveller in life's hard journey sitting down on that beach, and saying, "Behold the image of my own experience, of my broken resolutions, unaccomplished purposes, and perpetual failures!" Even in the Christian Church there are not a few who feel that they have failed of the high aims, the noble impulses, which warmed and quickened them at first! To any such disheartened souls this story of Mark's recovery should come like a trumpet call of hope. Never too late, while life lasts. Once more to the front! If Paul does not trust you, Barnabas will. If Paul does not care for you now, he may come to lean on you with all his strength. And One, of whom you know, clearer-sighted by far than that shrewd apostle, tenderer of heart than that "son of consolation," marks your struggles, and prays for your success; and He, as you arise, will breathe into your ear those words of unutterable hope and encouragement, "Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more." (*W. Brock.*) **And many were gathered together praying.**—*The special prayer-meeting*:—It was a great wonder that the infant Church of Christ was not destroyed. She was like a lone lamb in the midst of furious wolves. With what weapons did she protect herself? The answer is—prayer. Whatever may be the danger of the times, and each age has its own peculiar hazard, our defence is of God, and we may avail ourselves of it by prayer. But this is not all: the new-born Church not only escaped, but it multiplied. What made it grow? The answer is that on all occasions "many were gathered together praying"; and if our Churches are to live and grow they must be watered from the self-same source. We have heard a great deal of talk in certain sections of the Church about going back to primitive times; but unfortunately what they call the early Church is not early enough. If we must have the early Church let us have the earliest Church of all. Notice—I. THE IMPORTANCE WHICH THE EARLY CHURCH ATTRIBUTED TO PRAYER-MEETINGS. 1. As soon as we begin to read in the Acts, and continually as we read on we note that meetings for prayer had become a standing institution in the Church. They were not met to hear a sermon, although that is proper, but praying was the business on hand. The eminent speaking brethren seem to have been all away, and perhaps the Church was too much engrossed in intercession. There is a serious flaw in the arrangements of a Church when such gatherings are omitted or placed in a secondary position. The private Christian will read, and hear, and meditate, but none of these can be a substitute for prayer: the same truth holds good upon the larger scale. 2. It appears, however, that while prayer-meetings were a regular institution, the prayer was sometimes made special. It adds greatly to the interest and fervency of prayer when there is some great object to pray for. Here the special object was Peter. They prized the man, for they saw what wonders God had wrought by his ministry, and they could not let him die if prayer would save him. Why not pray for a certain missionary, or some chosen district, or class of persons, or order of agencies? We should do well to turn the grand artillery of supplication against some special point of the enemy's walls. 3. These friends fully believed that there was power in prayer; for, Peter being in prison, they did not meet together to arrange a plan for getting him out. It looked as if they could do nothing, but they felt they could do everything by prayer. They thought little of the fact that sixteen soldiers had him in charge. If there had been sixteen thousand these believing men and women would still have prayed Peter out. Let it never be insinuated in the Christian Church that prayer is a good and useful exercise to ourselves, but that it would be superstition to suppose that it affects the mind of God. As surely as any law of nature can be proven, we know both by observation and experiment that God assuredly hears prayer. 4. This prayer was industriously continued. As soon as Herod had put Peter into prison the Church began to pray. As in times of war, when two armies lie near each other they both set their sentries, so in this case Herod had his sentries, and the church had its pickets too. As soon as one little company were compelled to separate they were relieved by another, and when some were forced to take rest in sleep, others were ready to take up the work. Some mercies are not given to us except in answer to importunate prayer. There are blessings which, like ripe fruit, drop into your hand the moment you touch the bough; but there are others which require you to shake the tree again and again, until you make it rock with the vehemence of your exercise, for then only will the fruit fall down. I would pause here, and urge my brethren to attach as much importance to prayer as the early Church did. Some prize active agencies, but prayer is the steam

engine which makes the wheels revolve, and really does the work, and therefore we cannot do without it. Suppose a foreman were employed by some great builder to manage works at a distance. He has to pay the men their wages weekly, but he forgets to write for cash to go on with. Is this wise? Keep up a constant communication with heaven, or your communications with earth will be of little worth. You may go on preaching and teaching, and giving away tracts, and what you like, but nothing can possibly come of it when the power of Almighty God has ceased to be with you. II. THE NUMBER ASSEMBLED. 1. This is a rebuke to some here present. The text says, "Many were gathered." Somebody said that two or three thousand people had no more power in prayer than two or three. That is a grave mistake in many ways; but clearly so in reference to each other; for have you never noticed that when many meet together praying, warmth of desire and glow of earnestness are greatly increased. Have you not observed how one brother suggests to another to increase his petition, and so the petitions grow by the mingling of heart with heart, and the communion of spirit with spirit? Besides, faith is a cumulative force. "According to thy faith so be it done unto thee" is true to one, to two, to twenty, to twenty thousand. 2. This is not a very common occurrence, and why is it that so many prayer-meetings are so very thin? Gentlemen who do not get home from the City and have their dinner till seven o'clock, cannot be expected to go out to a prayer-meeting. They work all the day, so much harder than working men. Some of you who have your delightful villas are very careful of your health, and never venture out into the evening air at prayer-meetings, though I rather suspect that your parties and soirées are still kept up. After all, this is a personal matter. How are we to increase the number? Not by complaining of those who stay away, but by coming yourself. The largest numbers are made up of units. 3. I am not sure that quite so many would have been gathered together that night if it had not been that Peter was in prison. Ministers laid aside by illness find their people pray better, and perhaps one reason for his being afflicted was God's desire to stir the hearts of His people to intercede. Now, the best way to do good to your pastor is to pray to be kept in a right condition, and not need his sickness as a stimulus to prayer. III. THE PLACE OF ASSEMBLY. A private house, and I want to urge my brethren to consecrate their houses by frequently using them for prayer-meetings. There was a meetness in their meeting in this particular house, for the family stood in a very dear relationship to Peter. Peter in his First Epistle refers to "Marcus, my son." Mark would be sure to pray for his spiritual father. There is sure to be prayer for the pastor in the house where the pastor has been blessed to the family. Mark was not all we should like him to have been, but he might have been a useless Christian, and never have used his graphic pen for the Lord had not the good people come to his house. The house received a blessing, and so will you, too, if your house shall be every now and then opened for special prayer. Prayer-meetings at private houses are very useful, because friends who would be afraid to pray before a large assembly are able to feel free and easy in a smaller company in a private house. Sometimes, too, the social element is consecrated by God to promote a greater warmth and fervour, so that prayer will often burn in the family when perhaps it might have declined in the public assembly. IV. THE TIME OF THIS PRAYER-MEETING. At dead of night. Now, if the time for prayer-meetings be an inconvenient hour, and I should think the dead of night was rather inconvenient, nevertheless go. Better hold prayer-meetings at twelve o'clock at night than not at all. But the dead of the night was chosen for safety. Let the time fixed for modern prayer meetings be an hour suited to the habits of the people. V. THE SUCCESS OF THE PRAYER MEETINGS AS AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO US. The answer came so speedily that they were themselves surprised. It has sometimes been said that their astonishment was the result of unbelief. I doubt that, for their prayer did set Peter free, and therefore it could not have been unbelieving prayer. I trace their surprise to their probable expectation that Peter would be delivered at a different time and manner. And God can send us surprises quite as great as this. We may pray for some sinner, and while we are yet praying we may hear him cry, "What must I do to be saved?" We may offer our prayers for the sleeping Church, and while we pray it may be answered. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda.—*Rhoda*:—"Rhoda" means "a rose," and this rose has kept its bloom for eighteen hundred years, and is still sweet and fragrant. What a lottery undying fame is! Men will give their lives to earn it; and this servant-girl got it by one

little act, and never knew that she had it. Now there is a very singular resemblance between the details of this incident and those of another case, when Peter was recognised in the dark by his voice, and the evangelist Luke, who is the author of the Acts of the Apostles, seems to have had the resemblance between the two scenes, that in the high priest's palace and that outside Mary's door, in his mind, because he uses in this narrative a word which occurs, in the whole of the New Testament, only here and in his account of what took place on that earlier occasion. In both instances a maid servant recognises Peter by his voice, and in both she "constantly affirms" that it was so. Luke felt how strangely events sometimes double themselves; and how the man that is here all but a martyr is re-enacting, with differences, something like the former scene, when he was altogether a traitor. I. We may notice in THE RELATIONS OF RHODA TO THE ASSEMBLED BELIEVERS A STRIKING ILLUSTRATION OF THE NEW BOND OF UNION SUPPLIED BY THE GOSPEL. Rhoda was a slave. The word rendered in our version "damsel" means a female slave. Her name being a Gentile name, and her servile condition, make it probable that she was not a Jewess. If one might venture to indulge in a guess, it is not at all unlikely that her mistress, Mary, John Mark's mother, Barnabas' sister, a well-to-do woman of Jerusalem, who had a house big enough to take in the members of the Church in great numbers, and to keep up a considerable establishment, had brought this slave-girl from the island of Cyprus. At all events, she was a slave. In the time of our Lord, and long after, these relations of slavery brought an element of suspicion, fear, and jealous espionage into almost every Roman household, because every master knew that he passed his days and nights among men and women who wanted nothing better than to wreak their vengeance upon him. And now here this child-slave, this Gentile, has been touched by the same mighty love as her mistress; and Mary and Rhoda were kneeling together in the prayer-meeting when Peter began to hammer at the door. In God's good time, and by the slow process of leavening society with Christian ideas, that diabolical institution perished in Christian lands. Violent reformation of immoralities is always a blunder. "Raw haste" is "half-sister to Delay." Settlers in forest lands have found that it is endless work to grub up the trees, or even to fell them. "Root and branch" reform seldom answers. The true way is to girdle the tree by taking off a ring of bark round the trunk, and letting nature do the rest. Dead trees are easily dealt with; living ones blunt many axes and tire many arms, and are alive after all. Thus the gospel waged no direct war with slavery, but laid down principles which, once they are wrought into Christian consciousness, made its continuance impossible. But, pending that consummation, the immediate action of Christianity was to ameliorate the condition of the slave. The whole aspect of the ugly thing was changed as soon as master and slave together became the slaves of the Lord Jesus Christ. That slight, girlish figure, standing at the door of Mary, her slave, and yet her sister in Christ, may be taken as pointing symbolically the way by which the social and civic evils of this day are to be healed, and the war of classes to cease. II. Note how we get here a very striking picture of THE SACREDNESS AND GREATNESS OF SMALL COMMON DUTIES. Rhoda came out from the prayer-meeting to open the gate. It was her business, as we say, "to answer the door," and so she left off praying to go and do it. So doing, she was the means of delivering the apostle from the danger which still dogged him. It was of little use to be praying on one side of the shut door, when on the other he was standing in the street, and the day was beginning to dawn; Herod's men would be after him as soon as daylight disclosed his escape. It is not unnecessary to insist that no heights or delights of devotion and secret communion are sufficient excuses for neglecting or delaying the doing of the smallest and most menial task which is our duty. If your business is to keep the door, you will not be leaving, but abiding in the secret place of the Most High, if you get up from your knees in the middle of your prayer, and go down to open it. The smallest, commonest acts of daily life are truer worship than is rapt and solitary communion, or united prayer, if the latter can only be secured by the neglect of the former. Let us remember how we may find here an illustration of another great truth, that the smallest things, done in the course of the quiet discharge of recognised duty, and being, therefore, truly worship of God, have in them a certain quality of immortality, and may be eternally commemorated. III. The same figure of the damsel named Rhoda may give us a warning as to THE POSSIBILITY OF FORGETTING VERY PLAIN DUTIES UNDER THE PRESSURE OF VERY LEGITIMATE EXCITEMENT. "She opened not the door for gladness," but ran in and told them. Yes! And if, whilst she was running in with her message,

Herod's quaternions of soldiers had come down the street, there would have been "no small stir" in the Church as to "what had become of Peter." Now joy and sorrow are equally apt to make us forget plain and pressing duties, and we may learn from this little incident the old-fashioned but always necessary advice, to keep feeling well under control, to use it as impulse, not as guide, and never to let emotion, which should be down in the engine-room, come on deck and take the helm. It is dangerous to obey feeling, unless its degrees are countersigned by calm common sense illuminated by Scripture. Sorrow is apt to obscure duty by its darkness, and joy by its dazzle. It is hard to see the road at midnight, or at midday when the sun is in our eyes. Both need to be controlled. Duty remains the same, whether my heart be beating like a sledge-hammer, or whether my "bosom-lord sits lightly on its throne." Whether I am sad or glad, the door that God has given me to watch has to be opened and shut by me. IV. Lastly, we have here an instance of A VERY MODEST BUT POSITIVE AND FULLY WARRANTED TRUST IN ONE'S OWN EXPERIENCE, IN SPITE OF OPPOSITION. They had been praying, as has often been remarked, for Peter's deliverance, and now that he is delivered they will not believe it. Nobody ever seems to have thought of going to the door to see whether it was he or not, but they went arguing with Rhoda as to whether she was right or wrong. The unbelief that alloys even golden faith is taught us in this incident. Rhoda "constantly affirmed that it was so." The lesson is—trust your own experience whatever people may have to say against it. If you have found that Jesus Christ can help you, and has loved you, and that your sins have been forgiven, because you have trusted in Him, do not let anybody laugh or talk you out of that conviction. If you cannot argue, do like Rhoda, "constantly affirm that it is so." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Rhoda*:—I. HER NAME. Miriam and Rhoda are the only two girls of the Bible whose names we know. A learned German has written a book on "the names of women taken from flowers." He shows that these names mark the qualities which we expect to find in girls. Now Rhoda is the Greek name for a rose. It is the first part of the word "rhododendron," which means "rose-tree." In the olden times, as nowadays, people hoped that girls would be in the home what the rose is in the garden: that they would add a charm, a beauty, and a sweet perfume to life. I have read somewhere that a rose is carved on a girl's tombstone in France, with these words underneath, "She was just like that." The rose, however, is as famed for its speedy decay as for its sweetness and beauty. But when the ancients gave this name to their girls, they meant that, as they would wear, so they would justify and deserve their name all their days. Some, however, grow like the rose that has shed its leaves, and kept only its bare thorns. Others resemble the autumn flower, whose leaves are highly coloured while its sweet savour is gone. Some are like the rose into whose bud the cankerworm has crept; some are like the rose planted among thorns, which shows its wounds as well as its beauty; and some are even like the rose that is soiled and trampled in the dust of the highway. But Rhoda was a girl who deserved her beautiful name, and wore it well. For she was good; and to be good is to be beautiful with the best beauty. In old languages they used to call the bad ugly, and they do so in some parts of the world at this day. The good and the beautiful are really the same, when the matter is rightly understood. The grace of God is the grand beautifier. It makes people graceful, that is both good and beautiful. II. HER COMPANY. It is the very best in the world; she is among the Christians. Whether she was the slave or the daughter of Mary, we know not; but it is plain that she was among the Christians not by chance, but by choice, or else she would have gone to bed, or fallen asleep, like Eutychus. But Peter had hardly done knocking when she was at the keyhole, asking who was there. She knew his voice at once in the dark, and so must have been intimate with him. She was like the blind girl who, unexpectedly hearing her old minister at a meeting, shook with excitement, and said aloud, "Oh, that's my minister!" And Rhoda's gladness shows where her heart was. What efforts many make to get into what they call "good society"! This restlessness to be something which we are not, causes a world of misery. But Rhoda easily gained admittance to the very flower of human kind. They who come to Christ at once enter into the most splendid society in the world. Who would be foolish enough to shut herself out from that glorious band which embraces the best of every age and nation, all God's heroes, and the noble army of the apostles and martyrs? III. HER COURAGE. Every Christian then was a hero for God; for he ran the risk of poverty, prison, and death. It was so in this land two hundred years ago. In Rhoda's days it needed double courage to be a Christian in Jerusalem, for the

maddest of the Jews lived there, and Herod's sword was smoking with the blood of the saints. James, one of their leaders, had just been slain; and Peter was in prison, ready to be offered up. Rhoda, who shared the dangers, must have also shared the courage of the apostles. It was as much as her life was worth to attend that prayer-meeting. One small touch in her story gives us a hint of her dangers. When Peter knocked, she did not open the door till she knew who was knocking: they were afraid of Herod's soldiers. Persecution has passed away, but none the less on that account do you need the courage you admire in Rhoda. For mean, false shame is one of the worst of your snares. Pray that you may have the free and fearless spirit of those bold hymns which you love to sing: "Dare to be a Daniel"; "Stand up for Jesus." Be ready with a round, rousing No, when sinners entice you. IV. HER SERVICE. Though only a girl, we see her here doing service. It was very humble; for she was as one who keeps a door in the house of God. But she did her part, and did it right heartily. And God asks no more of you. Angels are perfect servants of God, and this chapter gives us a specimen of their way of serving. Watch the angel delivering Peter from prison, and take him as your model in doing God's work. How swiftly he works! Most pictures give angels wings, to denote the swiftness of a willing mind. Thus when Rhoda's heart was full of joy, she ran on her errand. Be this your resolve, "I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart." Gratitude makes wings grow on the feet of life. And how humbly the angel does his work! He does not even mention his name, but hastens back to God, to whom he gives all the glory. An old minister was once preaching a funeral sermon upon the death of an "elect lady," who had been his helper in Christ. She was angel-like in humility; and he compared her to a fair taper in a room, which is bright to others, but is itself hid in the shade made by its own light. You, too, may have an angel's spirit in doing the work God has put into your hands. (*J. Wells, M.A.*) **And they said unto her, Thou art mad.**—*Surprised by answers to prayer*:—Mr. Muller, of Bristol, believes in God for the support of his benevolent institution, and God supplies him with all his needs; but whenever you speak about him you say, "What a wonderful thing!" Has it come to this, that in the Christian Church it is accounted a marvel for Christians to believe in the promises of God, and something like a miracle for God to fulfil them? Does not this wonderment indicate more clearly than anything else how fallen we are from the level of faith at which we ought constantly to live? If the Lord wants to surprise His people, He has only at once to give an answer to their prayers. No sooner had they obtained their answer, than they would say, "Who would have thought it!" Is it really surprising that God should keep His own promise? Oh, what unbelief! Oh, what wretched unbelief on our part! We ask and we receive not, because we do not believe in God. We waver; we must not expect to receive anything at His hand except what He chooses to give as a gratuity; an act of sovereign mercy, not a covenanted blessing. We do not get what we might have as the reward of faith, because we have not got the faith that He honours. I like that story of a godly old woman, who, when told of God's answering prayer, supplemented with a reflection, "Is not that wonderful?" replied, "No, it is just like Him. Of course He answers prayer; of course He keeps His promise." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Forgetfulness through joy*:—On one occasion, in Limehouse chapel, a woman dressed in her working clothes appeared amongst the penitent inquirers. After being taught the way of salvation and prayed with, she found peace in believing. She suddenly remembered that her house was locked and the key in her pocket, and told us that, in leaving home, she had no thought whatever of a religious service. Seeing the chapel lit up and hearing the singing, she entered, heard the sermon, was convinced of sin, and remained to pray, with the result already mentioned. Rhoda, seeing Peter standing at the gate, was so overjoyed that she forgot to let the liberated apostle in; so the woman at Limehouse, rejoicing that she herself was made free indeed, forgot that her house-key was in her pocket, and that some of her family might be knocking at her door unable to enter. (*T. McCullagh.*) *The girl who was called mad*:—This girl—I. HAD A BEAUTIFUL NAME. Many Jewish and other parents gave to their children the names of certain plants, trees, and flowers. Hadassa, a myrtle; Susanna, a lily; Tamar, a palm-tree; Rhoda, a rose. That is beautiful, because it leads us to think of the garden in summer, and one of the prettiest flowers there. Have you such a name? Be thankful. Have you not such a name? Be content. It was given to you by others. They, and not you, are responsible. Besides, to grumble about it is to do no good. The time may come when it will be your duty

to give names to children. Select those only that are associated with lovely things. Let all the words which you employ in writing and speaking be of the same description. II. WAS A DOMESTIC SERVANT. Her duty was to open the door when any one knocked. In this respect she has advantages over those in other situations. She is more free from—1. Care. Nothing to pay for except her clothing. 2. Danger. Has not to go out in all kinds of weather. Sheltered from rains and storms. 3. Temptations. Others may have greater liberty. This often leads to temptations which do not come to the domestic servant. 4. Risk of losing her situation. Her class not so numerous as others. Masters and mistresses value a good servant, and will keep her as long as she does her duty. Nothing degrading about such a situation. To serve in a good family is exceedingly honourable. To show this the Bible has recorded some of the names and doings of domestic servants. III. WAS A CHRISTIAN. I. She was serving in a Christian home. 2. There was a prayer-meeting in that home, and she loved to be there. 3. She was quite familiar with the voice of one of the apostles. Your parents, teachers, and, above all, Jesus, wish you to be Christians. IV. WAS VERY CAUTIOUS. It was night. All around lonely and still. Some one knocking at the door. Instead of opening it at once, she said, "Who is there?" Never open the door at night till you know who is on the outside. Be cautious in all other things—in writing to, speaking about, and acting in the presence of others. V. WAS ACCUSED OF MADNESS. When she heard Peter's voice, she was so glad that she could not open the door. The same thing has often happened; and the praying company, instead of believing her, said she was mad. This did not make her angry, for she knew that she was right. If you know you are right, and others say you are wrong, be not angry, but calm. The truth sooner or later will appear to others as it does to you. (*A. McAuslane, D.D.*) **But Peter continued knocking.**—*Christian persistency:*—That's right. Bang away! If Christians will not bestir themselves at your first call, hammer at them until they do. There is nothing like persistency for overcoming the sluggishness and sloth of half-hearted faith. The preacher, or the teacher, or the parent, or the Christian worker in any sphere, who turns away from the door of the heart he wants to enter, simply because it is not opened at his first call, is not really deserving of success in his mission. "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." If it is not opened the first time, knock again. If it is not opened after ten times knocking, continue knocking until it is opened. When the door is opened, you can enter in. But until it is opened, your duty is to keep up a knocking. (*H. C. Trumbull.*)

Vers. 19–25. **And . . . Herod . . . went down from Judæa to Cæsarea.**—*The death of Herod:*—This journey of Herod is described by Josephus. It would seem that he left Judæa in disgust and spleen because Peter had escaped from his hands. We are next informed that "Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon," &c. Judæa being an agricultural and a pastoral country, and Tyre and Sidon being mercantile countries, the latter were dependent on the inland trade for their support, and therefore it would have been almost ruin to them if Herod had carried his thoughts into execution; for the expression "highly displeased" means that he contemplated war. They, therefore, came to him in the most submissive manner, and bribed Blastus to use his influence. Herod having acceded to their request, and being a vainglorious man, determined to receive the ambassadors of Tyre and Sidon with a display of royal splendour. He also made an eloquent oration, probably reminding them of his own great condescension in receiving their ambassadors and granting them peace; and then "the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him." And when the tyrant was dead, it is added, in striking and beautiful contrast, "But the Word of God grew and multiplied." Note—I. THE MISERABLE END OF HEROD. Observe—1. The extreme emptiness of earthly splendour. How wonderful it is, that with such a lesson as this continually recorded in the page of history, and in our own experience, we should still need to be reminded of it; for it seldom happens that any grand ceremonial takes place without there being some circumstance connected with it to stamp vanity upon it. But it is not merely in the dazzling circumstances of courts and kings that the worldliness of man's heart is shown; it is ingrained in us all. We are by nature lovers of this present world; and even when they are not actually removed, God often embitters to us our idols, and although we clearly see our own folly in idolising them, yet we cannot tear the idols away. We are all hastening towards the grave; and, painful as it must be, it would be very wholesome if we could look upon each other's

countenances, and feel an abiding sense that dissolution must soon come. Parents and children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, dear as they are to each other, must soon part. Oh! that we could meditate then upon this; and when we see a great king thus awfully cut down—when there seems but a step between the gorgeous apparel and the filthy worm—let us pause, learn how short our time is, and pray that we may not set our hearts upon the fleeting shadows of the world, but may seek to lay up treasure where "rust and moth doth not corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." How blessed, to think that there is a garment which shall never be exchanged for the worm, that there is a crown which shall never fall from our heads, that there is an abode where sorrow cannot come! Who would believe it, to see men frantically pursuing things that are not worth the having? 2. An awful instance of God's wrath against the persecutors of His Church and people. This man had killed James, &c. What a change is here. A little while, and Peter is safe, and the proud and mighty Herod is the prey of worms. "So let all Thine enemies perish, O Lord"; and so must they perish, if they die in their sins. There are few sins which are followed up with more signal punishment than the persecution of God's saints. We see this in the fate of those who persecuted Israel, and it would be easy to show, from the history of modern Europe, that there has not been a power, papal or heathen, which has persecuted the Church of God, but the Lord has rendered an awful retribution into their bosoms. "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of His eye." There is no organ so delicate as the apple of the eye. The smallest puncture there will give pain over the whole body. How strikingly is this illustrated in the case of Saul. "Why persecutest thou Me?" And our Saviour says that it would be better for a man who persecutes the saints of God "that a millstone had been hung around his neck, and he had been cast into the depths of the sea." And let us remember that it is the spirit of the persecutor which God looks at. You may say that men are not now sent to prison and to bonds for serving Christ. But ungodly men show the same disposition as ever to persecute. They point with the finger of scorn; they apply names of contempt, and endeavour to injure reputation. This is nothing else but the spirit which lifted the hand of Herod, and all that were like him, to persecute the saints of God. Happy are they who are "persecuted for righteousness' sake," but woe be unto them that persecute them. 3. God's jealousy of His own glory and condemnation of human pride. The sin for which he was eaten of worms was only a negative sin. When the people said, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man," Herod did nothing, said nothing; but it is added, "Immediately the angel of the Lord smote him." And why? "Because he gave not God the glory." Oh, what a little sin does this appear! How singular that this man should have been suffered to go through a long career of cruelty, oppression, and profligacy, ending with the murder of God's saints, and that the blow should be withheld until he had committed this apparently little sin—namely, not to reproach the people for their idolatry! Now this is well worthy of our serious consideration, because it is just by such things as these that we are led to the secret root of sin, and led to detect its hidden springs. It is of no use just to cut off the tops of the weeds in our gardens; we must pluck them up by the roots, or they will grow again. So it is with sin. The case of Herod is not a singular one. It is very remarkable, that we read of many instances in the Old Testament in which persons known to be of the most profligate and wicked character, and nations and people of the most debauched habits, have had the judgments of God poured out upon them, not for what are ordinarily considered great crimes, but for the crime of pride and exaltation against God (Isa. x. 5, &c.; xlvii. 10; Dan. iv.). It is perhaps said, "But this is an uncommon sin." Certainly in its full development it is; for all are not kings, nor can they array themselves in royal apparel; but as to the sin itself, it is universal. Oh! how many are there amongst us who spend their lives "in arraying themselves in apparel!" The love of personal admiration is one of the most universal sins of our fallen nature. From the queen upon her throne down to the meanest of her subjects, the love of dress and personal display is an indigenous sin in the hearts of all of us, according to our various stations in life. But, you observe, it was not for his apparel that the people admired Herod, but for his oration. Here is the pride of oratory, the pride of intellect. There are many who utterly despise the former, who feed eagerly upon the latter; and the more intellectual our sin, the more subtle it is, and perhaps the more venomous and deadly. There is no pride more detestable in the sight of God than intellectual or spiritual pride. And here again you see the love of flattery, the love of the admiration of our fellow-creatures.

There is scarcely any human being insensible to this. If there be any avenue by which you can infuse folly into a wise man's heart, it is by flattering him. Oh! how mean and little do we seem when these bosom sins of ours are stripped open! How many a splendid action, how many an apparently virtuous one, how many a seemingly self-denying one, becomes a detestable and abominable sin, when the secret self-love and self-admiration that guided it is exposed! "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God." II. THE PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL, notwithstanding all these events (ver. 24). Remarkable juxtaposition of facts! Here is the persecutor eaten of worms, and gives up the ghost. Poor, feeble, wretched man! he can do nothing against God and His truth; and while he is dying, the Word of the Lord multiplies. This is a sort of recurring chorus in the whole history of the Acts. Thus it was after the deliverance of Peter and John, after the doom of Ananias and Sapphira, after the death of Stephen, and the conversion of Saul. What an idea does this give us of the omnipotence with which the Word is clothed, and of the mighty purposes of God concerning it! He hath said, "So shall My Word be, that goeth forth out of My mouth," &c. And so it has been throughout the whole of the history of Christ's Church militant here upon earth. Infinitely diversified is the story; there is no history so romantic as that. The Church, founded upon a Rock, never can be shaken; the gates of hell cannot prevail against it; men and devils may unite, but they shall be "eaten of worms" and "give up the ghost"; while the "Word of God" shall "grow and multiply." Let us repose our minds on these glorious considerations. It is the consolation of every well-regulated Christian mind that all the things which we see around us, however untoward, work together for the purpose of God. The Lord will show who is right and who is wrong; the work of every man will be submitted to the fire, and we shall then see which was the gold, and which the wood, hay, and stubble. Meanwhile His people have a confidence that they are serving a Master who cannot be defeated, and obey Him who has all things in His hands, and who said to another persecutor, "Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above." (*Dean Close.*) *The death of Herod*:—I. HE WOULD NOT GLORIFY GOD. To exceed a just proportion, even in that which is good, is sometimes blameful; too much justice; too much love. But to give God the glory is a duty unto which we are bound with an infinite devotion. Wherefore if God gave children by seventies, He asked but the first born. Every hour of our time is His benevolence; yet the law is only to keep the Sabbath day. The earth is the Lord's, and yet His portion is but the tenth; but of His glory, it is His own entirely; He will not part with it. Themistocles, demanding tribute of the men of Andria, told them that he had brought two powerful advocates to plead his cause—Persuasion if they pleased, Violence if they refused. These two apparitors go before the glory of the Most High. Doth it like you to bless His name? So God is glorified by the devotion of His creature. Doth it like you to exalt yourself? Then He will be honoured in your confusion. He that swells to the greatest in this world shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. When the heathen traduced the Christians that they debased their emperor and made him less than the God of heaven, "Know you not," says Tertullian, "that this is the eminency of your emperor to be less than God?" The heathen said that everything which grew too tall was thunder-blasted, and that great fortunes, when they came to excess, did end in shameful ruin. As Virgil says of his bees, that one hive will fight cruelly against another; but cast a little dust into the air, and the fray is parted. So when the pride of man swells with vain opinion, methinks the casting of a little dust should pluck down our stomach, the base mould of which our flesh is made. Says St. Austin, "Set aside this corrupt leaven of ostentation, and all men are but men, as naked in their pomp as when they were born, or when they shall be buried." It was pride that dethroned the bad angels, and it is that which makes man stubborn against the law and refractory against faith. Now there are four ways whereby this daring vice of pride doth diminish from that which should be given to God's glory. 1. It is a sin no less ungrateful than presumptuous to enjoy wit, and art, and memory, and the blessings of the best portion, and to forget God. Everything that renowns us, feeds us, preserves us, is but a crumb that falls from our Master's table. 2. Violence is done to God's glory when conscience will acknowledge that God doth give all; but arrogancy will infer that man deserves all. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the free gift of God the Father, the unction of the Holy Spirit, are turned quite aside, like a river from his own true channel, when it falls into such

a soil that thinks it deserves it. When good works sue to be called merits, they are like the ambitious men of the world, that spend their whole revenue to buy some gaudy title of honour; and when they have it, they want substance to maintain it. 3. The third transgression is a lofty stomach, that will seem to be no less than to have no equals. The proud man is deciphered by the single horn of the unicorn, who would be solitary in all God's graces, and without a companion; whereas the congregation of the militant church is compared to a field of wheat, where all the ears of the field are of an equal growth, and if any stalk over-top the rest it is lank and without fructification. They that are not contented to be equal with the common condition of men, shall never be equal with the angels; and he that despiseth the gifts of God in his fellow servants, is not the man that gives God the glory. 4. There is one feather more in the tail of pride, and full as long as the rest: when they arrogate to themselves that which indeed they have not. Christ hath said we cannot add one cubit to our stature; no, nor make one hair of our head black or white. Why do ye practise it, then, O ye gaudy beauties! to bring that about which Christ told you was impossible? I have seen books of meditations whose subject was to let all men know that they are vain, and sinful, and ignorant, and yet they were dedicated to some great man most virtuous and most religious. Presume not to take false titles upon you, as Herod encroached upon the name of God Himself. But as to the pride of Herod, it is a monster that riseth up into two heads—1. A tongue full of vain and insolent speech. 2. An ear obnoxious to the flattery of the people. Of both in their order, and for your edification. It was Epaminondas's praise that he seldom met with a man that knew more than himself or spake less; and so the least doers inch out their poor works with much talk. As the artificial prospective to the eye, so is the tongue unto the ear an hollow instrument to make everything seem bigger and fairer than it is. The beasts, the birds, the serpents may be sooner tamed, says St. James, than the tongue of man. Worse than these creatures is the tongue of man; fiercer than the beasts, more flitting than the birds, more poisonous than the serpents. It is a member of the body that can taste everything but itself, and knows how all things relish but its own pride and bitterness. And as we are taught from hence to set a watch before our lips, so let us learn from Herod's example to circumcise our ears, to renounce the flatteries of evil men. The French proverb says that the boiling pot doth discover the little pea which is in the bottom of it, and the applause of a little vainglory doth discover the disposition of the mind of man more than any other passion. Says Seneca, "Glory is the fire that kindles virtue when it provokes virtue to good achievements; but when glory begets nothing but the desire of glory, it is but childish popularity." All flattery is the corruption of true glory; but to flatter any man in his vices is a sacrilege against virtue. It is a note of a reprobate that he speaketh good of the covetous, whom God abhorreth. To flatter vice is to promote Satan's kingdom; to flatter princes is to destroy their kingdoms; to flatter princes, as the Sidonians did Herod, is to pluck down God's kingdom. The Athenians, who were but Gentiles at the wisest, could not endure such injury to be offered to the God whom they knew not, but put Timagoras, their ambassador, to death, because he adored the king of Persia like a god. II. GOD WAS GLORIFIED IN HIM. 1. He, the king. The obedience of the law was violated; but the castigation of the law cannot be avoided. Machiavel, among his irreligious principles, says that all the credit of great enterprises depends upon success; for if Cæsar had miscarried in his civil wars, his infamy had been more odious than Cataline's. Mighty sinners run into mighty destructions; and such conspicuous offenders as Herod was, leave themselves as a beacon. Where is his eloquence now? Where is his costly garment? Where is the outcry of the Sidonians that canonised his tongue for the voice of a god? Take heed lest you forfeit your own possession of the earth for denying God the possession of heaven. The Sidonians gave Herod so much of heaven, that they lost him all the earth but a grave. St. Chrysostom asks why the people giving the first offence, yet Herod is punished, and the principal malefactors acquitted. (1) Josephus gives the reason: he should have reproved and abhorred their flatteries. He should have rent his spangled garment, as St. Paul did at Lystra. Woe will be to thousands that suffer so many unsavoury words to fly about their ears and not reprove them. (2) God will take a more exact account of great men's actions than of the vulgar multitude, because their lives are conspicuous and should be exemplary; and if their life is infectious unto many, so their doom will be dreadful unto many. (3) The people were not altogether free from chastisement. Look now upon him that was your idol, ye Sidonians! Imagine

with what astonishment the whole assembly was dissolved, if their consciences were not as full of worms as Herod's body! (4) Clemency and justice, when they meet together, attend how they may punish few and save many. If Herod suffer the malediction, one man feels the smart, and the whole assembly may repent and be saved. (5) Let the rabble go home in peace for this time; they were not all white for harvest upon that day, but behold the end. Where is Cæsarea now? Or who almost knows the Sidonians? They have learnt to know by dear experience that thunder and judgment is the voice of God, and not an eloquent oration. 2. He was smitten by an angel of the Lord. Strange wickednesses procure strange kinds of death. If the earth will not avenge them, the angel of the Lord will come down and fight. Do the trees of paradise deserve to have a cherubin set before them with a flaming sword? And shall not all the host of heaven stand about the majesty of the Most High, and see the honour of His name preserved? 3. Immediately he was smitten. In such splendour of attire, in such celebrity of attendants, before the face of strangers, among those who in their hearts were no better than his enemies; never did he come out of that chair of the scorner, from that throne wherein he was canonised, till he was stripped of all dignity. It is the most dreadful thing upon earth to be suddenly apprehended by judgment. But let the Christian pray every morning as if he should see the sun rise no more; every evening as if he should see the sun set no more; be ready to meet the bridegroom at midnight, and yet despise not that supplication, "From sudden death, good Lord deliver us." 4. Lest he should glory that he was smitten by no less than an angel, behold the meanest of all creatures, the worms, are made his executioners! He that humbled himself to be a worm and no man, he is exalted above men to the right hand of God. He that would have been *Deus non homo*, a God and not a man, is dejected below a man, and made a worm. This disease is more observed in histories to be the arrow of the Lord against sinners of high presumption than any other. Thus Sylla died; thus Antiochus Epiphanes; thus Herod the Great; thus Arnulphus, that spoiled the churches of the Christians; thus Phericides, that gloried he never offered sacrifice, and yet lived as prosperously. (*Bp. Hacket.*) *Herod's death:*—I. WHEREFORE HAS IT FOUND A PLACE IN THE ACTS? Not as if it had been a punishment for the murder of James, but also because political events are not matters of indifference to Christianity. II. WHAT ARE WE TO LEARN FROM IT? That the commonweal can prosper, not by flattery and yielding to the lusts and passions of men, but only when we are free from both, looking to the eternal and unchangeable will of God. (*Schleirmacher.*) *Herod smitten by the angel—an old picture of human society:*—Here we have—I. NATIONAL INTERDEPENDENCE. The Phœnicians wanted what the Palestinians had, and *vice versâ*. This is a glorious fact in God's government of man. Throughout the earth one zone produces what other zones want, and the peculiar products of each contribute towards the consummation of man's well-being. This interdependence serves—1. To stimulate human activities. It presses ever on the sense of need and love of gain, and thus keeps man's faculties ever on the stretch contriving and constructing methods to work the soil to the greatest advantage, and to increase facilities of transit. He makes seas his high road, electricity his messenger, winds and fire the carriers of his commodities. 2. To check all monopolies. There are narrow souls who would keep all their land produces to themselves. Ignorant alike of the laws of the universe, the genius of the world, and their own insignificance, they vainly talk of national independence. Nature laughs them to scorn. Creature independence is a solecism. 3. To promote international concord. (1) A free commerce throughout the world is one of the best means by which men may become mutually acquainted. Buyers and sellers mutually show themselves in their transactions. (2) It advances interest in man. It is to the interest of traders to be on terms of amity and free intercourse. The commercial interests of the world are against war. (3) But the higher concord, the brotherhood of soul, commerce can only effect this as it becomes thoroughly inspired and ruled by those principles which were embodied in Him who came to break down all partition walls. II. CLASS WICKEDNESS. 1. Unbounded arrogance on the part of the ruler. (1) The "set day" some think was in honour of Claudius' return from Britain, which he had reduced to a Roman province. Anyhow, the occasion was a grand one. Cæsarea was crowded with pleasure-seekers. The king enters that theatre which had been erected by his grandfather. The stone seats, rising in a great semicircle, tier above tier, were covered by an excited multitude. (2) The king magnificently arrayed makes an oration. What he said we know not; but we may be sure it was very "grand," like modern "orations"—as gorgeous as his

costume, as arrogant as his pretensions. Probably it dealt with the message he received through Blastus. Herod is a type of his class. The haughtiness of rulers is proverbial. Many treat their fellow men as if they themselves were a race of gods. (2) Base servility on the part of the ruled. Who can credit the shrewd Phœnician traders, the cultured Greeks, and the religious Jews with sincerity here? It was simply that base flattery which has been the sin and curse of the people in all ages. It is not uncommon, even in these days of enlightenment, to see men crushed by the injustice of rulers shouting hosannas in their ears. There is no greater obstruction to free government, wholesome law and national advancement, than the servile spirit of millions to those above them. No government can help the man who respects not the high prerogatives of his own humanity. III. RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE. Angels have often done such work before (Exod. xii. 21; 2 Kings xix. 35; 2 Sam. xxiv. 16; 2 Chron. xxxii. 21). The justice of this man's fate is clear. Surely he who had killed James, imprisoned Peter, and massacred his own guards, and now accepted Divine homage, deserved the end which befell him. Such instances of retributive justice had occurred with Pharaoh, Belshazzar, &c., but they are confessedly rare as compared with the number of notorious offenders. Yet they are sufficient to show that there is a moral government in the world, and to prophesy the coming of a time when retribution shall be fairly dealt out to all. IV. REMEDIAL FORCES. 1. The Word of God. This "grew and multiplied." The seed was growing everywhere, and the fruit was the antidote to the world's evils, the provision for the cravings of the human soul. Herod had done his best to crush it, but it went on, and as it advanced it elevated and blessed. 2. The agency of the good. Here are Barnabas, and Saul, and Mark, all working to help on the true and the right. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *This world's honour*:—Death strips us of this world's glory as a boot-jack draws off your boots. Another wears my boots when I am dead, and another wears my glory. It is of little value. (*Martin Boos.*) *Fleeting honour*:—It was a custom in Rome, that when the emperor went out upon some grand day in all his imperial pomp, there was an officer appointed to burn flax before him, crying out, "*Sic transit gloria mundi*"; which was done to put him in mind that all his honour and grandeur should soon vanish away like the smoke from the burning flax. *The law of reprisal*:—When we consider the almost invincible power which the crustaceans derive from their armour, their muscular vigour, their ferocity, and their numbers, we ask how is it that they have not depopulated the shores where they meet none but victims, no enemies capable of contending with them upon equal terms? For formidable as they are to all the tribes of molluscs and zoophytes, what have they to fear—except in a few countries certain littoral or amphibious mammals which, for the most part, only attack them as a last resort, preferring prey more easily devoured, and assisting them in their work of extermination rather than fighting them? Their tyranny then seems at first sight absolute and without counterbalance. Such, however, is not the case. The crustaceans undergo at certain epochs a fatal crisis, which delivering them up defenceless to external shocks and the blows of their enemies, places an easy vengeance within the reach of the oppressed. These epochs are their sloughing times, when, willy nilly, with great difficulty, and at the cost of the most painful and sometimes the deadliest efforts, they are forced to shed their armour of proof, to expose their living flesh barely covered with a thin soft pellicle, and to bury themselves piteously under the sand until the calcareous secretion shall be re-formed and solidified anew. This is their season of fear and fright. Their hiding-places are easily discoverable, and once unearthed the disarmed brigands are lost beyond redemption. Myriads perish in this manner, devoured by other animals, crushed among the stones, or dashed in pieces against the rocks by the movement of the waves. Thus Nature enforces her law of reprisal. The power of all tyrants and oppressors has its fixed limits. The quarrelsome crustacean and the despotic king are alike subject to the hour of retaliation. (*Scientific Illustrations.*) *Danger of flattery*:—Whitefield, when flattered, said, "Take care of fire: I carry powder about me." *Flattery answered*:—When the French ambassador visited Lord Bacon in his last illness, and found him in bed, with the blinds drawn, he addressed this compliment to him: "You are like the angels, of whom we read and hear much, but have not the pleasure of seeing them." The reply was the sentiment of a philosopher, and not unworthy of a Christian: "If the complaisance of others compares me to an angel, my infirmities tell me I am a man." *Flattery rebuked*:—A flattering priest told Constantine the Great that his virtues deserved the empire of the world here, and to reign with

the Son of God hereafter. The emperor cried, "Fie, fie! for shame! let me hear no more such unseemly speeches; but, rather, suppliantly pray to my Almighty Maker, that, in this life and the life to come, I may be reckoned worthy to be His servant." *Royal piety* :—One of the first acts performed by George III. after his accession to the throne, was to issue an order prohibiting any of the clergy who should be called to preach before him, from paying him any compliment in their discourses. His Majesty was led to this from the fulsome adoration which Dr. Thos. Wilson, prebendary of Westminster, thought proper to deliver in the Chapel Royal, and for which, instead of thanks, he received from his royal auditor a pointed reprimand, his Majesty observing that he came to chapel to hear the praises of God and not his own. (*Clerical Anecdotes.*) *The certainty of retribution* :—As you stood some stormy day upon a sea-cliff, and marked the giant billow rise from the deep to rush on with foaming crest, and throw itself thundering on the trembling shore, did you ever fancy that you could stay its course, and hurl it back to the depths of ocean? Did you ever stand beneath the leaden, lowering cloud, and mark the lightning's leap, as it shot and flashed, dazzling athwart the gloom, and think that you could grasp the bolt and change its path? Still more foolish and vain his thought, who fancies that he can arrest or turn aside the purpose of God, saying, "What is the Almighty that we should serve Him? Let us break His bands asunder, and cast away His cords from us!" Break His bands asunder!—How He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh! (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *God's ministers of retribution* :—An angel was the agent of judgment here, but worms were the ministers of vengeance. But God can dispense with superior ministers altogether. No need that He should grasp ten thousand thunders, or come riding on the wings of the wind. A grasshopper, a wire worm, a taint of air, the sporule of a microscopic mass, the bacillus of an invisible animalculæ—ah! these loathly nothings are potent enough in the hand of God to abase into dust the majesty of man. Julian would fain have trampled Christianity into the dust; a devious arrow, and Julian was struck down before the face of his enemies. Napoleon insolently remarked that God he usually found on the side of the strongest battalions; softer than feathers, melting at a breath, fell on the plains of Russia the white flakes of snow, and Napoleon was a fugitive, and his grand army lay wrapped in its ghastly winding sheet. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*)

Vers. 24, 25. **But the Word of God grew and multiplied.**—*The progress of God's Word* :—This progress—growth and multiplication of God's Word—was displayed—I. IN THE MEN OF THAT PERIOD. 1. The spirit of every age or movement of history is reflected in its leading characters. The Elizabethan age; the American Revolution; the age of Pericles. 2. Displayed in its leaders or exponents. (1) In Barnabas we see tenderness and generosity. (2) In Paul strength and genius. (3) In John Mark imperfection, but eventual usefulness after failure. 3. In its enemies. It defied Herod's craft and power, and its success was coincident with his doom. II. IN THE MARCH OF EVENTS. 1. "Happy is a land when it has no history," is true only of the old and false conceptions of history. 2. God's Word did not return unto Him void. (1) Gentile Christianity was launched on the stream of ages. (2) Thus the policy of Christianity, of the Church as a missionary, world-evangelising movement, was fixed by whatever force lies in the example of the primitive Church. III. IN THE ADVANCE OF IDEAS. 1. Pentecost did not end, but only began, the enlargement of mind to take in God's thoughts. 2. The minds of the disciples gained that flexibility as to method and inflexibility as to principle by which they could go "to every creature." "All things to all men, so that I might by all means save some." "We must obey God rather than men." 3. The New Testament itself—especially all of it except the four Gospels—shows how the minds of men were enlarged and inspired to apply the "Word of God" to human wants; and here, in an almost literal sense, it "grew and multiplied." Conclusion: 1. Thus it appears there is a sense in which the phrases, "new theology," "advanced thought," &c., may represent a state of things thoroughly satisfactory, upon which the Church and the world are to be congratulated. 2. It equally appears that all true progress in religious thought and action is made by men whose instrument is the Word of God, and whose power and guidance are supplied by the Holy Spirit. (*J. P. Otis.*) *The success of the gospel in the days of the apostles* :—I. THE WORD WAS OPPOSED. 1. By the Word we may understand the gospel of God our Saviour. 2. Jewish prejudices opposed the gospel. 3. Heathenish superstitions were opposed to the Word. 4. Human learning was opposed to the Word of God. The Greeks and Romans excelled in

learning; but that learning produced bad effects. 5. The devil opposed the gospel, by his influence and agency on the hearts of men. 6. In spreading the Word, the apostles had to endure many grievous afflictions, both from wicked men and evil spirits. II. OPPOSITION DID NOT PREVENT THE RAPID SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL; FOR THE WORD GREW AND WAS MULTIPLIED. 1. The Word is fitly compared to good seed. 2. This seed was sown by the apostles in prepared hearts; and it cannot bring forth good fruit unless the heart be prepared. 3. When the Word sinks into the heart, and takes deep root, it produces holy tempers and holy actions; and when we abound in these, the Word grows in us, and our prayers go up to God with acceptance. 4. The Word is multiplied when many are converted to God by the instrumentality of converts. III. BUT WHAT WERE THE PRINCIPAL CAUSES OF THE EXTENSIVE PROMULGATION OF THE GOSPEL IN THE AGE OF THE APOSTLES? 1. The extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, conferred on the apostles, and on many in the Church, promoted the success of the gospel. 2. Another cause of the rapid spread of the gospel in those days was the burning zeal of the apostles and primitive Christians. 3. Divine power attended the Word. 4. The holy tempers, and the holy conduct of the apostles, and of the first believers, produced powerful effects on the hearts of the people. 5. The unity of the Church gave success to the Word. 6. Persecution promoted the cause of Christ, and gave success to the Word. 7. Judgments poured out on wicked men, and on persecutors, gave success to the gospel. 8. The united prayers of the Church gave success to the Word. Inferences: 1. How widely different was the propagation of Christianity from that of Mohammedism! The one was by the force of truth and holy example; but the other was by the sword and acts of violence! 2. The effects of primitive times have reached us in these last days. 3. We lay no claim to apostolic gifts; but God has opened a wide door, in our day, for the spread of His gospel. (*Theological Sketchbook.*) *The success of the gospel*:—I. THE WORD WAS OPPOSED by—1. Jewish prejudices. 2. Heathen superstitions. 3. Human learning. 4. Kingly cruelty. 5. The devil, by his influence on the hearts of men. II. THIS DID NOT PREVENT ITS RAPID SUCCESS. 1. The Word is good seed. 2. This seed was sown by the apostles in prepared hearts. 3. When this seed takes root it produces holy tempers and actions. III. THE PRINCIPAL CAUSES OF THIS SUCCESS. 1. The extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. 2. The burning zeal of the apostles. 3. Divine power. 4. Church unity. 5. Persecutions. 6. Prayer. (*Pulpit Sketches.*) *The success of the gospel*:—I. THE WORD OF GOD GREW IN—1. Convincing. 2. Converting. 3. Sanctifying. 4. Comforting. 5. Stimulating power. II. THE WORD OF GOD MULTIPLIED—1. In the number of believers who embraced it. 2. In the number of preachers who proclaimed it. 3. In the extent of territory over which it spread (chap. xiii. 4, &c.). III. The Word of God grew and multiplied NOTWITHSTANDING—1. The might that was arrayed against it. (1) The tyranny of Herod. (2) The pleasure of the Jews. State authority and sectarian bigotry were combined for the first time since the crucifixion to oppress the Church; how often since has this unholy alliance been made for the same end! 2. The persecution it endured. (1) The vexation of Christians, espionage, loss of goods, &c. (2) The martyrdom of James. (3) The imprisonment of Peter. IV. NATIONAL PROSPERITY WAS IMPERILLED, but the Word of God grew and multiplied. There is more than appears in ver. 20. Tyre and Sidon as purely commercial cities were largely dependent on the purely industrial interior for the supply of merchandise, and the interior was dependent on those cities for its very sustenance. The prosperity of both was threatened by a war which would further aggravate the situation. Tyrants may frown, and people may cringe, but the Word of God is independent of both. V. HUMAN GLORY WAS HUMBLED, AND KINGLY POWER WAS DESTROYED, BUT THE WORD OF GOD GREW AND MULTIPLIED. Read vers. 23 and 24 as one, and the intended contrast is clear. "All flesh is grass . . . but the Word of God shall stand for ever." The Roman, German, Italian, and English potentates who oppressed the Church are in their graves, but the Word of God grows and multiplies still. VI. The Word of God grew and multiplied BY MEANS OF—1. Prayer—the normal condition of success throughout the ages. 2. Striking interpositions. These are exceptional, but are always at hand if need be. Here we see—(1) The deliverance of Peter by an angel. (2) The death of Herod by an angel. 3. Earnest evangelists (vers. 25–xiii. 3). (*J. W. Burn.*) *The invincibility of the Word*:—The truth of God is not only invulnerable, it is invincible. Smallest of all seeds dropped upon the gorgeous temple floor of the world's heathendom, lo! it burst into fragments the starred mosaics, and split the monstrous idols till they fell and crushed their worshippers. The one

main reason why the triumph of Christianity had from the first all the certainty of a law was this—God is in her, and therefore shall she not be moved. God shall help her, and that right early. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *The vitality of the Word:*—How strange, how providential has been its history! and how deep ought to be our attachment to a Book so mercifully made our inheritance! From the Churches of the primitive times it passed (as ecclesiastical tyranny grew strong, and would not brook a collateral authority) to the seclusion of the monasteries for many a long and barren century; but God was with it through the darkness, and He brought it forth in His own good time. It was like those seeds of which naturalists tell us, that lie for ages dormant and unfruitful in cells beneath the earth, but whose vitality has never been lost, and which, when brought upon the surface, shoot up with vigour into all the beauty of luxuriant vegetation. Such has been the story of the written Word. (*Prof. Archer Butler.*) *The enduring kingdom:*—We have here the kingdom of Herod and Agrippa, as a type of all earthly kingdoms, brought into contrast and collision with the enduring kingdom of Christ the Lord. In many points of view—in similarity and in opposition—the parallel is most peculiarly striking. The rise of both was unobserved. Herod's had grown up from nothing. There had been a time when he was living as a mere hanger-on upon the court of Tiberius. He was gifted with those powers by which such men rise in such courts. As he ingratiated himself with Tiberius, the visions of greater things would begin to fill his earthly soul. He was the grandson of the great Herod; perhaps he might yet make himself a name greater than that of the prosperous founder of his house. But upon this early sunshine fell the blackness of a sudden frost, and nipped the opening bud of his greatness. He was accused of wishing the emperor dead, and so the rising Idumæan found himself in a dungeon, and not upon a throne. Then followed the tyrant's death, and again Herod rose to favour. He was made king of Batanea and Trachonitis by Caligula; and by Claudius of Samaria and Judæa also. He was one of the few who thoroughly succeed, as it is called, in life; and he governed his kingdom with great splendour and success. He affected popularity; wished to reign in the hearts of his subjects; was a man who would stretch a point that he might do so. But all suddenly at noonday his sun sank in outer darkness. Puffed up with the applause of his subjects, he took to himself, as the great founder of his own fortunes, the honour which belonged to God only. An angel hand strikes him; and, as self-exaltation had been his master-sin, so the circumstances of his death are made humiliating in their accidents as well as sudden in their issue: he was eaten by worms. His kingdom passed away; the cunning web which had been woven so successfully, the fruit of youthful enterprise, of mature experience, of long labours, of late and, as it seemed, complete success: all was torn away by the first counterblast which the Almighty sent forth to scatter it. "But the Word of God grew and multiplied." Here is the contrast. Here is a kingdom which "fadeth not away." With this, Herod had just come into collision; but now he himself was gone; and that despised kingdom "grew and multiplied!" The blood which he had shed to quench it, made but its flame burn brighter and spread around in wider circles. And the cause of this power of growth is suggested in its very title: it was "the Word of God." It was not the mere creature of outside circumstance; it was not a kingdom formed by Caligula's passing favour, augmented by the good-will of Claudius, and built up and widened by the policy of Herod; it had a life within, which was life for all men. Now from this contrast there flow one or two necessary consequences. I. THAT THIS KINGDOM OF THE WORD OF GOD WILL AT LAST SUBDUE ALL OPPOSITION. That which we have seen in this chapter of the Acts has been going on ever since the day when the angel smote Herod. It is going on round about us now. 1. It is going on in the world of nations. Thrones have been built up since, higher than King Herod's; the nations of the earth have gone out to wonder at their greatness. Cæsar and Charlemagne, Clovis and Solyman, and how many more, have heard in their day the flattering cry, "It is the voice of a god!" And they have passed away, with their dynasties and their institutions: the great world-stream has flowed on, and, as its waves have swept by, they have overwhelmed what was once so great, until their very record has departed. And still the Word of God has "grown and multiplied." The outward forms of Christ's kingdom abide, as fresh as they were in their earliest morning. Still does baptism admit into this kingdom; still does the simple breaking of bread, and the pouring out of wine, endure amongst us. And, if possible, yet more marvellous still, its inward power over countless multitudes is just what it was of old; still they tremble under the Word spoken; still soul after soul melts in contrition, kindles in love, rejoices

in exultation, waits in hope, when the words which are the words of that kingdom of the unseen Lord sound in their ears; still in their trouble men gather together, as they did in the house where Rhoda went to the door at Peter's knocking; and still deliverances are given in answer to those supplications, and angels from heaven bear to the saints of the King the succour they need. And now what does all this foreshadow? What but that this kingdom which alone has in it this principle of life shall endure for ever? that it shall break in pieces all that are against it? 2. Ah! that which is thus plain in the worldwide history of nations is just as true in the detail of all private life. There, too, are the two kingdoms: the one full of show for vain men, the other full of strength for believing men. There are great promises of success, of rising in life, of acquiring a name, of a man's enjoying his pleasure; and there is an angel ever ready to strike at his noonday of seeming success every such worldly-minded man. There is a "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; and then whose shall this be which thou hast stored up for thyself?" And there are dungeons and chains on the other side, the following Christ in self-denial and self-sacrifice; and with these there is still, as of old, a portion in the Church's prayers, angels' visits, and a God and Father who sends them for our deliverance. Surely, then, it is plain which of these kingdoms will endure. II. THE BLESSEDNESS OF BEING ENGAGED UPON THE SIDE OF THIS LIVING POWER. We look into God's Word, and we see the worthlessness of all outer things; the utter vanity of Herod's pompous worm-eaten enthronement; the blessedness and the glory of Peter's dungeon, of saints' prayers, of martyrdom, of being the care of angels, and the children of the Highest; and our hearts are a little stirred, perhaps, and we have half resolved that we will seek this portion for ourselves; and then we look into the great world, and we are fooled again by the sounds of empire and greatness. Ay! and we look into our own little world; and do we not find it hard to remember and to feel how blessed it is, when God so orders it, for us to be disappointed and calumniated, and despised, and brought low, and afflicted? Do we not every one of us know how thoughts of ease and of comfort, how ambitious longings to be a little greater than we are, a little richer, a little higher in the world's estimation—how this clings to us? Do we not every one of us know how the secret curse of the world's measure and the world's judgment creeps back upon us almost unawares? Do we not know how ready we are to forget in practice the blessedness of being of that little flock which shall yet possess the kingdom for ever? III. And then put these together. If there be this blessedness in being upon God's side, and if there be this glory in bearing it truly in mind—may we not gather this further inference, THAT IT IS OUR WISDOM TO SET OURSELVES DILIGENTLY TO ACT UPON THE TRUTH THAT WE CONFESS? For it is only by acting upon it that we can make head against the temptation to forget it. This was the wisdom of the apostles. Remember how in their day, when the world threatened them, they went first unto their own, and "lifted up their voice, and said." They made their cry to Almighty God, and then having made their prayer they went forth again into that evil world, and began directly to act for Christ; and in that union of retiring for secret prayer, to draw His strength down upon them, and then simply going forth to act in that strength, as though He was present with them, they were enabled to keep their own hearts firm and their own heads clear, amidst the dizzying and amazing circumstances of their daily life. And we must do the same, each one of us, if we would make head. There must be with us this mixture of prayer to God, and of work for God. (*Bp. S. Wilberforce.*)

CHAPTER XIII.

VER. 1. **Now there were in the Church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers.**—*The nature and sources of the narrative:*—We now lose sight for a time of the Church of Jerusalem and the apostles, and in the place of Jerusalem, Antioch becomes the centre of Church history. Indeed chaps. xiii. and xiv. form an independent and self-contained memoir from an Antiochean point of view. And it has, not without plausibility, been supposed that Luke has here made use of an original document and inserted it in his book, which document may have proceeded from the Church at Antioch, or may have belonged to a biography of Barnabas, or

may have been a missionary narrative which Barnabas and Saul had made. (*C. V. Lechler, D.D.*) *The first designatory and valedictory service to missionary work*:—In this text notice—I. Those members of the Church at Antioch as CONSPICUOUS MEN. They were stars. Among the thousands connected with the Bible, only a few are named, so they must have been special noteworthy men:—"Barnabas," "Simeon, that was called Niger"—black. It has the same root as negro. "Lucius" of Cyrene, an African settlement. Simeon was black. He might have been an African; and Lucius was for certain. "Manaen," brought up with Herod the tetrarch. It was the old custom to have a sort of adopted child as companion for young princes, thus forming what would seem a companionship for life. A man who had lived in court would be a fine man, but his living with Herod throws another light upon things. He was "brought up" in court—then he had heard John the Baptist thunder and lighten in his preaching. "Brought up" in court—then he knew John in prison. Was he one of John's disciples? "Brought up with Herod." Then he knew that woman, the wife of the steward, who ministered so to Jesus. "Brought up with Herod." Then he was at the crucifixion when Jesus was "set at nought," when on bended knees the cruel shout was raised, "Hail, King of the Jews." Probably that was the crisis that brought him out. Now, here we find him among the disciples, not with Herod, but his name written in the Lamb's book of life. He leaves the court and goes into the tents at Antioch, struck his sword, and is here a soldier of Jesus Christ. The Church of Christ is composed of wonderful variety. II. We have a NEW SPEAKER—"The Holy Ghost." Who and what is the Holy Ghost? No one can answer. The Holy Ghost never intended that we should. The doctrine of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is a tremendous doctrine. We cannot draw a circle round infinity; we cannot even understand ourselves. How, then, can we understand God? We must leave the question, for it cannot be questioned. There are two very plain things—1. That the Spirit is a person, not simply an influence. 2. Not only a person, but a Divine person. III. We have an IMPORTANT COMMAND—"Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work," &c. 1. Here is a beginning—the first mission to the heathen. The Acts of the Apostles is a book of beginnings. We read of the first fear, first hope, first joy, first sermon, first prayer-meeting, the first sinner converted, the first Christians, the first baptism, the first Lord's supper, and now the first instance, by order, of men set apart for the work of missions. There were no Christians in England, in Spain, in Italy then. Everything then had to begin. And the Holy Ghost said, "Now" is the time to begin. 2. Here is a wise choice. "Now, there were at Antioch in the Church prophets and teachers." So Barnabas and Saul were not called away till they could be spared. The two captains were not removed till the ship was officered. Note, they were the best men. Not inexperienced or young, but the kind the Holy Ghost requires to send out—the very Barnabas and the very Saul. The Church may spare Barnabas and Saul now. 3. Here are propitious circumstances—"As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted." As they were going on in their ministry. It was a special meeting, because they were fasting. They wanted to know something, and as they were inquiring the Holy Ghost spake. (1) The Holy Ghost requires that He Himself should call persons to the ministry before the Church calls them—"I have called them." We cannot make ministers or missionaries. When we call them, we only ratify the call of God. (2) Those who go should be sent out by the act of the Church. (3) Missionaries are separated men. Separate from home, separate from the refinement of life, separate from wealth, separate from those who have watched them grow into Christians, separate from old companions, separate from the elders of the Church, separate by the rolling sea, separate by the mountain, separate by the wilderness. (4) "Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work," &c. This work is a work. (*C. Stanford, D.D.*) *Prophets and teachers*:—The two were not necessarily identical (Eph. iv. 11), though the higher gift of prophecy commonly included the lower gift of teaching. The former implies a more direct message from God, coming through the Holy Ghost; the latter a more systematic instruction, in which reason and reflection also bore their part. (*Dean Plumptre.*) **Simeon that was called Niger.**—The name seems to indicate the swarth complexion of Africa; but nothing more is known of him. The epithet was given to him, probably, to distinguish him from the many others of the same name, possibly, in particular, from Simon of Cyrene. (*Ibid.*) **Lucius of Cyrene.**—Probably one of the company of "men of Cyprus and Cyrene" (chap. xi. 20) who had been among the first evangelists of Antioch. On the ground that Cyrene was famous for its School of Medicine, some writers have identified

him with the author of the Acts, but the two names Lucius and Lucas are radically distinct, the latter being contracted from Lucanus. (*Ibid.*) **Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch.**—*Manaen*:—This statement has been interpreted to mean that he was Herod's foster-brother, and the Vulgate translates the term by one which signifies "fed from the same breast." But all that is implied is that Manaen and Herod were companions in studies and amusements. In the same household Joanna the wife of Chuza the steward was a believer in Christ. Thus early had the Word of God been known and acknowledged in a royal court. God indeed has had from the first those in all ranks who served Him—Moses, Obadiah, Daniel, and the "saints in Cæsar's household." As now, so it has ever been, those with the same advantages make a different use of them. Manaen, numbered amongst the first ministers of the Church; Herod, remembered for his part in the murder of John and Christ. (*W. Denton, M.A.*) *Manaen*:—This is the only record that we have of this man. Yet it is impossible not to find a melancholy interest in the juxtaposition of characters and lives so strangely contrasted. At the very time that the one foster-brother was prominent among the ministers of Christ, the other was living in a dishonoured exile with a dark past and a hopeless future—a fact of daily experience, viz., that the lives of men may begin, in the closest companionship, and under nearly the same conditions, and yet the end of the one shall be honour and the other shame. 1. The name Manaen was connected earlier with the Herods. When Herod the Great was a boy, an Essene of this name, believed to possess prophetic gifts, met him as he went to school, and reading, perhaps, in his features the signs of an insatiable ambition and an indomitable will, hailed him as "king of the Jews." He stood in somewhat the same relation to him that Ahijah did to Jeroboam. As with the son of Nebat, so with the son of Antipater, the early prophecy was not forgotten. When he attained the summit of his power he would fain have attached the prophet to his court as friend and counsellor. What the identity of name renders probable is that on the refusal of the old man the king transferred his offer of patronage to his son, or grandson, and had brought him up as the companion of one of his favourite sons. If so, the first great event in the life of Manaen must have been the change from the stern purity of the life of the Essenes to the pomp and luxury of the court of Herod. Soon this would be followed by a yet greater change. Antipas and Archelaus were sent to receive their education at Rome, and Manaen would naturally share this training. He may have heard of the arrival of the "wise men," and could not have been altogether ignorant of the Messianic hopes which animated the people. The very name which he bore (Menahem, the comforter), bore witness of this hope. 2. One so brought up would continue to be attached to the royal household, and Manaen may have adopted the life and the principles of those with whom he lived. He may have acquiesced in the king's incestuous marriage, but we can estimate the effect which the teaching of the Baptist must have had upon him. Here he saw a life, like in form to that devotion which he had known in his youth, the reappearance of the prophetic character, the open and fearless speech, as of a new Elijah, and as we find traces of the influence of the Baptist's teaching within the circle of Herod's attendants, it is reasonable to think that he too must have come under it. 3. The first trace is in Luke iii. 14, where "the soldiers" were literally "men on a march" to the war with Aretas, the father of the wife whom the tetrarch had divorced in order that he might indulge his guilty passion for Herodias. The line of their march would take them down the valley of the Jordan, and so they would pass by the chief scene of the Baptist's ministry. From that hour there must have been many among the attendants of Herod who were disciples of John. 4. The next trace meets us in John iv. 46, where the word "nobleman" means an attendant of the king, *i.e.*, of the tetrarch Antipas. I do not assume the identity of this "nobleman" with Manaen, but I point to it as one of the tokens of the Baptist's work as "preparing the way of the Lord," even among Herod's followers. The nobleman thus believed, and Herod's court now included some who were disciples, not of the Baptist only, but of the Prophet of Nazareth. 5. The imprisonment of John brought him into yet closer contact with the tetrarch's immediate followers. Even Herod himself "heard him gladly." It is clear from Matt. xi. 2, 3, that some of the Baptist's disciples were allowed free access to him, and who so likely as attendants of the prince? If we believe that every word which our Lord spoke at such a time was full of meaning, "they that wear soft clothing and are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in kings' houses," may have been those who were halting between two opinions, "like reeds shaken by the wind," whom it was

necessary to remind that the true servants of God were to be found, not "in kings' houses," but in prison. 6. The narrative of the circumstances of the Baptist's death includes notice of the feast of "lords, high-captains, and chief estates of Galilee," amongst whom must have been the "nobleman" of Capernaum, and the "steward" of Herod's household, and the king's "foster-brother and friend," who must have shuddered with an unimaginable loathing. It was time for them to make their choice. 7. At or about this time, some at least did make it, and among them was she who "ministered to Christ of her sustenance," *e.g.*, "Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward." This she could hardly have done, according to the Jewish law of property and marriage, without her husband's consent. 8. It may be that up to this point the foster-brother had continued faithful to the relationship which that name involved. But soon the course of events brought about a disruption of it. The ambitious intrigues of Herod Agrippas (Acts xii.) enabled him to assume the disused title of king. This gave him a higher dignity than that of his uncle the tetrarch, and the pride of Herodias was stung to the quick, and she gave her husband no peace until he had taken the fatal step of leaving his tetrarchy, in the hope of obtaining the privilege of regal rank. But the attempt failed, and he had the mortification of seeing his tetrarchy merged in the kingdom of Agrippa, and was exiled first to Gaul and then to Spain. The tradition that Pilate also was banished to the former province, suggests the probability that the two may have met once again there, to test the value of the friendship which had been purchased at so terrible a price. 9. About this time we have the first actual mention of Manaen. Unknown as he is to us, he stood then on the same level as Barnabas, in a higher position than St. Paul. Whatever his past life had been, it had led him to this. But what calls for special notice, as showing the tendency of the Baptist's teaching, is the fact that he is found at Antioch, not at Jerusalem. The words of the Baptist, "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham," contained by implication the whole gospel of the calling of the heathen, and Manaen must have seen that they did so. At Antioch, too, he must have taken upon himself the new name, and to one who had seen Antipas and Jesus face to face it must have been a joy unspeakable to cast off all connection with the *Herodiani*, and to take his place among the *Christiani*. In him, the prophetic form of utterance which had reappeared in John after long centuries of desuetude was powerful. As the disciples of John fasted oft, so he and those who were with him "fasted" as they ministered to the Lord. From his lips and theirs came the words which marked out the fittest labourers for the new and mighty work. One who had begun with the training of an Essene, and the teaching of the Baptist, now gave the right hand of fellowship to the two new apostles, not of "the twelve," as they went forth to their work among the heathen. 10. To such a man the Gentile Church, in its infancy, must have owed much. He alone of all the earlier teachers of the Church may have sojourned in the imperial city. From him the Apostle of the Gentiles must have had encouragement and support, and there is a probability that the debt is even greater. St. Luke's life as a Christian must have begun at Antioch, and if so, then he must have known Manaen, and from him he may have learnt many of the facts of the history of the Baptist, and the details of Herodian history, of which the third Gospel is so full. Conclusion: Whatever interest may attach to the juxtaposition of the two names of Manaen and Antipas, is deepened and strengthened by this fuller study. The danger of the weak will—untrue to its own convictions, and therefore losing them altogether, or keeping them only to its own condemnation—the power of earnestness and faith to triumph over the temptations of outward circumstances and perilous companionship are seen more clearly. Our inquiries, too, will have added something to the conviction as we read the Gospels that we are dealing, not with "cunningly devised fables," but with true histories, dropping hints, after the manner of all true histories, naturally and incidentally, suggesting more than they tell, and rewarding those who seek diligently with new insight into the facts which they record. (*Dean Plumptre.*) *Manaen and Herod, the different effects of a secular education*:—It would be natural to expect that children who grew up together under the same examples and instruction should appear in the same religious character in after life. But in this case the result was otherwise. One became a minister, the other a libertine. Manaen was a man eminent for faith and virtue, learning and ability, or he would not so soon have become a prophet in this celebrated Church. Herod was vicious and debauched in private life; haughty, cruel, and tyrannical in his government, and was the murderer of the Baptist. Herod made no virtuous improvement of his early advan-

tages; Manaen early became religious and escaped the corruptions of the world. Men's lives are not always answerable to the advantages they enjoy. The same gospel which is a savour of life and a rock of salvation to some, is a savour of death and a rock of offence unto others. The difference between these two men is observed in other families. How is this? I. THERE IS A GREAT DIVERSITY IN NATURAL TEMPER. 1. There is in all an inclination to evil, but in a different degree. 2. It is the wisdom of parents to watch the various tempers and propensities of their children. II. DIFFERENT WORLDLY PROSPECTS OFTEN MAKE A GREAT DIFFERENCE IN CHARACTER AND CONDUCT. 1. Herod was of royal descent, and had early prospects of a throne. Manaen had no such object, and was more at liberty to admit the sober concerns of religion. 2. Different passions and capacities put young men on different pursuits. Some through natural indolence and diffidence fall so low in their designs that they never rise. Others are animated by an ambition that proves a snare. Others, again, set out with a governing aim to please God. III. THE SOVEREIGN GRACE OF GOD MUST BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT. Men are dependent on the Holy Spirit. He strives with them. Some resist, others yield. IV. REFLECTIONS. 1. The particular care which was taken in apostolic times to secure men of learning and ability as public teachers. The unlettered men whom Christ called were trained by the Master Himself. Paul was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. Timothy from a child had known the Scriptures; Apollos was mighty in them. Luke, Stephen, and others appear to have had superior literary abilities. The apostles cautioned ministers to lay hands suddenly on no man who had not had time to furnish his mind. 2. The duty of parents to pay particular attention to the different dispositions of their children. Some must be ruled with great rigour, others with more lenity. 3. The young may here see that no worldly connections, temptations, &c., will excuse them in the neglect of religion. 4. The young are here cautioned not to abuse the grace of God. 5. Let the young be rational and discreet in forming their worldly prospects. (*J. Lathrop, D.D.*)

Vers. 2–13. **As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate unto Me Barnabas and Saul.**—*The completion of the apostolate*:—This act was no conferring of the apostleship by the prophets and teachers; the apostles themselves had received no power from Christ to do that. Both the vocation and its bestowal could only come direct from God. Barnabas and Saul were appointed to fill up the vacant places caused by the execution of James the son of Zebedee, and by the withdrawal of James the son of Alphæus from apostolic to episcopal work, and thus the number of those bearing the apostolic mission was restored to its normal condition of twelve. The apostolic college always consisted of twelve men at a time, and therefore the Apocalypse knows only of twelve apostles as foundation-stones of the holy city. (*Prof. Von Dollinger.*) *Bodily abstinence*:—Deep, earnest thoughts have often stirred in me on bodily abstinence, as the condition of helping the spirit through the strait gate of opposing animalism, into the sweet and holy Paradise element. There is an element of which Jesus is the Prince, and there is an element of which Satan is prince. While we appropriate the elements of the nethermost prince, we may be strong in the powers of nature, but perhaps not so strong in the life that is hid with Christ in God; for in the exercise and indulgence of our fleshly appetites we do not breathe deeply enough to inspire the holy element of our risen Prince. Finding that deep and holy spirit-breathing was suspended during bodily enjoyments, godly souls have often interdicted the gratifications of the flesh, in order to help their spirits in the God-ward direction. (*J. Pulsford.*) *Mission and commission* (with 2 Tim. i. 6):—In words such as these we have a picture out of that earliest life of the Church, of which the books from which I take it tell the story. How fresh and vivid it is! What high enthusiasm, unhesitating self-sacrifice! We look at the mighty forces against which the first Christian disciples hurled themselves, at the spiritual torpor, the black hopelessness, the unutterable moral degradation to which they made their appeal, and we wonder at their audacity—or their faith! No hostility daunted them; no tremendous bulk of evil deterred them. They were on fire with a consuming purpose, and they did not stop, whether to measure their task or to discuss its difficulties. This, we say, is the fruit of a great enthusiasm. It always works this way, and it would be without results if it did not. Yes, but the moment we look a little closer at the story of this enthusiasm we shall see that along with it there was something more. It has been common to disparage the gifts of the first founders of Christianity, and to seek to make the more of its distinctive characteristics by making as little as

possible of the men who illustrated them. They have been described as insignificant among the great of their own day; and measured in one way they were. But when we come close to some at least among them we cannot so easily disesteem them. One among them was chosen to be the leader among his fellows. Can anybody who reads the story of his life find it easy to believe that he had not in him that natural genius of leadership? The voices that have stirred the world, the messages that have thrilled and enkindled cold and discouraged hearts, have not been the voices and messages of fools. And does anybody suppose when the Church at Antioch fasted and celebrated its solemn Eucharist, and prepared to choose who were to go forth on its high errands, that Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, and the rest of them were there at haphazard? Out from these half-dozen men, more or less, were to be chosen two to be consecrated on that memorable day to a great and memorable work. Do you suppose that they did not seek for eloquence (if they could find it), for sympathy, for the quick power of understanding another's perplexities, for that infinite hopefulness of human nature which, I sometimes think, is quite its finest quality? We may be sure they did. And no less sure may we be that when Barnabas and Saul were singled out from among their associates for the rare dignity of suffering and loneliness and privation in their high office, they were chosen because, among any set of men, and in whatever service, they would sooner or later inevitably have come to the front. Yes, but how were they singled out? "There came a voice," &c. Whose voice was it? Were those men called thus to their high office by the high acclaim of a public assembly? For myself I have little doubt that before the Voice that spoke those few words was heard there had been heard another and more multitudinous one. That city of Antioch contained the first Church organised among the Gentiles, and it became in time the centre of those missionary activities by which the Roman world was evangelised. The prophets and teachers who began the work were supplemented later by Barnabas and Saul; and step by step in the simple story we may trace the unfolding of the organic life of the Church. There was an assembly first, and then there came to be the *ecclesia*—and it was this community of the brethren, it may easily have been, that, with more or less formality, first indicated its preferences, and pointed its finger of designation towards the men who were fittest and worthiest for the higher service of the Church. But this was not mission. That came into view when we read that the Voice which said "Separate Barnabas and Saul" was the voice of the Holy Ghost. It is not only "separate"; it is "separate *Me*." It is not only for the work ye are to separate them, but "for the work whereunto I have called them." And thus we come into the presence of that unique distinction which for ever differentiates the enthusiasm of the disciples from all other enthusiasms. It was the enthusiasm of a new creation by the power of a Divine breath. It is the sevenfold power of God the Holy Ghost. Call it an influence, water it down to be a cult, disparage it as so much mysticism, verily you will have to tear yonder story to pieces before you can get that element out of it! Bereft of the mission and work of the Holy Ghost, calling, arresting, convicting, convincing, enlightening, transforming, empowering—the whole fabric of primitive history becomes somehow invertebrate, and crumbles into a shapeless mass of incident and talk. But a still further question remains. What was not alone the evidence or token of that mission, but its authentication? Was this the whole story of that mission—that certain men being assembled together, a voice said, "Separate Me Barnabas and Saul," and that then those who were named separated themselves and went away, and henceforth did their work as men fully and sufficiently authorised and empowered thus for its discharge? On the contrary, there is something more in the history, which we may not arbitrarily leave out, and which is just as essential to its integrity as anything that has gone before. "When they had fasted and prayed, *and laid their hands on them*," &c. Certainly there is no obscurity here. Juggle with the words as one may, he cannot separate the inward call and the outward ordinance, the spiritual mission and the tactual commission, the Divine empowerment and the human authentication of it. There is a way which is of God's appointment; there is a ministry which He first commissioned, and which they whom He first commissioned passed on and down to others. Its authority does not come up from the people; it descends from the Holy Ghost. And, as in the beginning, its outward and visible sign was the laying on of apostolic hands upon men called, whether to this or that or the other service—pastoral, priestly, or prophetic, yet still to an apostolic ministry—so it has been ever since. We turn from this scene at Antioch to those memorable ministries that came after

it. One of them stands forth conspicuous above all the apostolates of its age—unique in its energy, unapproachable in its heroism, incomparable alike in the power of its preaching and in the inexhaustible richness of its writings. What a fine scorn there is in those writings for that retrospective piety which lingered regretfully among the beggarly elements of the elder order and ritual—what impatience of the latter, what bold assertion of Christian liberty, what intense ardour of spiritual enthusiasm! Yes; but what scrupulous respect for authority, what careful observance of apostolic tradition, what reverent use of appointed means. There came a day when St. Paul is to set apart a youthful son in the faith to be an overseer of the Church in Ephesus. How does he do it? Does he tell him of the work that he is to do, and then simply dismiss him to do it? Does he say, "Go, my son, and tell men in Asia Minor the story of your Lord's love, and write me occasionally how you are getting on"? Not such is the meaning of that clear and unequivocal language which he uses: "Stir up the gift of God which is in thee"—and which is in thee, not by inherited cleverness, or acquired learning, or popular endowment—but "by the laying on of my hands"; or, as the same fact is elsewhere stated, "Neglect not the gift that was given thee . . . with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." And thus once and again does this apostle of a spiritual religion guard against that disesteem of the outward institutions of the Church, without which history demonstrates that religion runs thin and runs out. (*Bp. H. C. Potter.*) *Church enterprises, how they must begin in order to be blessed:*—1. Not with worldly computation, but from the impulse of the Spirit. 2. Not with a premature shout of triumph, but with humble prayer. 3. Not trusting to human names, even those of Barnabas and Saul, but in the name of the living God on whose blessing all things depend. (*K. Gerok.*) *The messengers of the gospel, how they should be sent to the heathen:*—I. ON THE CALL AND INTIMATION OF THE LORD. 1. Those who send must be moved not by their own spirit, but by the Holy Ghost. 2. Those who are to be sent must be chosen, not according to the dictates of human prudence, but according to the evident marks of Divine grace. II. WITH HOLY BEHAVIOUR. 1. Those who send should fast, *i.e.*, abstain from all superfluities in order to have enough for the wants of the heathen. 2. They should pray; the prayer of the sender co-operates mightily with the word of the preachers. 3. The messengers should depart with the imposition of hands; regularly ordained if they are to have an orderly ministry for the salvation of the heathen and the advancement of the Church. (*Lisco.*) *Church offices; their value dependent on the Divine choice of the officers:*—The meanest office imposed on one according to the Divine call is worthy to be received: the greatest dignity is not worth running after. (*Rieger.*) *The first missionary ordination at Antioch:*—I. WHY DID THE FIRST MISSIONARIES PROCEED FROM ANTIOCH? 1. On account of the flourishing condition of that Church. 2. According to the peculiar will of Divine wisdom. II. THE APPOINTMENT OF THE FIRST MISSIONARIES. 1. What men were appointed? (1) Barnabas, the Son of Consolation. (2) Paul the scholar. 2. Their ordination. (1) Called by the Holy Ghost. (2) Separated by the Church. (*Lisco.*) *The first foreign mission:*—I. SEPARATED BY THE HOLY GHOST. Missions are of Divine origin. Saul had been chosen for the work, but the Holy Spirit had finally to give the word of command and direction. With regard to these pioneers in mission work, note—1. The Church from which they were called. It was a strong Church. It had a large membership, and men inspired to declare the will and instruct in the Word of God. Important as Saul and Barnabas were, there were those who could carry on their work after they were gone. The Holy Spirit does not ask any Church to cripple itself even for the sake of missions. 2. The circumstances of their calling. The Church was just in the condition to hear the Divine call. They were offering their services to the Lord, and God designated what their service should be. The Church or the man that offers all to God will be made use of somehow and somewhere. 3. How they were called. "The Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul." Observe here—(1) The personality of the Holy Spirit. "Separate Me. . . . I have called." (2) The rulership of the Holy Spirit. Jesus had said that when the Comforter should come, He would be the one to guide the disciples. This declaration now was being fulfilled. To Him believers should look for direction. (3) The co-operation of the Holy Spirit. He did not say, "I have separated Barnabas and Saul," but "Separate Me Barnabas and Saul," that they might have back of them not only the authority of the Spirit, but the authority of the Church. Doubtless this was done that the missionaries might feel that they were sent forth by their brethren as well as by the Holy Ghost. 4. Who were called. "Barnabas and Saul,"

the two chief factors in the edifying of the Church at Antioch. The Holy Spirit chose the two best men, the men that least could be spared. It is a grave mistake to send out to foreign fields third or tenth-rate men. Few Churches ever have made the sacrifice for the mission cause that was made by the Church at Antioch. 5. For what they were called. "For the work whereunto I have called them." The "uttermost part of the earth" was in the thought of Christ and of the Holy Spirit alike. Their oneness is suggested in the wording of the call. 6. How their call was responded to. Cheerfully and promptly. II. SENT FORTH BY THE HOLY GHOST. 1. The missionaries departing. "So they . . . went down," &c. They were not only called by the Holy Spirit, but directed by Him as to their journey. That guidance continued, the Holy Spirit not suffering Paul to go into Bithynia, or to preach the gospel in Asia. Those who are called of the Spirit may trust to the Spirit for direction. 2. The missionaries at work. "They proclaimed the Word of God in the synagogues of the Jews." They entered upon their work with wisdom —making use of the regular channels for religious effect. Where pulpits were all ready for them they did not try to find new ones. They tried to reach God's chosen people first as a means of reaching others. III. REBUKING BY THE HOLY GHOST. 1. The two missionaries were to score one more triumph for Christianity as against paganism, like that which was achieved by Philip in Samaria. 2. The sorcerer overcome. (1) His opposition evidently had a mercenary inspiration. He was afraid of losing a powerful and generous patron. (2) His rebuke—(*a*) Was inspired by the Holy Spirit. More inspired denunciation is needed, but there is already too much of that which is uninspired. (*b*) Justly characterised the man. Elymas was "full of all guile and all villainy." He made his living by fraud and trickery. He was "a child of the devil"—doing the devil's work by seeking to turn men to destruction. He was an "enemy of all righteousness"—hating the true as much as he loved the false. He was perverting the right ways of the Lord, and trying to make them seem like wrong ways. For such men to-day there ought to be the same righteous wrath and severe rebuke. (3) His sentence. In this, inspired by the Holy Spirit, there was for the sorcerer—(*a*) Terror. He was to feel the hand of the Lord upon him in judgment—to experience the power of God whom he had defied. (*b*) Hope. It was to be for "a season" only. He was to have opportunity for repentance—to be blinded for a while that he might come out, if he would, into the marvellous light of the children of God. (4) His punishment. He was blinded physically as he had blinded others spiritually. The impostor was unmasked, and deprived of his power to harm. The false had met with the true, and had been vanquished. 3. The proconsul convinced. The prompt, punitive miracle "taught" the proconsul—(1) That his old teacher really was a "child of the devil," instead of being a true prophet. Hence it showed him his danger. (2) That Barnabas and Saul (henceforth Paul) were teachers accredited of God, and therefore to be heeded. (3) That God was not to be trifled with, but to be feared and followed. And the proconsul, being ready to accept the truth, believed. The hand of the Lord was outstretched to save him as it had been outstretched to smite Elymas. The opposer of truth always will feel its weight—the seeker after truth always will receive its help. (*M. C. Hazard.*) *The first foreign mission*:—"Westward the star of empire takes its way": and the same may be said about the star of truth. A new departure is now to be noticed in the policy of the Church. Propagation had thus far grown out of persecution; here is the first deliberate organisation—and that on behalf of foreign missions. Notice—I. THIS BEAUTIFUL PICTURE OF THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH. 1. Strong people make a congregation strong. This body of disciples numbered among them a group of fine intelligent Christians. Besides the unnamed "prophets and teachers," we recognise Barnabas and Saul, both brilliant, eloquent, scholarly men. It is not prince merchants, nor members of congress, nor fashionable women, that usually build up the piety of our families, unless they are devoted workers, and are constant in prayer. 2. Even inconspicuous Christians can be exceedingly useful. Nobody knows who Simeon was; Lucius received a message from Paul (Rom. xvi. 21), but that is all that is heard of him. Manaen is not mentioned elsewhere. These are only a few among the plain Church members in Antioch—persons who often accomplish most for Christ to-day. 3. The missionary spirit is the first-fruit of Divine indwelling in the hearts of believers (Psa. lxvi. 16). It is not always the most vigorous Christians who are content to sit down and wipe their weeping eyes the moment they think they can read their title clear to mansions in the skies. 4. Those in high service may expect to be invited higher. These people were ministering to the Lord faithfully where they

were, when the Holy Spirit gave them the chance of starting the first foreign mission in history. It is a pity that good men forget the chief glory of being Christians, which is to spread the truth swiftly and widely and vigorously. II. THIS SUDDEN APPOINTMENT OF MISSIONARIES. We shall find much instruction concerning evangelistic methods. 1. The Church should choose its best men for foreign missionaries. The great systems of infidelity are to be besieged by the finest generals the Church can select. 2. The Holy Spirit will tell such praying people whom to commission. Three times does this mention of the Holy Ghost occur. The high authority of the ministry comes straight from Christ; all the Church can do is to follow where He leads. 3. The missionaries should be well supported in each enterprise. Our Lord told His disciples to go forth two by two (Mark vi. 7). There is great comfort in companionship (Prov. xxvii. 17). The most pathetic spectacle in this world is that of one foreign missionary in some distant heathen city. Paul never grew plaintive until he was alone. Elijah never lost his courage until he was alone. 4. Those sent out in prayer will be likeliest to return in triumph (chap. xiv. 26, 27). III. THE ACCOUNT OF THE VOYAGE AND THE GENERAL RESULTS OF THE MISSION. Let us notice—1. Some of the successes. (1) They had a safe voyage. The Mediterranean is exceedingly vicious, as Paul had reason afterwards to know. The Lord will make His providence protect those whom His grace sets apart for risky endeavour. (2) They found free chance to preach the gospel. It is quite a grand success always to have an open door. The chief man in the city gave them a hearing. There is hope in every case when people give the chance for conversation. 2. Some set-backs. It was to be expected that Satan would show himself somewhere. Things were getting serious for him: so he stirred up opposition from two sources. (1) Earliest there came trouble from one of the devil's children (ver. 10). But God turned the wrath of man into praise (Psa. lxxvi. 10). (2) Then there came trouble from one of God's children. Mark left the company; Paul's heart was grieved (chap. xv. 36-40). It is sad to get weary in well-doing (Luke ix. 62). Young Christians must be steadfast. Mark did better afterwards (Col. iv. 10, 11). (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The first missionary journey*:—1. "In the Church,"—how much is implied in these three words! Why this separateness of indication? Why not refer to the human family as a whole; the greater which includes the less? There must be some meaning in this society within society. Who ever speaks of society as a grand sum total of human life? The integer is broken up into innumerable fractions, but there is one fraction which says that it will and must become itself the whole number—that fraction is the Church. How many men does it take to make a Church? Two! Where do they meet? Where they please! What pomp and circumstance are requisite to constitute them into a Church? How much money? How much learning? None! Then they must be very weak? No: the side on which Omnipotence fights cannot be weak. Then they may be very poor? No! The side that banks in heaven can never be short of treasure. But they must have some place to meet in? Not necessarily. Under a tree will do, or in the middle of a meadow, or in the dens and caves of the earth. And the moment two men come together to constitute a Church, nothing further is requisite but the presence of Christ. The Church is composed of redeemed and regenerated men. They are one in Christ: diverse in everything that enters into the composition of humanity, yet one in Him who breaks down all middle walls of partition. Why do they not, then, "cleave unto the Lord"? When we pray we are one; when we speak to each other we are divided. Then why do we not pray, and let opinion alone? We have torn the seamless robe of Christ into innumerable rags! Christianity has now become a tissue of opinions; once it was a world-shaking faith. Pray on! Worship is the union of the Church! 2. "Certain prophets and teachers,"—different gifts, but the same subject. The prophet had a higher gift than the teacher; the teacher read a book that was written with pen and ink; but the prophet read a book that was going to be written. We have excluded the prophet from the Church; we call him "heterodox," unsafe, not always to be relied upon; men speak of him with many parenthetic qualifications; they write about him with so many footnotes that the substantial text is reduced to a minimum. Yet it is the prophet that must lead us. 3. "The Holy Ghost said." The Holy Spirit dwells in the Church; there He can whisper and touch gently the minds which He seeks to affect. Had we listened more, had we invited fuller confidences from heaven, we should have known that "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." The Holy Spirit must be our genius, our ability, our inspiration, our wealth. It is the function of the Holy Spirit to elect His own ministers: do not

let us meddle with God in this matter. A minister is not a manufacture—he is an inspiration! "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest," &c. There our interest may well cease. Young men are not to be driven into the ministry; they are called to particular work and to particular places. The Lord hath a candlestick for every candle; He allots the place as well as calls the man. 4. A singular combination of the human and the Divine you will find in vers. 3, 4. When the Church "had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on Barnabas and Saul they sent them away." That is the human side. "So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost," presents the Divine aspect. This was a joint work of the Spirit and of the Church. This is the solution of the whole controversy about the Divineness of our salvation and our share in it. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you." So then we are fellow-workers with God. 5. The two men sent forth by the Holy Ghost and the Church had their way made clear for them. God will take care of His own ministers. No minister of Christ in all this world but has friends. You may meet an Elymas, but you will also meet a Sergius Paulus. But the true ministry develops the evil spirit of the times. We sometimes hear timid people saying that this or that movement may be good, but certainly there has been a great deal of rioting on account of it. Wherever Barnabas and Saul are, Elymas will put in his claim, and there will be controversy in any town whose possession by the sorcerer is disputed by those who claim it in the name of Christ. We are disabled by timidity. Did Barnabas and Saul write home that opposition having arisen, they would return by the next boat? They were not given to returning except with victory, or to equip themselves for further Christian assault! 6. It is beautiful to mark how Saul takes his right position by a most natural process. Nothing can keep down a man whom God has appointed to the throne. There will be no controversy, for Barnabas was a good man, and he instantly knew where the power was, and he stood aside with the graceful courtesy which is taught and acquired only in the school of heaven. 7. "Then Saul" wrought his first miracle. He fixed his eyes on the Sorcerer, and said: "O full of all subtilty," &c. Truly his speech was then not "contemptible!" Stung by fire, he turned into a mighty and thrilling speaker. That fire we have lost. We talk to Elymas in syllables of ice; we look at him with vacant eyes, he returns our unmeaning stare. We shall presently hear Paul's first speech. Truly he begins in this chapter! He has been at home waiting, wondering, reading, thinking, and praying; and now his turn has come, and in this chapter we see his first miracle, and hear his first thunder, and know that the king of men has arisen in the Church! (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The first missionary journey*:—1. At Antioch there was a very large Christian society. But, however large, it is always spoken of as "the Church," and not "the Churches," as was the case in Judæa and Galatia. We do not wonder, therefore, at finding that there were several instructors, as was probably always the case. Variety of gifts, division of labour, adaptability for special service, a governing body, with other advantages, were naturally secured by this arrangement. In the present case it is very likely that each of the persons named was a man of some consideration and culture. God is a God of order; and however, in introducing into the world something new, men who are rude and unlettered may be employed, yet when things get into a condition that is to be permanent, then laws come into operation which belong to the ordinary requirements of common life. When you have not inspiration, you must have men who have original power and acquired knowledge, and cultivated faculty, which become "spiritual gifts," fitted for "the work of the ministry and the edification of the body of Christ," when they are sanctified by God. 2. There was something special about the exercises in which we find these men engaged. They were fasting and praying perhaps under the influence of the state of things in the persecuted Church in Judæa, and because there was a growing feeling amongst them that they should be making aggressions upon the world. As they fasted and prayed the Holy Ghost said, "Separate Me *now*, Barnabas and Saul," &c. They had been called long before, and had been endowed with gifts and authority, but now they were to be solemnly set apart to go to their special "work." They went forth, seeing perhaps the first step or two before them, but not knowing whither they were to be led. 3. In being called specially to set forth on a work of this kind, I do not know whether they were directed, or whether they were left to decide for themselves. If the latter, several circumstances and motives might have influenced them. Saul had been to his native place; what was more natural than that they should now go to Barnabas's? And then the Church at Antioch owed its very existence to men of Cyprus. A sense of obligation

to Cyprus, as well as the natural feeling of Barnabas, might determine them to go there first. 4. The first place they came to was Salamis, where they preached in the synagogues; it is not said with what success, unless there be an underlying implication of success, when it is said that "they had also John to their minister"; in which capacity, as Peter did not baptize Cornelius, and Paul tells us that "Christ sent him not to baptize, but to preach the gospel," he probably assisted Barnabas and Saul by taking that work. 5. From Salamis they passed on through the island, to Paphos, but most likely preaching as they went. We have here, in vivid type, an image of that grand contest between truth and error which was then beginning—the age, with its inquiry and philosophy, looking on. First of all we have "a certain sorcerer," the representative of corrupted Judaism and perverted intelligence. He has got a wonderful amount of knowledge from the study of the Divine Word and the science of the day, but he seeks to turn it to selfish purposes, and by false pretensions impudently pretends to be possessed of supernatural powers. This sort of thing was very common in that age, just as it is now, when some of the most gifted are to be found putting faith in communications from the dead—communications which never are anything that seems worth coming from "Hades" to tell! But, on the other hand, you have in Paul Judaism refined, elevated, purified—its prophecies fulfilled, its dark sayings illuminated, and the old faith developed into that high and perfect form of truth which is in future to rule the world. Then, in Sergius Paulus you have the age looking on. Sergius Paulus was "prudent," most probably an earnest philosophical inquirer, who had seen the absurdity of idolatry, and the insufficiency of scepticism, and in search of truth was ready to welcome it however it came. He thinks he may learn something from Bar-Jesus, and therefore he listens. He hears of the other strangers, and he "calls for" them. When the two are brought together they are found to be opponents. Truth in the one instantly detects the lie in the other. Then there comes forth, at last, a manifestation of Divine power. Immediately there fell upon Elymas "a mist and a darkness," &c. An outward and visible type of his spiritual state, and of the vanity of his pretensions! Instead of being able to be a guide it was his place to ask for those who might lead the blind. The intelligence of the age, in the person of the deputy, was subdued by "the power of God and the wisdom of God"—and thus he became an unconscious prophecy of what was afterwards seen in the Roman empire, and what will one day be seen in every part of the "round world." 6. But now there comes a change in the language of the narrative. "Barnabas and Saul," which we have always had before, now gives place to "Paul and Barnabas." It is very singular that this change should take place just where this illustrious convert is introduced. It can hardly be thought, however, that Saul took the name of Paul out of compliment to the deputy. It is most probable that he had always had the name, and it came to be used in consequence of his becoming recognised as the Apostle of the Gentiles. 7. Passing from Cyprus, they went over to the continent, and got to Perga, and there Mark left them. We must not be too hard upon this young man. His conduct, no doubt, was very disappointing and mortifying to his uncle, and it greatly displeased Paul. He was inexperienced, and perhaps naturally timid. When he got to Asia, and saw the savage aspect of the country, heard of rivers and robbers, his young heart probably failed. Perhaps he thought that he was not called like Paul and Barnabas, and it is also very likely that his natural feelings towards Peter, his spiritual father, who was more to him than either Paul or Barnabas, had something to do with it. So the two men had, henceforth, to journey alone. 8. They travelled on; and probably the journey was such as to lead to the reference which we have in one of the apostle's letters to "perils of waters, and perils of robbers, perils in the city, and perils by the heathen," &c. At last they got to Antioch in Pisidia. There were a good many Jews in this city. On the Sabbath-day they "went into the synagogue," where they were recognised in the synagogue as brethren, though strangers. Their personal appearance indicated, possibly, that they were not ordinary men; or they had been long enough in the town to give rise to some curiosity. After that part of the service was concluded, in which the "minister" brought out the scroll, and read portions of the law and the prophets, the rulers sent to Paul and Barnabas, saying, "If ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on"—expressing both national and religious unity, which made the Jewish people one throughout all the world. Paul began by addressing himself both to the Jews and proselytes, and then "reasoned out of the Scriptures." Referring to the history of the people, he sketched it from God's first choice of them, through their fortunes in Egypt and the wilderness, down

to the time of David. He then came out with the statement, "Of this man's seed hath God raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus." He then referred to the ministry of John; the fulfilment of prophecy in the rejection and death of Jesus; and the fact that God had raised Him from the dead. After further "reasoning out of the Scriptures," he came to the grand Christian proclamation:—"Be it known unto you" (ver. 38). This was not the end of his speech, but it was the end of his argument; and the Jews who had listened up to this time rose up, were offended, and made for the door. Seeing them pressing out, Paul added the warning—"Beware" (ye who are moving away) "lest that come upon you" (vers. 40, 41). They went their way, but the Gentiles were left, and after Paul had spoken to them, the congregation dispersed. Some of the Gentiles, glad to learn what they had heard, with some of the Jews, accompanied Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them as they went along, and persuaded them to "continue in the grace of God." What a week it would be that followed! And the next Sabbath "almost the whole city came together." There were many of them who never would have gone under ordinary circumstances, and the Jews were offended. "Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold" (ver. 46). When they turned to the Gentiles, every man and woman amongst them who had anything like religious earnestness in them in seeking after eternal life, "glorified the word of the Lord, and believed." (*T. Binney.*) *Barnabas and Paul sent forth:*—The original destination of Saul of Tarsus, when he was called to the apostleship, was to the heathen—or, as we should now say, to a missionary life (chap. ix. 15, xxii. 17-21; Gal. ii. 8; Rom. xi. 13; Gal. i. 16; Eph. iii. 8). The appointment of Saul and Barnabas to this work was an important event in each of their lives, determining their own future course. It was important as the manifestation of a more just view of Christianity itself; it was the first development of the idea which has since gone so essentially and so far into the civilisation of the world: viz., that Christian nations should send to the heathen a knowledge of that to which they owe their own elevation. The following points here occur as proper to be illustrated. I. THE BARRIERS WHICH HINDER THE SPREAD OF A NEW RELIGION. 1. Differences of nationality. Where nations belong to different races—where their independence has been established as the result of wars, where they speak diverse languages, where they have different religions, where they have peculiar manners and customs, where they are rivals in trade, where one is warlike and another peaceful—all these, and kindred things, constitute barriers not easy to overcome. Thus to the ancient Jews the whole world was divided, "Jews and Gentiles," producing in their minds the feeling that they were the peculiar favourites of heaven, and that all others were outcasts. Thus the Greeks divided the world into "Greeks and Barbarians." In modern times, a similar instance occurs among the Chinese, who regard themselves as the children of heaven, the "Celestials,"—and all others as "outside Barbarians." In a world thus divided, any new religion that claims to be universal must find serious obstructions. 2. Distinctions in social life—of rank and caste. These exist within a nation, dividing the rich and the poor—the learned and the ignorant—the bond and the free; or they are based on a derivation from royal blood, an aristocracy or a priesthood. 3. Diversities of colour and complexion. The class favoured with what they deem a fairer complexion, have not only sought to enslave those of a different colour, but they have been slow to believe that, even in the eye of God, a dark skin is not an emblem of a darker debasement than is found under a white one, and seem to imagine that even the blood of the atonement fails to efface the distinction, and to place them in any manner on a level. This is the most formidable barrier of all. 4. Separate religious beliefs. The idea still prevails that the religion of each nation is, by the purpose of the Creator, their own—designed like their laws, customs, climate, mountains, &c., to separate them from other people—a religion good for them; adapted to them; intended for them; and not to be changed for another. II. THE DIFFICULTY OF OVERCOMING THESE BARRIERS. This difficulty exists—1. In those who regard themselves as of the more favoured class. How difficult for them to offer to others the same privileges as themselves, or to admit that others are on the same level! To counteract this narrow feeling in the apostles required all the skill of the Saviour Himself; and after three years' teaching it required a special revelation to convince Peter that he should go and carry the gospel to a Gentile. 2. In men's unwillingness to receive a communication in favour of a new religion from one of inferior rank or condition. Who knows not what a mighty obstacle this was when the gospel was preached at Athens, at Ephesus, at Antioch, at Rome? How hard it is for a master to receive the lessons

of religion from those whom he regards as slaves—a prince from one of his own subjects—a rich man from a beggar—a philosopher from one occupied in the humbler arts. With what contempt would a Brahmin turn away from one of humbler "caste" who should undertake to teach him the nature of true religion. The relative condition of nations has changed in our times, and the missionary goes out under better auspices. He goes now from a land of civilisation, and science, and art, to those lands where such things are unknown; yet still this difficulty exists. Take, for illustration, the Chinese. An obstacle exists in their case as stern as in the case of Athens or Rome. III. THE TEACHINGS BY WHICH CHRISTIANITY TRIUMPHS OVER THESE OBSTACLES. It declares—1. That mankind are one race; the children of a common parent; on a level before God. No truth more vital, more far-reaching, more powerful in its bearing on human rights and human liberty, more potent in elevating man, has ever been proclaimed to the world. Revelation describes the creation of man as the creation of a single pair, and declares that "God hath made of one blood all nations of men." The doctrine of depravity which it urges pertains to men everywhere, as derived from the fall of that one pair; and it makes no exception when it says that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." The Redeemer gloried in the title "Son of Man," for He came not to take on Him the nature of the Caucasian, the Ethiopian, or the American, as such—but the nature of man. 2. That the work of Christ had respect to all men; and whatever there was in the atonement, as such, was designed for one as much as for another. There is no higher argument that can be addressed to men to prove their equality, than to say to them that they all have been redeemed by the same blood. 3. That the hopes inspired by the gospel are the same for every human being. When it makes known a heaven for one, it unfolds it for all. And it is a great thing to go forth to a world where men are separated from each other, and to say to them that, in the hope of immortality, they are all placed on the same level before their Maker. 4. That the way of salvation is the same for all. No one has any priority of claim by his rank, or enjoys any peculiar facilities for salvation by his titles or his wealth; and no one is excluded, or placed in less favourable circumstances, by his poverty, his ignorance, his servile condition. The prince and the sage are not more welcome to heaven than the poor and ignorant. 5. That all men are invested with the same natural rights to the light of the sun, to the tides, and the winds, and the stars; the same right to limb, and liberty, and life;—the same right to the air, and to the productions of the teeming earth, and to a spot wherein to sleep the long sleep when they are dead. Conclusion: 1. The gospel cannot be preached without sooner or later breaking down every false distinction. 2. Christians, admire and adore the goodness of that Universal Father who has sent the messages of grace to you, so that you are "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Our ancestors were heathens. The gospel raised them from their low condition. Be it ours to spread the religion to which we owe so much. Other nations have a right to it; and it would elevate them as it has done our fathers and ourselves. (*A. Barnes, D.D.*) *A place found at last for Saul*:—No place had been found big enough for Saul; Damascus, Jerusalem, Antioch—none of these could hold him. He had to go. There was that irresistible and expansive force about him. To shut him up in those rotten old cities, full of prejudice and artificiality, was like shutting up dynamite in an eggshell. Saul burst his fetters: he was beginning to feel his freedom. The world hunger took possession of him—the wide sea was before him—the future beckoned to him—the time was come and he had to go, and he went eagerly, elated, triumphant. The Church at Antioch probably heaved a great sigh of relief as he departed—they probably saw rocks ahead. (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) *The strength of missionary work*:—It consists in—I. THE CALL OF GOD, which it follows. II. THE FIDELITY OF THE LABOURERS, whom it sends. III. THE PRAYER OF THE CHURCH, on which it relies. (*K. Gerok.*) *The best travelling attendance for a departing missionary*:—1. The Divine call concerning him. 2. The impulse of the Spirit within him. 3. The prayers of the Church behind him. 4. The sighing of the heathen world before him. (*Ibid.*) *Missions, home and foreign*:—A gentleman once said to Dr. Skinner, who was asking aid for foreign missions, "I don't believe in foreign missions. I won't give anything except to home missions. I want what I give to benefit my neighbours." "Well," the Doctor made reply, "whom do you regard as your neighbours?" "Why, those around me." "Do you mean those whose land joins yours?" "Yes." "Well," said Dr. Skinner, "how much land do you own?" "About five hundred

acres," was the reply. "How far down do you own it?" inquired Dr. Skinner. "Why, I never thought of it before, but I suppose I am half-way through." "Exactly," said the Doctor; "I suppose you do, and I want this money for the Chinese—the men whose land joins yours at the bottom." *Obligation of Christians to send out missionaries*:—A Karen convert in Burmah who was taken to America, and was asked to address a meeting upon their obligation to send out missionaries. After a moment of thought he asked with a good deal of meaning, "Has not Christ told you do it?" "Oh, yes," was the reply, "but we wish you to remind them of their duty." "Oh, no," said the Karen; "if they will not mind Jesus Christ, they will not mind me!" *The duty of sending the gospel to the heathen*:—The possession of the gospel involves the duty of giving it to those who have it not. If the Jewish Christians of the apostolic days had not performed their duty in that respect, we should not have it now. Yet probably they regarded the Gentiles as quite as hopeless as we are apt to regard the savages of Patagonia. When in 1788 William Carey ventured to advocate an effort being made to send the gospel to the heathen, Rev. John Ryland, a venerable minister, reproved him. "When God pleases to convert the heathen," said the clergyman, "He will do it without your help or mine." But the son of that minister was one of the first to join in the great rejoicing when forty years later William Carey could tell of thousands of heathen who had received the Holy Spirit. The duty might involve difficulty, but he who loved his fellow-man, and knew how much good the gospel would do to any who accepted it, would be anxious to preach it at any cost to himself. *Blessing sent to others*:—Loch Katrine, embowered among the highlands of Scotland, a poem in water, immortalised in story and song, till it seems almost transfigured with a glory beyond its natural beauty and charm, is yet the source of the water supply of the city of Glasgow, flowing down among the homes of the poor, cleansing the filth from the streets, bringing refreshment, cheer, comfort, cleanliness, and health everywhere. So to every one who has the living water—and all the more if it is possessed amid wealth, culture, education, talent—is given the privilege of sending the living water in copious streams to the heathen, to the poor, to the sinful, to all who are in need. *Work of missions*:—I remember, when in Wales, seeing the men working in the quarries there. A man is suspended by a rope half-way down the stone quarry, and I have seen him there for a length of time boring a hole in the rock; and after spending much care and toil and time in boring the hole to a sufficient depth, I have seen him fill it with some black dust, and if I did not know what power lodged in that black dust I should say, "What a fool that man was to spend so much time in boring a hole in the rock, and then fill it up again!" But I know that that black dust is powder. There is a wonderful explosive power in it. And then when he has filled the hole with powder he has applied his fuse and lighted his match, and while the fuse was burning in the direction of the powder he has taken the opportunity of fleeing to a distance by climbing up the rope to the mountain-top. Well, that is just what many of our missionaries are doing abroad. At present they are preparing the way. They are cutting a hole into the very rock of heathendom, and they are filling it up with the powder of Divine truth. What we want is fire from heaven to touch it. And God is doing it. He is preparing the people. By and by we shall have a mighty upheaving in this rock of heathenism and ignorance and superstition, and from it polished stones to adorn the temple of our Lord. (*R. Roberts.*)

Vers. 3–12. **And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.**—*Undying fame*:—History has contemptuously obliterated from her annals the names of countless kings, who have set forth from their capitals for the scourge or conquest of nations at the head of armies, and with all the pomp and circumstance of glorious war; but centuries after these conquerors are in their turn forgotten, whom she still deigns to commemorate, she will preserve in the grateful memory of mankind the names of these two poor Jews, who started on foot, staff in hand, with little, perhaps, or nothing in their scrip but the few dates that suffice to satisfy the hunger of the Eastern traveller. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) **So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia.**—*Seleucia*:—The port of Antioch, distant by land fifteen miles; by water, through the windings of the Orontes, forty-one miles. Built by the first Seleucus, it had by this time attained the privileges of a free city. Polybius described a very extensive excavation, which was the only communication between the city and the sea; and vestiges of its slopes and tunnels are still conspicuous. Two piers, the remains of its once mag-

nificent harbour, retain the names of Paul and Barnabas. (*Bp. Jacobson.*) **And from thence they sailed to Cyprus.**—*The first missionary ship*:—1. ITS BOLD CREW. 1. The great Paul. 2. The noble Barnabas. 3. The youthful Mark. II. ITS FRESH WIND. 1. The east wind filled the sails. 2. The Holy Ghost inspired the teachers. III. ITS FAVOURABLE ANCHORAGE. The renowned Cyprus, with its natural beauties and sinful abominations. IV. ITS GREAT PRIZES. 1. The sorcerer vanquished. 2. The governor converted. (*K. Gerok.*) *Cyprus*:—The population of the island was largely Greek, and the name of the chief town at the east end recalled the history or the legend of a colony under Teucer, the son of Telamon, from the Salamis of the Saronic gulf. It owned Aphrodite, or Venus, as its tutelary goddess, Paphos being the chief centre of her worship, which there, as elsewhere, was conspicuous for the licentiousness of the harlot-priestesses of her temple. The copper-mines (the metal *Cuprum* took its name from the island), farmed by Augustus to Herod the Great, had attracted a considerable Jewish population, among whom the gospel had been preached by the evangelists of chap. xi. 19. An interesting inscription—the date of which is, however, uncertain, and may be of the second or third century after Christ—given in M. de Cesnola's "Cyprus" (p. 422), as found at Golgoi in that island, shows a yearning after something higher than the polytheism of Greece: "Thou, the one God, the greatest, the most glorious name, help us all, we beseech Thee." At the foot of the inscription there is the name "Helios," the sun, and we may probably see in it a trace of that adoption of the worship of Mithras, or the sun, as the visible symbol of Deity, which, first becoming known to the Romans in the time of Pompeius, led to the general reception of the *Dies Solis* (=Sunday) as the first day of the Roman week, and which, even in the case of Constantine, mingled with the earlier stages of his progress towards the faith of Christ. The narrative that follows implies that the prudence or discernment which distinguished the proconsul may well have shown itself in such a recognition of the unity of the Godhead; and it is worthy of note that M. de Cesnola ("Cyprus," p. 425) discovered at Soli, in the same island, another inscription, bearing the name of Paulus the Proconsul, who may, perhaps, be identified with the Sergius Paulus of this narrative. (*Dean Plumptre.*) *Cyprus and its people*:—Cyprus was by no means a reputable island: it was devoted to the goddess Venus, and you can imagine what her worship was, and what would be the fruitful licentiousness which sprang of it. It was the native country of Barnabas, and, as he was at first the leader of the missionary party sent out by the Church of Antioch, it was fit that Barnabas and Saul should begin preaching there. Landing at one end of the island the two apostolic men traversed it till they came to Paphos, where the Roman governor resided. Now, this Paphos was the central city of the worship of Venus, and was the scene of frequent profligate processions and abominable rites. We might call it "the place where Satan's seat is." Athanasius styled its religion "the deification of lust." Neither men nor women could resort to the shrine of Venus without being defiled in mind and depraved in character. Yet it was no business of the apostles to stop away either from Cyprus or Paphos because they were the resorts of the gay and vicious; but the rather there was a special need for them to go thither with the purifying waters of the gospel. The more wicked the locality the more need for Christian effort in that very spot. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Saul in Cyprus*:—1. Evangelistic work hitherto had been sporadic, the mere result of circumstances, or the prompting of spiritual instinct. The Church had made no direct effort to carry the truth abroad. But now Antioch has the honour of sending out the first heralds of the Cross. The vessel which carried them bore in the highest sense the fortune of the world. The two strangers were inaugurating a new era, and commencing a work which should be repeated, until every people shall have its sanctuary and its Scriptures, and the world bow to the happy reign of the Lord Jesus. 2. The evangelists landed at the nearest port, that of Salamis, which had a number of synagogues, while other towns usually had but one. It is to be borne in mind that numerous proselytes must have been in those synagogues, for paganism had greatly lost its hold, and the unsatisfied spirit of many sought refuge in Judaism. Such minds were the more easily impressed by the gospel, for they would find in it a doctrine that spoke to their inmost longings. A preference was given to the Jews. How could it have been otherwise? It was impossible even in the apostle of the Gentiles to throw off the attachments of blood and kindred. 3. Barnabas and Saul went through the whole isle as far as Paphos, a place infamous for its temple and dissolute worship. Here the gospel came again into contact with the magic of the East. Already it had confronted Simon at

Samaria. Bar-Jesus—son of Jesus or Joshua, "was with the governor"—had attached himself to his court, and probably exercised no little sway over him as a confidential advisor. The proconsul had apparently thrown off the religion of his country, but had adopted none other. His soul was groping in darkness, scarce knowing what it yearned after. To a mind in such a state any doctrine claiming Divine authority is welcome, and the theology of this Jewish magician must have to some extent commended itself. It brought with it the unity and spirituality of the Divine Being—a refreshing doctrine to a mind wearied out with the very names of numberless divinities. But he was not satisfied, and the same desire that brought him under the power of Elymas led him to send for the preachers of a new religion. He could not be supposed to know much of the gospel, yet he seems to style it "the Word of God," for it was in its character of a Divine revelation that he wished to hear it. It was not speculation or philosophy that his soul thirsted after. 4. The addresses of the evangelists produced a deep impression on the mind of the proconsul. The sorcerer could not suffer those impressions to be deepened. His selfish schemes would all vanish if his patron should yield to the teaching of the two strangers. So he sought "to turn away the deputy from the faith." How, is not known; probably by sophistry and malignant insinuation. But so pertinacious was he and dexterous, that an example must be made of him; and Saul's first miracle must be one of judgment on a spiteful and irreclaimable adversary. The contest was, whether Elymas the sorcerer or the truth of Christ was to have the ascendency. 5. Saul, henceforth to be named Paul, has been during this mission rising to a full conception of his apostolical dignity and prerogative. "The Spirit of God came upon him" to do a mightier act than Samson ever did by the same influence. Intensely conscious of his position and what it involved at that awful moment, and looking on the wizard with an eye that read his soul, the anathema burst from his lips. "Filled with the Holy Ghost"—armed with a supernatural power to chastise the incorrigible—Paul said: "O full of all subtilty"—a master of low cunning and ingenious retort. "And all mischief"—facility of evil-working. "Thou child of the devil"—not a child of Jesus, as thy name is—proving thy lineage by showing thy father's spirit and doing thy father's work. "Thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" Not only the gospel, but also the old dispensation, which he contrived either to give a crooked turn, that it might lead in an opposite direction, or made it such a labyrinth that none could find their way in it save such as paid him for the clue. 6. The apostle adds the terrible words (ver. 11). This challenge was Paul's first conscious putting forth of supernatural power. Strange that his earliest miracle should be one of doom—the infliction of such a blindness as in the moment of his conversion had come upon himself. That blindness was a symbol of Elymas' spirit and work. His moral sense was blunted, and in attempting to sway Sergius Paulus, it was the blind leading the blind, while he needed to be led himself. His sin might be read in his judgment. His boast was of insight, but he was taught that he saw nothing. Infliction coming direct from God's hand, often takes its shape from the crime. Ham mocked his father, and his doom was one of servitude, under which a father's claims are ignored. Abimelech wished to add Sarah to his harem, and sterility was the penalty of his household. Israel, God's first-born, are kept in bondage, and Pharaoh's first-born fall before the destroying angel. Jeroboam put forth his hand against "the man of God which had cried against the altar in Bethel," "and his hand dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him." When Herod accepted homage as a god, his godship "was eaten up of worms, and gave up the ghost." 7. Paul had risen to the dignity and authority of his apostolate. He had a "power to edification," though it now assumed a terrific aspect; and the deputy, awed and overcome, believed, "being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord." He was awe-struck, and unable to refuse his assent. He could not allow the sorcerer to trifle with him any longer, nor durst he longer "halt between two opinions." Thus judgment and mercy have been often associated. "Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God!" (*J. Eadie, D.D.*) *The first missionary intelligence*:—An emblem of all succeeding, representing missionary work—I. IN ITS MANIFOLD COURSES. 1. Externally, Seleucia and Cyprus, by sea and land. 2. Internally, to Jews and Gentiles. II. IN ITS SEVERE CONTESTS. 1. With heathen vices—the worship of Venus at Paphos. 2. With heathen superstition—the Sorcerer Elymas. III. IN ITS BLESSED VICTORIES. 1. The powers of darkness are overthrown. 2. Souls are gained. (*K. Gerok.*) *Paul's fitness for his mission*:—He was a Jew, well up in the literature and prejudices of his countrymen. That surely

would be a great help to him as he passed from Jewry to Jewry. He was fairly well read in Greek, and tolerably fluent; speaking it, however, as a ready Englishman is apt to speak French, with a bad accent and a faulty construction, but rapidly, impetuously, and to good purpose. Greek was the passport language in those days as French is now. Then Saul was a Roman citizen—by that he saved his life more than once. And lastly Saul had a large heart, a great fund of humanity. This made him fit to treat on equal terms with princes like Agrippa, without being above slaves like Onesimus. Saul had, too, the restless enterprise of all Nature's great missionaries, explorers, and conquerors. In the early days he was extraordinarily rash and reckless, and always utterly fearless, regardless of personal comfort and suffering—a perplexing and somewhat difficult person to work with, no doubt. In controversy unyielding, but subtle and full of tact in trying situations, and with an abnegation of self at all times perfect. In person, according to tradition, Saul was short in stature, with perhaps a stoop, rather bald, with black hair early streaked with grey, and a full beard; a defective eyesight, and perhaps a slight impediment in his speech. "His bodily presence," men said, "was mean, and his speech contemptible." But his soul made itself felt. People soon forgot what he looked like when he began to speak. There was a charm about him that few could resist. Such was Saul of Tarsus. Not man's conception of a popular preacher, but, taking him all in all, almost an ideal apostle to the Gentiles. (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) **And when they were at Salamis.**—*Salamis:*—The Greek capital of the island on its eastern side, the nearest port to Seleucia, at the mouth of the Perdicas, the largest river in Cyprus, a little to the north of the Venetian capital, Famagusta. Under its subsequent name, Constantia, given when it had been rebuilt by Constantine after an earthquake, Salamis had Epiphanius for one of its bishops. Lactantius reports, that human sacrifices were offered there periodically till the time of Hadrian. (*Bp. Jacobson.*) **They preached . . . in the synagogues.**—*To the Jew first:*—There is always a gain in touching others at the point of sympathy, rather than at the point of divergence. A lawyer who would win over a jury, addresses himself first to the one man who is clearly on his side of the case, rather than to the eleven men who are against him, to begin with. The wife who proposes to carry her own way quietly, starts out by agreeing with her husband at some point; and with that beginning she will have him agreeing with her at the main point, before she is through with him. There is sound philosophy in this way of working, and God's plan is always the perfection of philosophy. The Holy Ghost led the first foreign missionaries to begin their work abroad in the synagogues of their Jewish brethren. The Holy Ghost would now lead every Christian worker anywhere to look first for points of sympathy or agreement with those whom he would win over or influence, rather than to start out by recognising, and battling, differences and prejudices, which will thus be made to stand as permanent barriers to an agreement, when they might have been quietly passed, and left behind permanently. (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) "*They preached the Word of God*":—Those Christians have done most service who have in every instance trusted the Word for the power of the truth in it. Dr. James W. Alexander put in one of his letters, near the end of his career, the statement that, if he were to live his public life over again, he would dwell more upon the familiar parts and passages of the Bible, like the story of the ark, the draught of fishes, or the parable of the prodigal son. That is, he would preach more of the Word of God in its pure, clear utterances of truth for souls. When the saintly Dr. Cutler of Brooklyn died, the Sunday-school remembered that he used to come in every now and then during the years of his history, and repeat just a single verse from the superintendent's desk; and the next Lord's-day after the funeral, they marched up in front of it in a long line, and each scholar quoted any of the texts that he could recollect. The grown people positively sat there and wept, as they saw how much there was of the Bible in the hearts of their children, which this one pastor had planted. Yet he was a very timid and old-fashioned man; he said he had no gift at talking to children; he could only repeat God's Word. Is there anybody now who is ready to say that was not enough for some good? (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) **They had also John to their minister.**—*John Mark:*—Saul and Barnabas were highly educated men. Mark was a friend of the fisherman Peter—young, active, a useful courier, no doubt, but not in his habits or tastes the social equal of his companions. From the first Mark does not seem to have been one of them. His heart was still at Jerusalem, his sympathies were Judaic, his natural friend and master was Peter, not Saul. He had his own work, but he soon found he was not called to the Gentiles. No, Mark!

When you get to Perga and see those wild hills of Pisidia in the distance, when you think of those heathen cities beyond, those treacherous lone countries, you wont care to face them. Your mother is at Jerusalem, your teacher also is there; you cannot assimilate brother Saul's strong anti-Judaic doctrines, just yet at least; you don't share his contempt for ceremonies. You are a little nettled at one so new to the work (not one of the twelve) posing as an authority not quite in accord either with Peter or James, and yet habitually, and without question, stepping in front of Barnabas. Saul thinks you lukewarm. You are not exactly that. Nevertheless, you will "not go with him to work"—you will return to Jerusalem. Perhaps you are right. You have your own work; do it in your own way. Had you gone with those two you might never again have sat at Peter's feet, collected his memoirs, written that priceless, brief, matter-of-fact statement—the earliest, the most authentic of the Synoptic documents—which was once called Peter's Gospel, and which we know as the Gospel according to Mark. (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) **And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos.** *Paphos*:—Now Baffo, at the western extremity of the island, about a hundred miles from Salamis, on a rocky eminence about a mile and a half from the sea, with a small harbour, which at certain seasons affords no shelter from the prevalent winds. The city was restored by Augustus, after suffering most severely from an earthquake; but in Jerome's time its site was covered with ruins. (*Bp. Jacobson.*) *Paul in Paphos*:—Or the preaching of the Cross in its power to conquer the world. It conquers—I. THE SINFUL LUSTS OF THE WORLD. In the lascivious myrtle and rose groves of Venus, the apostle plants the Cross of Christ as the symbol of repentance, and of the crucifixion of the flesh. II. THE FALSE WISDOM OF THE WORLD. The deceits of Elymas dissolve before the light of evangelical grace and truth. III. THE POWER AND WEAPONS OF THE WORLD. The Roman proconsul surrenders as a prisoner to the Word of God. (*K. Gerok.*) **They found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-Jesus.** *Prevalence of sorcery*:—The incident presents a true picture of the times. At that period impostors from the East, pretending to magical powers, had great influence over the Roman mind. The East, but recently thrown open, was a land of mystery to the western nations. Reports of the strange arts practised there, of the wonderful events of which it was the scene, excited almost fanatically the imagination both of the populace and the aristocracy of Rome. Syrian fortune-tellers crowded the capital, and appeared in all the haunts of business and amusement. The strongest minds were not superior to their influence. Marius relied on a Jewish prophetess for regulating the progress of his campaigns. Pompey, Crassus, and Cæsar sought information from Oriental astrology; Juvenal paints to us the Emperor Tiberius "sitting on the rock of Capri, with his flock of Chaldæans round him." "The astrologers and sorcerers," says Tacitus, "are a class of men who will always be discarded, and always cherished." (*H. B. Hackett, D.D.*) *Elymas the sorcerer*:—The word is *Magos*, the same as that used for the "wise men," Matt. ii. 1, but it is obviously used here in the bad sense which had begun to attach to it even in the days of Sophocles, who makes Œdipus revile Tiresias under this name, as practising magic arts ("Œd. Rex.," 387), and which we have found in the case of Simon Magos, the sorcerer. The man bore two names, one Bar-Jesus, in its form a patronymic, the other Elymas (an Aramaic word, probably connected with the Arabic *Ulema*, or sage), a title describing his claims to wisdom and supernatural powers. We have already met with a character of this type in the sorcerer of Samaria. The lower class of Jews here, as in chap. xix. 14, seem to have been specially addicted to such practices. They traded on the religious prestige of their race, and boasted, in addition to their sacred books, of spells and charms that had come down to them from Solomon. (*Dean Plumptre.*) *Paul and Elymas*:—1. Among the chief enemies to the gospel in early times was the sorcerer. He was the degenerate descendant of the astrologers and wise men of the courts of Pharaoh, and Babylon. They interpreted dreams, explained the language of the stars, and had knowledge of the laws of nature. We can account for their ascendency. It would be easy, *e.g.*, for the wise man to account for the cure of disease, by ascribing it to his power over occult qualities or evil spirits. A mysterious look would do much! 2. They were the Jesuits of antiquity. Their one object was to make all things work together for the glory of their order. The stars, the past, the future, the dream, the disease, the earthquake, the eclipse, were all taxed for their interest. All depended on making men think that they had influence over nature. Thus their power rested on a lie. 3. The light of the East was waning, the craft of the sorcerer, therefore, moved

westward, and the Rome of Tiberius was inundated with them. I. THE SORCERER LIVES ON FROM AGE TO AGE. He belongs to no particular profession, he is in all. There is the sorcery of the political economy school; the magician of literature; the false prophet of science; last, but not least, worse than all, is the Church-Magus, who calls attention to himself instead of directing it to God. To make use of the Bible, of sacraments, of heaven and hell, to terrify men into conviction of our authority and influence, is the essence of modern sorcery. The ancient used a star, the modern a cross; the old Magus availed himself of diseases of the body, the new of diseases of the mind. For one man to stand up and proclaim himself to be possessed of power or privilege not possessed by all, is to write Elymas in large letters on his forehead. II. YES! AND THE CURSE OF ELYMAS IS ON YOU! The gospel darkens and blinds this sorcerer, by showing what are "the right ways of the Lord." The apostle disclaimed all power. He came to turn men away from man; to say that all were sinners, he the chief; that all must turn to God, from all false and hollow supports; and being converted from man to God, they became, through faith in Christ, priests—offering up their bodies a living sacrifice through Christ. And any one who calls away the attention of the priestly people offering themselves to God, to himself, is a thief and robber. The glory of the gospel is that it gives glory to God only. "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom," &c. The glory of the gospel is, that it points sinners to God, away from all human, secret ways of giving aid. These are the "cunning craftiness," the "sleight of men," which the apostle denounces; the "enticing words of man's wisdom," "the hidden things of dishonesty," which he disclaimed. The doctrine of the universal Christian priesthood, of the one sole High Priest, is, therefore, Paul meeting Elymas. This it is most needful to ponder; for human indolence, guilty fear, and love of power are all equally interested in the support of the sorcerer ecclesiastic. III. THEY ARE BLIND, BOTH SORCERER AND VICTIMS. How blind to think it a greater thing to make himself mysterious, than to be simply a channel of God's truth to a soul! How blind to think it better to seem than to be! How much more glorious to break in on superstition with, "We are men of like passions with you," and come to turn you away from idols to the "living God"! How much greater to wake men up to a sense of their priesthood, than to claim an exclusive priesthood which degrades them! There is absolutely, then, but one way of dealing with Elymas and his victims, that is to preach the whole truth of Christ respecting the lofty privileges of the sons of God. We cannot, if we would, strike the sorcerer blind. He is blind, blinder he cannot be; but we can proclaim the truth he hides. We can tell them that the only way to be sure of "the doctrine of the Lord," is to receive and experience its gracious influence; that we preach "the unsearchable riches of Christ, to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery." (*B. Kent, M.A.*) **Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man.**—*Sergius Paulus:*—The first great trophy of the great Apostle of the Gentiles. I. TAKEN FROM THE MIDST OF A HOSTILE CAMP. A Roman, a man of power, a man of education. II. WRESTED FROM A CRAFTY POSSESSOR. Elymas the sorcerer, as the representative of the falsely praised art of human sophistry. III. AS A PERMANENT ORNAMENT TO THE APOSTLE. Supplanting his Jewish name. (*K. Gerok.*) *A prudent man:*—In a worldly point of view, nothing could be considered more imprudent, than for a prominent man, in a Pagan empire, to recognise the claims of the prophet of Galilee, who had so lately been crucified at Jerusalem. Sergius Paulus ran the risk of losing, not only his office, but his life, and yet the Divine record describes him as "A prudent man." The cunning, artful man is not prudent, neither is he always prudent who is most successful in the pursuit of worldly gain. Prudence is discovered in the preference which it gives to every object according to its relative value. And what better evidence can we have of it, than the choice of an everlasting portion in heaven, instead of being content with the short-lived pleasures of sin? How fearfully, in the great day of account, will the Holy Spirit of God vindicate this use of the term, when all other wisdom shall be proved to have been folly, and all other prudence insanity, except that which leads men too seek diligently for the pearl of great price, and when they have found it, to sell all that they have to purchase it! Are you acting the part of "a prudent man," in God's sight? Alas! in how many hundred ways has this point been brought home to the conscience of some thoughtless worldling, who is hardening his heart against it now! One can almost hear his imprudent resolution to delay, although he does not put it into words. A railway passenger observed three persons in the same car with himself, in three very different conditions. The

first was a maniac, guarded by his keepers, who was on his way to an asylum, perhaps to spend weary years. Another was a culprit, in chains, on whom the iron hand of justice had seized. The third was a bride, gay and joyous, speeding onward to her new home, where a warm welcome awaited her. Thus are we all flying towards eternity; some, the veriest madmen, because they neglect to care for their souls; some, condemned culprits, for grievous violations of Divine law; and some, prepared for a Father's welcome to the heavenly city. We all belong to one of these classes. Which one? (*J. N. Norton, D.D.*) *Christian prudence*:—I. ITS NATURE. 1. The cunning man is not prudent. 2. The worldly-minded, persevering for their own advantage in this life, are not prudent. 3. Conceit of our own wisdom does not prove us among the prudent. II. ITS SPHERE. It is seen—1. In an insatiable thirst for useful knowledge. 2. In the preference it gives to every object according to its relative value. 3. In the subordination of the passions. 4. In foresight of, and provision for, circumstances. 5. In a willing subjection to reproof. 6. In a capacity to be silent on fit occasions. 7. In observing the fittest seasons for the improvement of opportunities. III. ITS MEANS AND MOTIVES. 1. Be it your concern to imbibe a fixed sense of its vast importance. 2. Consider the numerous evils sure to result from its absence. 3. Remember that prudence sweetens all the endearing charities of domestic life. 4. Prudence increases and facilitates the means of doing good. 5. Prayer and an intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures are the grand means of its successful cultivation. (*G. Clayton.*) *Prudence, false*:—James I. once said of armour, that "it was an excellent invention, for it not only saved the life of the wearer, but it hindered him from doing harm to anybody else." Equally destructive to all usefulness is that excessive prudence upon which some professors pride themselves; not only do they escape all persecution, but they are never able to strike a blow, much less fight a battle, for the Lord Jesus. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Prudence imprudent*:—Prudence, in its ordinary and most inadequate sense, has done little for the world, except to tease and hinder many of its masters. It would have kept every mariner from the deep, and deterred every traveller from the desert; it would have put out the fires of science, and clipped the wings of poetry; it would have kept Abram at home, and found Moses a comfortable settlement in Egypt. Beware of imprudent prudence; it will lull you to sleep, and bring you to a nameless and worthless end. *Prudence defined*:—Prudence is that virtue by which we discern what is proper to be done under the circumstances of time and place. (*Milton.*) *Prudence is the art of choosing*:—He is prudent who among many objects can distinguish that which deserves the preference. (*L. M. Stretch.*) *Prudence is practical wisdom*, and comes of the cultivated judgment. It has reference in all things to fitness, to propriety, judgment wisely of the right thing to be done, and of the right way of doing it. It calculates the means, order, time, and method of doing. Prudence learns of experience, quickened by knowledge. (*S. Smiles, LL.D.*) *Prudence: its necessity for self-protection*:—The child who has only sailed his paper boat on the edge of a placid lake, might wonder what was wanted with enormous beams and bars of iron, innumerable bolts and screws, and clasps, and bars of metal, in making a ship. Ask the sailor and he will answer. He says we must be prepared for something more than calm days, we must look ahead, the breakers will try us, the winds will put us to the test, we may come upon an unknown rock; we must be prepared for the worst as well as for the best. We call this prudence. We condemn its omission. We applaud its observance. What of men who attempt the stormy and treacherous waters of life without having any regard for the probable dangers of the voyage? (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Seeking for the truth*:—The position of Sergius Paulus was just this. On the one side were the spirit-stirring reports of a Divine message; and on the other, this false prophet plying all his subtle arts to discredit it. The situation is not an uncommon one. A young man often finds himself standing between his evil genius and his faithful friend, without very clearly discerning which is which, or wavering between the tidings of salvation and the spells of infidelity, and the question with him is, in which direction shall he turn? like a traveller standing where two roads meet, at the foot of a guide-post, unable in the grey twilight of morning, to read it, and knows not which will lead him to his home. In the case before us, the deputy was a "prudent man," *i.e.*, thoughtful, having a spice of common sense; and therefore he "sent for the apostle," &c. I. The deputy, BEING IN DOUBT, SEEKS FARTHER LIGHT. 1. It is natural to suppose that some features in the reports which had reached him impressed him favourably, and that others

were perplexing. Elymas, playing upon his old prejudices, would take care to exaggerate some and to explain others away, and to feed his Roman pride; but after all his arts were exhausted, the deputy still desired additional light, and determined to act for himself. All this suggests to us an honest mind. He does not rush to a conclusion; does not all at once swear by Bar-jesus or by Barnabas, or even take a middle course, and dismiss the whole matter from his thoughts; but he determines to get more knowledge. 2. Now, there are many professed truth-seekers in the world who vaunt their love of truth and proclaim certain principles with unflinching boldness. But they never go a step out of their way to catch the sound of any voice but their own, or of their own school. Their reading is all on one side; and their beliefs float along with the same tide as their worldly interests. But he who unfeignedly sets himself to the pursuit of truth, welcomes her in every situation and guise. It is not this system or that which he seeks. Truth is the pearl of great price, for which he is prepared to sell all that he has, even if it be found beneath his feet and entrusted with miry clay. II. The deputy DESIRED TO HEAR THE WORD OF GOD. 1. Barnabas and Saul did not come with a philosophy or a new theory. They claimed to speak in the name of God, and to be entrusted with His own Word, and it was this which the deputy was anxious, or, at least, curious, to hear. 2. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, for us to conceive the thrill of interest which the very phrase the Word of God would awaken in a devout, truth-seeking, heathen soul, and yet most natural. The soul was made for God. In its fallen state it is unconscious of this. But when God is pleased to breathe upon it, it begins to yearn after Him, and soon finds the signs of His presence, but it wants to hear His voice. 3. Imagine, then, the impetuous rush of feeling when the deep silence is broken by the voice of God; or when only the report comes—God has spoken! But some one may say, but, after all, it may really not be the Word of God, but some specious fabrication. Possibly, for many false prophets had gone out into the world, as, *e.g.*, this Elymas the Sorcerer. There was the possibility that Paul and Barnabas might be pretenders of the same kind. But suppose your father had gone to a distant part of the world, and after a long absence you were hoping for his return, would not every new voice, every reported arrival naturally excite the question, Is this he? And if the news reached you that a gentleman from a far country had arrived at a distant port, answering somewhat to the description of your father, how eagerly would you set out to ascertain the fact and to rush into his arms! But if the tidings arrived that your father had returned, though, after all, it might be a false report, yet how enthusiastically would you fly to meet him! So, in like manner, if you hunger after your heavenly Father, and anything comes in the shape of a message from Him, you will certainly determine to hear it. It may possibly, after all, not be His word, but you will hear it. There can be no harm in hearing it. It may be your Father's arrival. III. The deputy DESIRED TO HEAR THE WORD OF GOD AT FIRST HAND. 1. It is always best to go to headquarters for our information. Judge not of any man, or system, or Church through the eyes of another, but look and see with your own. There must have been all kinds of rumours in reference to Paul and Barnabas, rumours exaggerating, disparaging, caricaturing, or falsifying. Now, there are many people in our day, and, no doubt, there were some then, who would have contented themselves with these flying reports, and would, perhaps, have helped to distort and to spread them. Or they might have made a selection, each taking up just those elements which were most congenial with his own tendencies. But the sensible man who wanted to know the truth would have done just what the deputy did—"sent for the apostles." Pay all proper respect to the judgments of others, and open your ears to every voice which may possibly direct your way; but, in dependence on the guidance of God's Spirit, examine and judge for yourself; for you are responsible for yourself, and you have your account to render at last to God. 2. But I would especially urge this course in reference to your own study of the Word of God. You desire to hear it. Then do as the deputy did. The Scriptures are in your hands, and you can read them for yourselves. This is the best school in which to learn spiritual truth. Do not be content with the mere assertions of others as to what is contained in the Scriptures; but like the noble Bereans, search the Scriptures themselves daily, to see if these things are so. But take care how you deal with them; not hastily or lightly caught by the sound of words, or the first blush of a text; not taking out of it what you have first put in, but making it your earnest endeavour to draw from it what God has intended to teach and nothing else.

Before all things, therefore, invoke the Divine Spirit of light and truth. Then take the best help you can get, in order to reach the real meaning; compare one part of Scripture with another. This may be a toilsome labour, but it is gainful. Men do not shrink from the labour and dangers of mining. The Scripture is a mine, which must be worked with equal earnestness and hard labour, but with infinitely more profit (Prov. ii. 3). In this manner the Bible becomes its own witness, and proves itself to be the Word of God. IV. The deputy having desired to hear the Word of God, WAS FAVOURED WITH A WONDERFUL DISPLAY OF ITS DIVINE POWER. But the Spirit of truth, here as everywhere, was too mighty for the spirit of lies. Here was the man who was going to enlighten others, himself immersed in darkness; he, who was going to lead all wanderers, is seeking some one to lead himself by the hand. There, as you see him staggering and groping about in bewilderment, how striking is the emblem of the dismal confusion of his soul! He had opened his eyes to stare impiously at the glorious Sun of truth, and its beams have blinded him. The Roman is astonished at the doctrine of the Lord, and, convinced by such overwhelming evidence, becomes a believer in the gospel of Christ. Observe—1. That the form in which this Divine manifestation was made was one of power. This was the one thing which the Romans reverenced. They had little taste for the speculations of philosophers, or for the tenderness of poets. They were not fascinated by the arts, unless, indeed, in the creations of stately and massive buildings; but they were profoundly impressed with power. They had aspired, not without success, to be the masters of the world, and to give laws to subject nations. Sergius Paulus was a Roman, and had come with these proud conceptions to rule over Cyprus. A gospel preached by a few poor Jews, having for its object a crucified Jew, would naturally appear to him a weak and contemptible thing, which no eloquence could render worthy of his notice. But when Paul, speaking in the name of the living God, hurled the thunderbolt of His vengeance against an impostor, the pride of the Roman was subdued into a humility of wondering reverence. 2. That the power of God is here put forward to expose imposture and to unmask pretence. It was a false prophet who was thus smitten with blindness. It was the lurid light of cunning and lies which was quenched by the sunbeams of truth. The Roman ruler must have in this event recognised the awful presence of a God of purity, whose eye pierced into the inner chambers of the soul, and to whom lying lips are an abomination. And therefore he believed. If you will earnestly bring yourselves into contact with the Word of God, you, too, in like manner, will become the witnesses of its Divine power. But there is a mist and a darkness still ready to fall on those who, like Elymas, deal in hypocrisies. Beware how you stifle your hidden convictions, or disguise your real character, or deal in hollow pretence. (*J. M. Charlton, M.A.*)

Vers. 9–11. **Then Saul (who also is called Paul).**—*The crisis in Saul's history and his change of name:*—From this point Paul appears as the great figure in every picture, and Barnabas falls into the background. The great apostle now enters on his work as preacher to the Gentiles; and simultaneously his name is changed. As "Abram" was changed into "Abraham" when God promised that he should be the "father of many nations"; as "Simon" was changed into "Peter" when it was said, "On this rock I will build My Church"; so Saul is changed into "Paul" at the moment of his victory among the heathen. What the plains of Mamre were to the patriarch, what Cæsarea Philippi was to the fisherman of Galilee, that was Paphos to the tent-maker of Tarsus. Are we to suppose that the name was now given for the first time—that he adopted it as significant of his own feelings—or that Sergius Paulus conferred it on him in grateful commemoration of the benefits he had received, or that "Paul," having been a Gentile form of the apostle's name in early life conjointly with the Hebrew "Saul," was now used to the exclusion of the other to indicate that he had receded from his position as a Jewish Christian, to become the friend and teacher of the Gentiles? We are inclined to the opinion that the Cilician apostle had this Roman name before he was a Christian. This adoption of a Gentile name is so far from being alien to the spirit of a Jewish family, that a similar practice may be traced through all the periods of Hebrew history. Beginning with the *Persian* epoch (B.C. 550–350), we find such names as Nehemiah, Schammai, Belteshazzar, which betray an oriental origin, and show that Jewish appellatives followed the growth of the living language. In the *Greek* period we encounter the names of Philip, and his son Alexander, and of Alexander's successors—Antiochus, Lysimachus,

Ptolemy, Antipater; the names of Greek philosophers, such as Zeus and Epicurus; even Greek mythological names, as Jason and Menelaus. When we mention the *Roman* names adopted by the Jews the coincidence is still more striking—Crispus, Justus, Niger, Drusilla and Priscilla might have been Roman matrons. The Aquila of St. Paul is the counterpart of the Apella of Horace. Again, in the earlier part of the *Middle Ages* we find Jews calling themselves Basil, Leo, Theodosius, Sophia, and in the latter part Albert, Benedict, Crispin, Denys. It is indeed remarkable that the separated nation should bear in the very names recorded in its annals the trace of every nation with whom it has come in contact and never united. It is important to our present purpose to remark that double names often occur in combination, the one national, the other foreign. The earliest instances are Belteshazzar-Daniel and Esther-Hadasa. Frequently there was no resemblance or natural connection between the two words, as in Herod-Agrippa, Salome-Alexandra, Inda-Aristobulus, Simon Peter. Sometimes the meaning was reproduced, as in Malich-Kleodemus. At other times an alliterating resemblance of sound seems to have dictated the choice, as in Jose-Jason, Hillel-Julus, Saul-Paulus. Thus satisfactory reasons can be adduced for the apostle's double name without having recourse to the hypothesis of Jerome, who suggests that as Scipio was called Africanus from the conquest of Africa, and Metellus Creticus from the conquest of Crete, so Saul carried away his new name as a trophy of his victory over the heathenism of the proconsul Paulus, or to the notion of Augustine when he alludes to the literal meaning of the word Paulus, and contrasts Saul the unbridled king, the proud, self-confident persecutor of David, with Paul, the lowly, the penitent, who deliberately wished to indicate by his very name that he was "the least of the apostles" and "less than the least of all saints." Yet we must not neglect the coincident occurrence of these two names just here. We need not hesitate to dwell on the associations which are connected with the name of Paulus, or on the thoughts which are naturally called up when we notice the critical passage where it is first given to Saul. It is surely not unworthy of notice that as Peter's first Gentile convert was a member of the Cornelian house, so the surname of the noblest family of the Cornelian house was the link between the Apostle of the Gentiles and his convert at Paphos. Nor can we find a nobler Christian version of any line of a heathen poet than by comparing what Horace says of him who fell at Cannæ, "*Animæ magnæ prodigum Paulum*," with the words of him who said at Miletus, "I count not my life dear unto myself," &c. And though Saul most probably had the name of Paul at an earlier period, and that it came from some connection of his ancestors (perhaps as manumitted slaves) with some member of the Æmilian Pauli; yet we cannot believe it accidental that it occurs at this point of the inspired narrative. The heathen name rises to the surface at the moment Paul enters on his office as apostle to the heathen. The Roman name is stereotyped at the moment when he converts the Roman governor; and the place where this occurs is the very spot which was notorious for what the gospel forbids and destroys. Here, having achieved his victory, the apostle erected his trophy, as Moses, when Amalek was discomfited, "built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi—the Lord my banner." (*J. S. Howson, D.D.*) **Filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, and said, O full of all subtlety and mischief.**—*Sin and its punishment*:—Paul's rebuke, of course, applies to the specific iniquity of Elymas, but with a master hand the apostle at the same time delineates the characteristics of sin in general. The punishment of Elymas is also typical. I. SIN. 1. Its subtle methods. There is nothing straightforward about sin; nor can there be: for were its nature and consequences clear, it would be universally shunned and abhorred. Its methods, therefore, must needs be crooked and insinuating. Evil is dressed up in the guise of good. The fruit of the tree was made pleasant to the eyes of Eve. So is it all through time. 2. Its mischievous effects. It debases the body, degrades the mind, debilitates the will, and damns the soul. 3. Its Satanic paternity. "The serpent was more subtle than all the beasts of the field." The devil injects the sinful thought, guides the sinful resolution, helps the sinful action, and enjoys the sinful effect. 4. Its enmity to righteousness. Right and wrong are not co-ordinate powers which, like adjacent states, can flourish side by side and enter into peaceful alliances with each other. They are ever in irreconcilable antagonism, and the prosperity of the one is absolutely dependent on the destruction of the other. 5. Its perversion of the right ways of the Lord. This is the essence of sin. It is not simply negation, but perversion; and its highest

achievement is to secure the acceptance of evil under the guise of good. Elymas, as a Jewish prophet, armed with the authority of a Divine dispensation, threw a spell over the mind of the proconsul, and endeavoured to use his usurped authority for selfish and villainous purposes. Wherein does he differ from the modern hypocrite? II. ITS PUNISHMENT. 1. Its subtlety is detected. (1) Sometimes sin overreaches itself; it is not sufficiently comprehensive in its views. Ahab calculated on getting Naboth's vineyard, but did not calculate on Elijah. So here Elymas overlooked the possibility of the advent of a Paul. (2) Sometimes its detection is the result of some extraordinary Divine agency—"Saul, filled with the Holy Ghost." The common saying, "Murder will out." How often, by a trivial oversight on the part of the criminal, or by some trifling coincidence, has a great crime been revealed. 2. Its mischievous effects are turned upon the sinner. He who sought to blind the intellect of Sergius Paulus is himself made blind. "Be sure your sin will find you out." 3. The son inherits the father's punishment. Satan is the prince of darkness, and his children are doomed to walk in darkness. The dark ways in which the devil leads his victims leads to "outer darkness." 4. Its enmity to righteousness is met by the righteous God. "Though hand join in hand the wicked shall not go unpunished." 5. Its perversion is met by perversion. "He went about," &c. (ver. 11). (*J. W. Burn.*) *Reproof: how a true servant of God uses his office of*:—1. Not in carnal passion, but in the Holy Ghost (ver. 9). 2. Not with worldly weapons, but with the sword of the Word, by which he discloses the evil state of the heart (ver. 10), and announces the judgment of God (ver. 11). 3. Not for death or condemnation, but for warning and for the salvation of souls. (*K. Gerok.*) *The punishment of Elymas* was—I. IN CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE TRANSGRESSION. He who blinded others is himself blinded. II. STRIKING AND CONVINCING FOR THE SPECTATORS. III. WITH ALL ITS SEVERITY CONDUCIVE TO AMENDMENT BY AN INTIMATION OF THE DIVINE MERCY. Paul himself, at his conversion, had been blind for a season, and knew from his experience how profitable this darkness was for internal collection and composure of mind. (*Apostolic Pastor.*) *The exceptional character of the miracle*:—The miracles of the New Testament are generally distinguished from the Old by being worthy works of mercy. Two only of our Lord's were inflictions of severity, and those were attended with no harm to the bodies of men. The same law pervades the miracles of the apostles. One miracle of wrath was worked by Peter and Paul; and we can see sufficient reasons why liars and hypocrites like Ananias and Sapphira, and impostors like Elymas, should be publicly punished, and made examples of. A passage in the life of Peter presents a parallel which is closer in some respects with this interview of Paul with Bar-jesus. As Simon Magus, "who had long time bewitched the Samaritans with his sorceries," was denounced by Peter "as still in the gall of bitterness," &c., and solemnly told that his heart was not right in the sight of God; so Paul, conscious of his apostolic power, and under the power of immediate inspiration, rebuked Elymas as a child of that devil who is "the father of lies," as a worker of deceit and mischief, &c. He proceeded to denounce an instantaneous judgment, and according to his prophetic word, the "hand of the Lord" struck the sorcerer, as it had once struck the apostle himself—the sight of the magician began to waver, and presently a darkness settled on it so thick that he ceased to behold the sun's light. This blindness of the false prophet opened the eyes of the deputy. That which had been intended as an opposition to the gospel proved the means of its extension. We are ignorant of the degree of this extension in Cyprus. But we cannot doubt that when the proconsul was converted, his influence would make Christianity reputable; and that from this moment the Gentiles of the island as well as the Jews had the news of salvation brought home to them. (*J. S. Howson, D.D.*) *Seeking to turn men from the faith*:—Unprincipled white men have often been great stumbling-blocks in the way of Indian evangelisation. An Englishman made his boast that he could induce the Indians again to drink; and providing himself with ardent spirits, he moved in his canoe over to the island where the Indians were encamped. Leaving all at the shore, he went up to the camp, and, inviting the Indians down, brought forth his bottle. "Come," he said, "we always good friends; we once more take a good drink in friendship." "No," said Captain Paudaush, "we drink no more of the fire waters." "Oh, but you will drink with me; we always good friends"; but while this son of Belial was urging them to drink, the Indians struck up, in the tune of *Walsall*, the hymn they had lately learned to sing—

"O for a thousand tongues to sing
The great Redeemer's praise!"

And while the Indians were singing, this bacchanalian, defeated in his wicked device, and looking completely crestfallen, paddled away from the island, leaving the Indians to their temperance and their religious devotions! *An enemy of righteousness*:—Mr. Beecher once met Colonel Ingersoll, a great American atheist, and Colonel Ingersoll began to discourse on his atheistic views. Mr. Beecher for some time was silent, but, after a time, asked to be allowed to tell a story. On being requested to do so, he said, "As I was walking down town to-day, I saw a poor man slowly and carefully picking his way through mud, in the endeavour to cross a street. He had just reached the middle of the filth when a big, burly ruffian, himself all bespattered, rushed up to him, jerked the crutches from under the unfortunate man, and left him sprawling and helpless in the pool of liquid dirt, which almost engulfed him." "What a brute he was!" said the colonel. "What a brute he was!" they all echoed. "Yes," said the old man, rising from his chair, and brushing back his long white hair, "yes, Colonel Ingersoll, and you are the man. The human soul is lame, but Christianity gives it crutches to enable it to pass the highway of life. It is your teaching that knocks these crutches from under it, and leaves it a helpless and rudderless wreck in the Slough of Despond. If robbing the human soul of its only support on this earth—religion—be your profession, why, ply it to your heart's content. It requires an architect to erect a building; an incendiary may reduce it to ashes." *Seeking to turn men from the truth*:—A boy was impressed in one of Mr. Moody's meetings. But his mother said he was "good enough without religion," and threw her influence against Mr. Moody's efforts to win him to Christ. She succeeded, and some time after Mr. Moody found him in the county jail. "How came you here? Does your mother know of it?" "No, sir, and pray don't tell her. I came in under an assumed name, and am going to Joliet State prison for four years. She thinks I am in the army." And Mr. Moody often heard her afterwards, mourning that her boy was killed.

Ver. 12. **Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed.**—*Two Pauls and a blinded sorcerer*:—Note—I. OPPOSITION TO THE FAITH. 1. Elymas "withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith." This is true the world over. The greater the opportunity the greater the opposition. The devil is ever on the look-out to defeat the servants of God and hinder the effect of truth. 2. But opposition is overruled for good. The intense opposition of Elymas only served to draw the attention of the deputy more intently to the doctrine of God's Word. But more than this: when Saul pronounced upon him the solemn judgment of God, the proconsul saw that it was in very deed the Word of God. The blinded sorcerer, seeking some one to lead him by the hand, was a visible witness for the truth against which he had fought. So that the overthrow of the opposition made the victory of truth the more conspicuous. And this is always so. II. AIDS TO FAITH. I have not called miracles causes of faith, for they do not cause it, although they may lead up to it. What Sergius Paulus saw did not make him believe, but it helped him to believe. What did he see, then? 1. The great courage of Paul. In another case boldness struck a blow at unbelief, for when the rulers saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled. In this case the effect would be the same. Saul fixed his eyes on Elymas as though he were perfectly master of the situation—as indeed he was, and without hesitation or apology addressed him, "O full of all subtlety," &c. Intense conviction in the mind of Paul led him to speak thus plainly and sternly, but it was not the heat of his own spirit, for he was filled with the Holy Ghost. Let every teacher of Christ be thus filled, and then let him speak boldly, as he ought to speak. Come not forward with your "ifs" and "buts" and "peradventures" to prove God's Word. Tell out the message God hath told thee, as from Him, and not as thine own opinion! 2. God's judgments. If Sergius Paul was deeply impressed with Paul's boldness, he was still more deeply moved when he saw Elymas stricken with blindness. 3. God's wonders of mercy. Conversions are the standing miracles of the gospel, the best attesting seals the truth can have. I knew a man who was of a fierce temper, a troubler to his own household; I have seen that man since his conversion, and the lion has become a lamb. We have seen persons revelling in licentiousness, but they have

heard the gospel and become chaste. What has wrought this? What teaching must that be which accomplishes such marvels? III. THE SOURCE OF FAITH. It is "doctrine," or faithful teaching, which brings men to Christ. Let those who despise doctrine beware, for the doctrine of the Cross is only foolishness to them who perish. Under the influence of the Holy Ghost the plain teaching of the Word of the Lord leads men to believe in Jesus. I do not think it is any great good for a preacher to cry, "Believe," if he never tells you what is to be believed. There is plenty of this kind of preaching about, and the result is sadly transient and superficial. If we do not preach the great doctrine of the atoning sacrifice, we have not put before men the basis on which their faith is to be built. Justification by faith and regeneration by the Spirit must be taught continually. The proconsul was, no doubt, astonished to see Elymas blinded, but he was a great deal more astonished at the doctrine which Paul preached when he began to tell him that salvation was not by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ; that the way to be accepted of God was not by presenting to the Lord anything performed by us or felt within us, but by laying hold upon the righteousness which Jesus Christ has wrought out and brought in. When he heard this good news he might well be astonished, and yield his heart to Jesus. The most astonishing thing in the world is the gospel. Come, then, and candidly study what is to be believed. If you desire to know God you shall know Him. The great Father is not far from any one of you. There is the light! It is not dim, nor far away. The fault is in your eyes if you do not see. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The conversion of Sergius Paulus*:—I. HE SAW. Probably no special stress is laid upon the seeing, yet the fact that opportunity was given him to see is worthy of emphasis. Had the Church of Antioch loved their own better than the things of Christ, the missionaries had been kept at home. If we turn over the opportunity of Sergius and examine its obverse side, we shall find written thereon a duty and a privilege. Paul, who felt it and obeyed it thus early in his career, later states it (Rom. x. 13–15). The great salvation is provided for all; let it be carried to all. No violence is done human thought or the spirit of the gospel by discerning, in the proconsul's opportunity to see, the Church's opportunity to send. Paul came and preached, therefore Paulus saw and heard. II. HE WAS ASTONISHED. The transition from sight to faith is explained in the astonishment produced by the matter and manner of the doctrine of the Lord. Two teachers, each professing to possess the oracles of the Highest, had confronted each other with contradictory doctrine. The mind of the heathen deputy, unrestful and discontented with the fables of Roman mythology, must have been perplexed with these rival claimants for his faith and devotion. But the purer doctrine had the prevailing power, and Paulus wondered at the doctrine of the Lord, and admired it. Then came the proof that the story of Divine love was no bright fiction nor sweet poem, but a genuine fact and power in the world among men by the method of the teaching—persuasively to him who was ready to hear—judicially to him who was determined to resist. It could sue or subdue. III. HE BELIEVED. The simplicity and freshness of youth adorned and invigorated the gospel of that early day. The deputy's mind was not perplexed by half a dozen kinds of faith, each with a technical name requiring special instruction to understand. The story of the living, personal Christ, what He had said and done, and what He wanted and waited to do, was the simple and unformulated theology of that earliest day. Sergius Paulus, in believing, was conscious of no such abstract process as that of accepting a theory or adopting a system. This might come afterwards; but when he believed he simply trusted himself into the care of God, he took Him at His word. The Roman proconsul became the Christian disciple; faith gave him a higher rank and a sublimer title. He had before represented the emperor of the world. He then represented the One "seated on the right hand of God." The name "Roman proconsul" pales before the title "Heir of God." (*J. R. Danforth.*) *Paul's first convert from heathenism*:—When Napoleon landed on his return from Elba, and one man came and presented himself as willing to serve the Emperor, "Here," said Napoleon, "is one recruit at least." So may we say when we have converts, "Here is one recruit, and thank God for one; for the same attractive influence which draws one will draw multitudes more." We have got the right medicine, we have got the right power, and therefore let us hope that there is a harvest to be reaped now. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The conversion of one soul*:—The conversion of one soul by the gospel should be to you a hopeful sign that God intends to convert others. For see, the cholera is raging in certain towns, say, on the continent, and a

physician has been studying the disease. He has administered a variety of drugs, but in every case without success. He has prescribed different methods of treatment, but in no case has he succeeded in effecting a cure. At last he has hit upon the right drug, and, administering it, he sees his patient rallying, strength evidently given by the medicine; the struggle ends favourably, and the patient rises to life and health. "Now," says the physician, "I know that I shall have a harvest of men who will be preserved from this disease, because the same medicine which heals one will heal two, will heal twenty, will heal a thousand, or even twenty thousand; it only has to be administered; that one person has been healed by this compound, and it is clear that as many more may be healed as are willing to receive it." Brethren, we do not lack this sign with regard to the gospel. (*Ibid.*) *Opposition helpful to the gospel*:—In all probability the opposition of Bar-jesus may have called the attention of Sergius Paul more intently to the doctrine of the Word of God. When a certain doctrine is neglected and half forgotten by the Church of God there rises up a bold heretic who rails at the truth most bitterly, and then Christian people remember it, defend it, and propagate it. A Colenso attacks the story of the Exodus, and all eyes are fixed upon Moses and the tribes of Israel. Some critic or other attacks the Book of Deuteronomy, and straightway we get a host of books about Deuteronomy; all the scholars of the Christian Church begin to study it, and as a part of the Word it is valued exceedingly. This Elymas finds fault with the gospel, and Saul and Barnabas are thus called upon to clear up the points at issue, and by refuting the magician's malicious errors they make the truth the more apparent to the mind of the proconsul. So far so good. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 13–52. **Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia.**—*Perga in Pamphylia*:—Because Perga was little known Pamphylia is subjoined. It was an ancient city on the river Cestrus, about seven miles from its mouth. The stay in it was very short, and there seems to have been no preaching till the return journey (chap. xiv. 25). Some of the perils from robbers and rivers (2 Cor. xi. 16) may have been encountered at this time. (*Bp. Jacobson.*) **And John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.**—*The defection of Mark*:—We are not to suppose that this implied a rejection of Christianity. A soldier who has wavered in one battle may live to win a glorious victory. Mark was afterwards not unwilling to accompany the apostles, and actually did accompany Barnabas again to Cyprus (chap. xv. 37–39). Nor did Paul always retain his unfavourable judgment of him (Col. iv. 10; 2 Tim. iv. 11). Yet if we consider all the circumstances of his life, we shall not find it difficult to blame his conduct, and to see good reasons why Paul should distrust his steadiness of character. The child of a religious mother, who had sheltered in her house the Christian disciples, he had been a close spectator of the wonderful power of the religion of Christ, and had been a minister of the apostles in their successful enterprise; and now he forsook them when they were about to proceed through greater difficulties to more glorious success. We are not left in doubt as to the real character of his departure. He was drawn from the work of God by the attraction of an earthly home. "Either he did not like the work, or he wanted to go and see his mother" (M. Henry). (*J. S. Howson, D.D.*) *The departure of Mark and the continuance of the apostles*:—1. Any one who turns back from God's work does himself an injury. 2. The work will go on, no matter who turns back. 3. Those in the work should seek every fit opportunity to proclaim the Word. 4. Those in the work should seek the regular and appointed channels for proclaiming the Word. 5. Those who seek for opportunities for work will have opportunities given them. 6. Those in the work should make use of all their tact to make the Word acceptable. 7. Those who are earnest and persistent in the work, guided by the Spirit, will be successful. (*S. S. Times.*) *John Mark*:—I. Consider, first, his—what shall I call it? Well, if I may use the word which Paul himself designates it by, in its correct signification, we may call it HIS APOSTASY. It was not a departure from Christ, but it was a departure from very plain duty. He was quite ready for missionary work as long as it was easy work; quite ready to do it as long as he was moving upon known ground and there was no great call upon his heroism, or his indolence; does not wait to test the difficulties, but is frightened by the imagination of them; does not throw himself into the work and see how he gets on with it; but before he has gone a mile into the land, or made any real experience of the perils and hardships, has had quite enough of it, and goes away back to his mother in Jerusalem. Yes! and we find exactly the

same thing in all courses of honourable life. Many begin to run, but one after another, as "lap" after "lap" of the race-course is got over, has had enough of it, and drops on one side; a hundred started, and at the end the field is reduced to three or four. And so, in regard of every career which has in it anything of honour and of effort, let this man teach us the lesson not swiftly to begin and inconsiderately to venture upon a course, but once begun let nothing discourage. "Nor bate one jot of heart or hope, but still bear up and steer right onward." Some of you need the word of exhortation and earnest beseeching, to contrast the sluggishness, the indolence of your present, with the brightness and the fervour of your past. And I beseech you, do not let your Christian life be like snow—when it first lights upon the earth, radiant and white, but day by day more covered with a veil of sooty blackness until it becomes dark and foul. II. Look, next, in the development of this little bit of biography, to MARK'S ECLIPSE. Paul and Barnabas differed about how to treat the renegade. Which of them was right? Would it have been better to have put him back in his old post, and given him another chance, and said nothing about the failure; or was it better to do what the sterner wisdom of Paul did, and declare that a man who had once so forgotten himself and abandoned his work was not the man to put in the same place again? Barnabas made a mistake. It would have been the cruellest thing that could have been done to his relative to have put him back again without acknowledgment, without repentance, without riding quarantine for a bit, and holding his tongue for a while. He would not then have known his fault as he ought to have known it, and so there would never have been the chance of his conquering it. God treats His renegades as Paul treated Mark, and not as Barnabas would have treated him. Ready, and infinitely ready, to forgive and to restore, but needing to see the consciousness of the sin first, and needing, before large tasks are committed to hands that once have dropped them, to have some kind of evidence that the hands are stronger and the heart purified from its cowardice and its selfishness. Let us learn the difference between a weak charity which loves too foolishly, and therefore too selfishly, to let a man inherit the fruit of his doings, and the large mercy which knows how to take the bitterness out of the chastisement, and yet knows how to chastise. Mark's eclipse may teach us another lesson, viz., that the punishment for shirking work is to be denied work. You have been asked to work—I speak now to professing Christians—duties have been pressed upon you, fields of service have opened plainly before you, and you have not had the heart to go into them. And so you stand idle all the day now, and the work goes to other people that can do it. And God honours them, and passes you by. Mark goes away to Cyprus, he does not go back to Jerusalem; he and Barnabas try to get up some little schismatic sort of mission of their own. Nothing comes of it; nothing ought to have come of it. He drops out of the story; he has no share in the joyful conflicts and sacrifices and successes of the apostle. The punishment of indolence is absolute idleness. Beware! all of you professing Christians, lest to you should come the fate of the slothful servant with his one buried talent, to whom the punishment of burying it unused was to lose it altogether; according to that solemn word fulfilled in the temporal sphere of this story, on which I am commenting. "To him that hath shall be given," &c. III. Again, consider THE PROCESS OF RECOVERY. Concerning it we read nothing indeed in Scripture; but concerning it we know enough to be able at least to determine what its outline must have been. There is only one road, with well-marked stages, by which a backsliding or apostate Christian can return to his Master. And that road has three halting-places upon it, through which our heart must pass if it have wandered from its early faith, and falsified its first professions. The first of them is the consciousness of the fall; the second is the resort to the Master for forgiveness; and the last is the deepened consecration to Him. No man that wanders into the wilderness but comes back to the King's highway, if he comes back at all. IV. And so, lastly, notice THE REINSTATEMENT OF THE PENITENT RENEGADE. Notwithstanding the failure, notwithstanding the wise refusal of Paul to have nothing to do with him years before, he is reinstated in his old office, and the aged apostle before he dies would like to have the comfort of his presence once more at his side. Is not the lesson out of that, this eternal gospel, that even early failures, recognised and repented of, may make a man better fitted for the tasks which once he fled from? Just as they tell us—I do not know whether it is true or not, it will do for an illustration—just as they tell us that a broken bone renewed is stronger at the point of fracture than it ever was before, so the very sin that we commit, when once we know it for a sin, and have brought it to Christ for forgive-

ness, may minister to our future efficiency and strength. The sin which we have learned to know for a sin and to hate, teaches us humility, dependence, shows us where the weak places are; sin which is forgiven knits us to Christ with deeper and more fervid love, and results in a larger consecration. Think of the two ends of this man's life—flying like a frightened hare from the very first suspicion of danger or of difficulty, sulking in his solitude, apart from all the joyful stir of consecration and of service; and at the end of it made an evangelist to proclaim to the whole world the story of the gospel of the servant. God works with broken reeds, and through them breathes His sweetest music. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Abandonment of missionary work*:—Felix Carey, a nephew of the great Dr. Carey, the Indian missionary, was, like his uncle, devoted to missionary life. He abandoned his sacred calling, however, to become an ambassador to the court of Burmah. Speaking of the change, Dr. Carey said, "Felix *was* a missionary, but he is now shrivelled up to an ambassador." (*W. Walters.*) **They came to Antioch in Pisidia.**—*Antioch in Pisidia*:—Seleucus Nicanor is said to have built nine cities to which he gave his own name, Seleucia, and sixteen which he called after his father Antiochus. Amongst these are the Syrian and the Pisidian Antioch. Six others were called Laodicea, after his mother, and at least one after Apamea, his wife. This recurrence of the same name is a cause of some confusion when considering either the geography or history of this part of Asia. Antioch in Pisidia is situated on a table-land of a ridge of hills on the confines of Pisidia and Phrygia, to which latter province it is sometimes, but inaccurately, reckoned to belong. It lies north of Perga, and east of Apollonia, and the roads which radiated from it in every direction made it a port of considerable importance, commercial as well as military. The city was originally founded by Magnetes, and subsequently refounded by Seleucus. It was, however, of little importance until Augustus made it a Colonia, and a free city with the *Jus Italicum*, from which circumstance it is sometimes called *Antiochea Cæsarea*. Until that time it was distinguished for the worship of the moon, as a male deity, and large numbers of priests were supported by the rich endowments belonging to the temple at this place. The population was a very mixed one, with a larger amount of the Latin element than was usual in the cities of Asia Minor. The Jews were probably not numerous, as we only read of *the* synagogue, not, as at Salamis and other places, in the plural. It is referred to in the New Testament, in Acts xiii. 14; xiv. 19–21; 2 Tim. iii. 11. Many of the inscriptions and coins belonging to the Pisidian Antioch are for this reason in Latin. This city is now entirely deserted, and its site, having been long unknown, has only been rediscovered in modern times. (*W. Denton, M.A.*) *The continental mission*:—1. THE WORD ACCEPTED. 1. Giving up the work. The return of Mark very much displeased Paul. In his eyes a deserter was worse than an enemy; no man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, was fit ever again to be taken into such service. Hence, when Barnabas would have given him another trial, Paul would not consent. But Barnabas was right. His kindly nature was better than the stern, uncompromising disposition of Paul. Barnabas was "a good man," his goodness leading him to lean toward the erring. Under his training and influence Mark recovered the character he had lost, so that at last Paul himself said, "He is useful to me for the ministering." In his dealing with Mark, Barnabas again proved his right to the title, "Son of Consolation." 2. Going on with the work. It was a small force, numerically, that moved upon the intrenched idolatrous hosts of Asia Minor. By the desertion of Mark, the army of three had been reduced one-third. But the soldiers of Christ are not to be estimated by their numbers, but by the personality in and back of them—the Holy Spirit. 3. The opportunity for work. They followed the course pursued by their Master before them. They reverenced the Sabbath, and had regard for its institutions. They so commended themselves by this, and by their devout behaviour, as to receive from the rulers the invitation, "Brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation, say on." The result was a surprise to those who gave it. A word of exhortation was given, the like of which they never had heard before. What they heard was to them a revelation. (1) Paul declared that God, who had done such great things for His chosen people of old time, had now, according to promise, completed His work of grace by giving unto Israel a Saviour (vers. 17–23). (2) Paul went on to prove the truth of this assertion by showing—(*a*) That Jesus' advent was prophetically pre-announced by John, His forerunner (vers. 24, 25). (*b*) That Jesus rose from the dead (vers. 26–37). After reciting how the Messiah was slain, Paul proved His resurrection, first, by the fact that He was seen of chosen witnesses; second, by

quotations from the Psalms, which showed that this resurrection was nothing more than a fulfilment of the promise made unto the fathers. (3) Paul declared that "through this Man is proclaimed unto you remission of sins." (4) Paul warned his hearers of the fatal consequences of despising this offer of salvation. 4. The fruit of the work. The address of Paul—(1) Aroused a general interest (ver 42). It is a good sign when there is a general desire to have a sermon repeated. (2) Secured many converts (ver. 43). These had become so obedient to the truth, that the apostles needed only to urge them "to continue in the grace of God." (3) Bitter opposition was aroused (ver. 45). Jealousy has been the secret of the opposition to many a new religious movement. The Jews here were jealous of their new leaders, and of the hold they and their doctrines were getting. II. THE WORD REJECTED. 1. The bold word (ver. 46). They were not cowed by the opposition. They had within them a moral courage, born of the Spirit and of a conviction of right, that made them more than a match for their opponents. Bold words, uttered under such circumstances, make revolutions in opinions. 2. The spoken word. The Divine order was Jews first, then Gentiles. The Jews were the natural sons of the household, and therefore had the first right to the Father's proclamation of a new inheritance for all of His children. 3. The word thrust away. Note—(1) That those who reject the gospel judge themselves to be "unworthy of eternal life." The choice that a man makes determines his personal worth. God demands no more worthiness in men than that they shall accept the offer of salvation. (2) That when men demonstrate that they are unworthy of eternal life, it is the duty of Christian workers to turn to others. There is no use in labouring in a barren field, when a rich harvest can be reaped near by. Better save ten, than work on unavailingly with one. 4. The word of command (ver. 47). The redemption of the Gentiles was no new addition to the plan of salvation. From the beginning God intended that those who sat in darkness should see a great light. His eye was fixed upon "the uttermost part of the earth," as well as upon the land of the covenant. 5. The word glorified (ver. 48). They proved themselves to be worthy of eternal life, for many believed, "and the Word of the Lord was spread abroad throughout all the region." III. THE WORD PERSECUTED. Note—1. The unbelieving Jews. They demonstrated that they were unworthy of eternal life by conducting themselves as though inspired by the evil one. 2. The believing disciples. "The disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Ghost." The persecutors, on the contrary, were filled with jealousy and with hate. They succeeded in driving away Paul and Barnabas, but the apostles left behind them a peace and joy that could not be banished. The missionaries were expelled, but the gospel had come to stay. (*M. C. Hazard.*) **And went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down.**—*Paul at Antioch:*—In these verses there are many inferential lessons: *e.g.*, ver. 26. We are not to cast our pearls before swine; it was to those who feared God that Paul spoke of the great salvation. To him that hath shall be given; those who fear God shall be led to the knowledge of His truth. Ver. 27. Ignorance is a frequent cause of crime; hence the importance of educational effort. It is possible for us to misunderstand the things with which we are most familiar. How little we know of the tendencies of our actions; they may actually accomplish the very opposite of what we intended. Ver. 28. A blameless life will not necessarily exempt from hatred and persecution. Hatred is irrational; let us be on our guard against its perverting influences. Ver. 29. There is a limit to all that men can do to us, and it is soon reached. Ver. 34. The men of the greatest influence and activity soon reach the end of their course and pass away; only Christ remains the same efficient power in all generations. Note here—I. PAUL'S METHOD OF PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO THE JEWS. He urged them to accept it because—1. In Christ were fulfilled the promises made to their fathers. This Paul used to establish by copious quotations from the Old Testament, his object being always to prove that Jesus was not the founder of a new religion, but the Messiah of whom the prophets had spoken. 2. The ignorance and wickedness of the Jewish rulers had led to the accomplishment of predictions that could not otherwise have been fulfilled. 3. By the resurrection of Christ God had completely reversed this condemnation by men. 4. Christ confers on them who believe on Him greater blessings than could be obtained from the Mosaic law. II. LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM THIS METHOD. 1. Let us endeavour to conciliate those whom we seek to convert. 2. Let us make Christ the central theme of our teaching. 3. In our presentation of Christ and all truth, let us adapt ourselves to our hearers. What a contrast between this address and that on Mars Hill! 4. Yet no fear of offending the prejudices of our hearers

must lead us to keep back any portion of the truth. 5. While always maintaining the spirit of love, let us not hesitate, if need be, to persuade our hearers by the terrors of the Lord. (*R. A. Bertram.*) *Paul at Antioch*:—I. HE BROUGHT A GREAT MESSAGE. It was not an ingenious development of a trivial theme. No doubt the account of the sermon is only the merest outline, but it calls to a living interest in the few great themes of the gospel. A true religious knowledge is not an infinite number of anatomical bits of information about the Bible. He whose heart and mind are filled with the thoughts of God's sovereignty, and Christ's redemption and the resurrection life, has a true knowledge of the revelation. Other things are important only as they throw light on these. II. HE REINFORCED HIS MESSAGE BY THE POWER OF HIS OWN INTENSE CONVICTION. He was not half persuaded merely of the truth he preached. It was a message to the utterance of which he had given his life, upon the truth of which he had staked his own destiny. III. THE GOSPEL MESSAGE THUS BROUGHT TO ANTIOCH REVEALED THE HEARTS OF HER CITIZENS. 1. The Jews were narrow, unteachable, holding what truth they had in unrighteousness: they judged themselves "unworthy of eternal life." 2. The Gentiles awakened to a transient interest in a new religion, in their sudden excitement betokened their lack of thought and earnestness in receiving the grace of God. They were the "stony-ground" hearers. 3. The "devout women of honourable estate" were able to influence the municipal authorities, and to stir up persecution against the apostles. In so doing, they passed judgment upon themselves, separating themselves from the greater number of "honourable women," who elsewhere greatly aided the apostles in their labours. 4. The Roman authorities, tolerant of the Jewish religion because careless about all religion; deprecating excitements, solicitous for peace; easily persuaded, for the sake of quiet, to banish the disturbers—their irreligious nature is disclosed to us. Thus the gospel revealed the hearts of all. It compelled all to take sides. And so now men cannot come into the full light of the gospel without showing what manner of men they are. IV. THE MESSAGE NOT ONLY REVEALED CHARACTER—IT FORMED CHARACTER. God's Word does not leave men as it finds them. The gospel has power to quicken the conscience; but when the clearer voice of conscience is disobeyed, estrangement from God is deepened. More evident and remarkable was its transforming power upon those that believed. They were "filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost." V. THE OPPOSITION OF THE JEWS TO THE MESSAGE SUGGESTS THAT THERE IS A LIMIT TO RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL AT GIVEN TIMES AND PLACES. Having clearly set before the Jews the claims of the gospel, Paul had discharged his obligation (ver. 46). Every man who has learned from the gospel what the state of the natural heart is, and what the power is by which God renews the heart, and what the channel is through which Divine grace comes to men, has learned enough to be fully accountable for his own salvation. To him the Church has performed her mission and discharged her obligation. When she has set before you the gift of God, which is eternal life, you must judge yourself worthy or unworthy of it. VI. THE GOSPEL BRINGS ABIDING AND INCREASING BLESSINGS TO THOSE WHO RECEIVE IT (ver. 52). The persecution of Paul and Barnabas did not shake their faith. By the presence of the Holy Ghost they were freed from shame and fear, and filled with joyous hope. (*W. G. Sperry.*) *Paul's first recorded speech*:—1. Paul and Barnabas did not violently separate themselves from old traditions and religious companionships. The Christian is not the enemy of the Jew; he owes everything precious in his civilisation and in his hope to the Jew. There was a custom in the synagogue which we have not in the church. The rulers of the synagogue, noticing distinguished persons in the audience, would invite them to address the assembly. In the olden time they believed that the Word was its own defence, that the fire of the Lord would disinfect whatever it touched, and that to be in the synagogue was to be deeply religious, and loyal to the spirit of the house. These things have all changed. Men can be in the Christian church in an unchristian spirit. The mere verbalist, yes, and even the mocker, may find his way into the church, and be only too glad to have an opportunity to contradict what he did not understand. The usual challenge having been given, Paul stood up. That was an event in history. In that brief sentence you have the beginning of a battle which was concluded with these words—"I have fought a good fight," &c. Paul did not stand up by himself. Men are lifted up. Every action of the loyal life is an action of inspiration. The good man lays no plans, and makes no arrangements which can exclude the sudden and incalculable inspiration of God. 2. This is Paul's first recorded speech. I like to be present at beginnings. There is a subtle, tender, mysterious joy about

planting roots and sowing seed, covering it up and leaving it in the darkness; then what a surprise it is to come back in due time and find the green lancet puncturing the soil and coming up to look at the light it has been groping for all the while! Sometimes our first speeches were very poor because they were our own. We made them, wrote them out, graved them upon the unwilling memory, and they were like something put on, not growing out; and so we begged our friends, who were unhappy enough to be able to quote some portions of them, to forget them if they could! But the first speeches of the Christian defender were incapable of improvement. They were as complete as the fiat of God which said—"Let there be light: and there was light." 3. Paul based his apology on the model of Stephen. We cannot tell of what elements our life is made up. It is no one shower of rain that makes the summer green. We are gathering from every point all day long. Paul was no student of rhetoric when he listened to Stephen; but Stephen's speech, like all vital speech, got into the man, and became part of his intellectual and spiritual life. Paul began as Stephen did, with a narrative of Jewish history. To their credit be it spoken, the Jews were never tired of hearing their own history. Are we patient under the citation of the facts which make up our history? We cannot live in sentiment. You cannot build a castle in the air that you can live in; it must be founded upon rock, however high up into the air you may carry it. This was the great law of Jewish eloquence and Jewish appeal, basing the whole argument upon the rock of undisputed history. Do not some of us occasionally say, "Tell me the old, old story of Jesus and His love"?—therein we are partly Jewish—that is our story! As the Jews began from the formation of themselves as a people, we begin at Bethlehem, and in proportion as we are in the right spirit and temper, we are never tired of hearing the old, old story. 4. Notice in this speech what we may call Paul's grip of God. I know not any speech of the same length in which the sacred word occurs so frequently. The factor we have omitted from our sermons is only—God! We are afraid or ashamed of His name; we pronounce it hesitatingly, mincingly, timidly. Paul did not use it so; he hurled it like a thunderbolt; he measured everything by that grand standard. All through history he saw a Figure after the similitude of God. You can dislodge a man from any position but that. 5. As we find Stephen's character in Stephen's apology, so we may find Paul's character in Paul's exposition. Mark his courtesy. He was no rough intruder, but a gentleman born, and indestructible all through and through, polite, refined, courteous, gentlemanly. His tact is most wonderful; he notices how the assembly is made up—he is a poor speaker who takes no note of his hearers. Paul saw not only the Jews, but the Greeks and proselytes, who, wearied with the absurdities of polytheism, had come to believe there was one God, a spiritual, invisible, eternal God! So Paul accosted both classes, "Men of Israel"—always distinguishable, never to be confounded with others—"and ye that fear God"—converted from mythology to true spirituality of thought—"give audience." How delicately he puts the case in ver. 27! 6. How wondrously Paul introduced the right way of quoting Scripture! There is hardly a quotation which he makes here which is not a double or a treble quotation turned into one: *e.g.*, ver. 22 cannot be found in the Old Testament; it is at least three passages made into one. It is all in the Bible, but is in no one place in the Scripture. He does not quote the Bible who quotes mere texts. The Bible is larger than any one text that is in it. There is a spirit of collocation and a spirit of quotation, a Bible-spirit that can bring from east, west, north, and south lines that shall focalise in one intense and dazzling glory. 7. Paul's voice surely had a quiver in it which no reporter could catch—for in reports we do not get the tonic colour and force of speech—when he said, "God gave unto them Saul," &c. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Paul's first reported sermon*:—Note three great facts which he was anxious to impress on their attention. I. THAT THEIR SCRIPTURES, WHICH EXHIBITED GOD'S SPECIAL KINDNESS TO THEM AS A PEOPLE, CONTAINED THE PROMISE OF A MESSIAH. After reminding them of certain striking facts in their history, showing how wondrously kind God had been to them as a people, extending from vers. 17 to 21, he directs them at once to the great prophetic truth that there was, according to their Scriptures, to come a Messiah. He states—1. That David was to be the progenitor of that Messiah (vers. 22, 23). 2. That John the Baptist, one of the greatest prophets of their age, was to be His forerunner (vers. 24, 25). This fact, namely, that their Scriptures pointed to a Messiah, they would be prepared, of course, readily to admit. Hence he proceeds to another fact arising out of this which would not be so easily admitted. II. THAT THE MESSIAH PREDICTED BY THEIR SCRIPTURES HAD ACTUALLY APPEARED ON THE EARTH (ver. 26).

He states facts that occurred in the history of the Messiah while here. 1. That He was crucified and buried according to their Scriptures (vers. 27–29). In their Scriptures they would find an account of just the treatment He actually met with on the earth. 2. That God actually raised Him from the dead, also, according to their Scriptures (ver. 31). He states that His resurrection formed the glad tidings which they had to declare unto them (ver. 32). He states that His resurrection was a fulfilment of their Scriptures (vers. 33–35). In quoting these passages he seemed to anticipate that some of his audience would say that they referred to David; but this he declares is impossible, as that David "was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption." The other great fact we discover in this sermon is—III. THAT THIS MESSIAH IS THE MEDIATOR THROUGH WHOM THE WORLD IS TO BE SAVED. He states—1. That faith in Him will secure the forgiveness of all sins (ver. 38). 2. That the rejection of Him is of all crimes the most to be deprecated (vers. 40, 41). (1) That sometimes the Divine judgments following the rejection of God's Word have been foretold. It is the principle of the Divine government that punishment shall ever follow unbelief. Numerous instances in the Bible might be cited. The apostle quotes a case here where such punishment had been predicted (Hab. i. 5). The original design of the prediction was to proclaim the ruin that would come upon the Jewish nation by the Chaldeans. The reason why that ruin came on them from God was their unbelief. (2) That the judgments that have followed unbelief in past times should be taken as types and warnings of those that will follow the rejection of God's Word in Jesus Christ. Thus the apostle uses Divine judgment here. The passage which he quotes from the Septuagint, not by any means with literal accuracy, he cites to show, not that this particular prophecy will be fulfilled in the experience of the rejecters of Christ, but that something as terrible. From the language we may infer—(*a*) That the judgment, when it comes, will fill the victim with amazement—"Behold, ye despisers, and wonder." What wild amazement seized the antediluvians, the men of Sodom, &c., when the judgment came. (*b*) That the judgment, when it comes, will effect utter destruction—"perish." (*c*) That the judgment that is to come is incredibly tremendous. It is "a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Paul in his introductory discourse already a complete Paul:*—1. The profound interpreter of Scripture (vers. 17, 33). 2. The large-hearted Apostle of the Gentiles (vers. 16, 26). 3. The truly evangelical preacher of the faith (vers. 38, 39). 4. The undaunted witness of the truth (vers. 40, 41). (*K. Gerok.*) *"I will make you fishers of men":*—The apostles, in obedience to this saying, have—1. Cast their net in many places (ver. 13). 2. Suffered not themselves to be hindered in their work, though some went back (ver. 13). 3. Regarded every time of work as opportune (ver. 14). 4. Taken advantage of every place (ver. 14). 5. Disregarded no request in order to testify of the grace of God in Christ Jesus (ver 16). (*Lisco.*)

Vers. 17–41. **The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers.**—*The hours on the world's clock:*—1. Moving slowly forward as the hours of the Eternal God, with whom a thousand years are as one day, and of the long-suffering God, whose patience has borne with this perverse world, as it did with Israel for forty years in the wilderness. 2. But unceasingly progressing to the end appointed of God—of the world's redemption, and the world's judgment. (*K. Gerok.*) *The history of the kingdom of God:*—The history of the world in the light of the gospel transfigured into the history of the kingdom of God. I. ITS PLACE is sketched out before in the eternal counsels of Divine wisdom, power, and love. II. ITS SECTIONS OF TIME are stations on the progress of humanity to its destination. III. ITS HEROES are the vassals of Christ, and willingly or unwillingly the servants of His kingdom. IV. ITS END is the glorification of God in humanity. (*Ibid.*) *The providence of God in the history of Israel:*—An encouraging type of the Divine government of mankind. I. WHEREIN THIS PROVIDENCE IS RECOGNISED. 1. In the history of Israel. 2. In the history of the world. II. WHAT INFLUENCE THE CERTAINTY OF THIS DIVINE GOVERNMENT SHOULD HAVE UPON US. 1. We should be comforted with the sure confidence that the issue of things will be the best. 2. We should do our part, in order that the Divine plan of salvation may be more and more realised. (*Lisco.*) *Christ, the world's Saviour:*—I. FORETOLD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT (vers. 16–25.) II. REJECTED BY HIS PEOPLE (vers. 26–29.) III. PREACHED AS THE SALVATION OF BELIEVERS (vers. 30–41.) (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 18. **And about the time of forty years suffered He their manners in the wilderness.**—*Divine forbearance toward human perverseness retraced:*—The goodness of God to man and the ingratitude of man to God form a very striking and affecting contrast. No one can seriously review his own history or that of the Church of God for any given period without being impressed with these two thoughts. How man tries God! how God bears with man! Consider—I. THE PERIOD OF TIME. How long? "About the time of forty years." This was the period during which Israel was wandering in the wilderness. This time was appointed by God Himself. Modern travellers go the whole distance in some two or three weeks. 1. Thus we see how more or less of time may be spent in the same journey. The journey of life occupies sometimes a shorter, sometimes a longer period of time. The little infant sometimes accomplishes, in a few hours, all the space which lies for man between the cradle and the grave, while others are forty years, or sometimes forty years twice told, in completing the same journey. There is a strange diversity as to the length of life. Certainty and uncertainty are here wonderfully intermingled. The certainty, as to any number of persons of the same age, that they will on an average live so long—the utter uncertainty, as to individuals, how long this or that person may live—are very instructive. Our conclusion ought to be, "My times are in Thy hand." It is for God to determine the limits of our wanderings; it is for us to use the space allotted us with fidelity. 2. For the time allotted is also throughout a season of responsibility. We surely see this in our text. Throughout that period the Jews were observed by God, as persons responsible to Him for their use or abuse of their privileges. And it is so with us. Our birth in a Christian country, in one age of the world rather than another, with certain advantages and opportunities more or less favourable—all form part of the circumstances of our responsibility. And this responsibility goes with us throughout our life, although some may carelessly forget, and others presumptuously deny it. There is "a book of remembrance" with our God, in which is recorded a faithful history of our lives. We cannot blot out a letter in that book. There is One, who can. "I have blotted out as a cloud thy transgression," &c. 3. The time is also a time of mercies. (1) Those forty years with Israel were years of mercies. There were mercies in their deliverance from Egypt, in the provisions of the wilderness, in their education by the moral law showing the holiness of God, and by the ceremonial law showing forth His mercies in Christ Jesus—in their guidance by that pillar of a cloud by day and that pillar of fire by night—in their preservation amid hostile nations, &c., &c. (2) But are not our years years of mercies? (*a*) If Christians indeed, have there not been mercies of conviction, conversion, justification, regeneration? Mercies in our education by the law leading to Christ, and by Christ writing the law by His Spirit upon our hearts—mercies also in our guidance by the Word and Spirit, and Providence, mercies too in our recoveries from sickness, &c., &c. (*b*) But if some of you are not Christians, yet your past years have also been years of mercies. God has dealt very mercifully with you, in sparing you so long. Seek then that God's mercies of forbearance may lead you to know His mercies of loving-kindness in saving you also through His dear Son. II. THE FACT. "Suffered He their manners." 1. They provoked God in the wilderness. "Harden not your heart," says the psalmist, "as in the provocation," &c. Scarcely had they entered the wilderness, when they began to murmur at Marah. They go but a little further, when again they murmur for bread. Soon after at Massah and at Meribah for water. They come to Sinai, and there they fall into idolatry. Then at Taberah again they complained. Then how badly the spies behaved. After this was the rebellion of Korah, and murmurings again and again. Is not the term used in our text exceedingly appropriate and expressive? Could any people have behaved much worse than this called the people of God? 2. Thus then He had to "suffer their manners," and He did suffer them with a patience that is truly wonderful. Yet, observe, it was not with the weak patience of one who gives up the rod of government, and leaves a people to "do what is right in their own eyes." His patience was that of one who yet showed Himself just and holy. He sent repeated punishments; He gave many warnings; He plied them with remonstrance and expostulation. III. THE INSTRUCTION FOR US. They were very like us, and we have been very like them. Let any one of you review any definite portion of his life and he will be alike humbled and surprised to see how like he has been to those, whose "manners God suffered in the wilderness." More indeed has been expected from us, because more has been given. 1. They murmured repeatedly, and so displeased God. "Neither

murmur ye," says the apostle, "as some of them also murmured." And yet what fault more common? Many murmur if "their bread and their water" be scarce, when they had much better be praying, "Give us our daily bread," and be trusting to Him who has said, "bread shall be given them and their water shall be sure." There are who murmur for "the flesh-pots of Egypt," and complain because they are debarred from some of the pleasures of the world. 2. The Israelites were guilty of idolatry, and Christians are exhorted, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Nor is the exhortation needless. To love riches as the world do, is to be an idolater of Mammon. To love pleasure is to be an idolater of pleasure. To love sin is to give to sin what belongs to God. Who of us can review life for any term of years, and not now own that in some or in many or in all of these ways we have been idolaters? (*J. Hambleton, M.A.*)

Vers. 22-23. **He raised up David.**—*David*:—David is one of the grandest men in the Bible, and his character is more fully pourtrayed than that of any other with one exception. The sweet singer of Israel was royally dowered with charms of the person, with gifts of the mind, and with susceptibilities of the heart; and, from a youth up, he was as one who is well beloved, and therefore rightly named. He was great in all the faculties of his soul, and has not been placed higher in the esteem of the Church than his virtues have warranted. It has been questioned how he could be called a man after God's own heart, and his crimes have been sketched with nauseating fulness. But the Church no more defends them than he did or the Bible. I. WHY THEN ARE HIS SINS SO FULLY PRESENTED? 1. That we may see how full of infirmity are the best of men. 2. That we may see how efficacious grace is to overcome them. 3. That we may see how bitter is the sorrow of the truly penitent, and how wide is the door of mercy. II. WHY IS HE CALLED A MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART? 1. David was chosen by God. 2. As thus chosen he would more strictly observe the revealed will of God. 3. David was a man of fervent piety, of swift repentance, and of the deepest spiritual aspirations. 4. He was large-hearted, true as a friend, affectionate as a father, and ever ready to be reconciled with his foes—to forgive and forget. In these attributes of a fatherly heart he resembled God. III. THREE INFERENCES FROM HIS HISTORY. 1. This life is not an encouragement to commit sin or to continue in sin, but an encouragement to those struggling to be delivered from their sins. 2. Any one may be called a man after God's own heart, if his life is marked by the same religious fervour, by the same sincere penitence, and by the same deep longings after God by day and by night. 3. We must seek after likeness to God in our moral nature—in our likes and dislikes. (*Homiletic Monthly.*) *The ability to see the beautiful*:—How much easier it is to see defects than to see beauties, in anything at which we look. No art education is requisite to the perceiving of a broken arm or a nose, on an ancient Grecian statue, or of the weather-stains on its marble surface; but it does require a trained eye and a cultivated taste to recognise the lines of beauty, and the tokens of power, in a discoloured and a battered fragment of a master-work of art. And so it is in the reading of a book, or in the observing of a character: the ability to perceive that which is worthy, and that which is admirable, is higher and rarer than the ability to perceive errors and flaws. No teacher or scholar has been too stupid to see David's faults. Only here and there has one been noble enough, and clear-eyed enough, to recognise the exceptional high qualities, and the transcendent attractions of character, which lift David above his fellows. And so, again, this truth is continually being illustrated. Let him who would have the credit of superior ability be careful not to criticise or to condemn too freely; for that is a sure mark of inferiority. The power to point out beauty and worth, where others would pass it by, is, in itself, a proof of excellence. Why can not all aim at that higher standard? (*The Sunday-school Times.*) **A man after Mine own heart.**—*The sins of the saints*:—1. We all know of the frequency with which testimony is given to God's affection for David. Speaking of him to his successors, He always holds him up to their admiration (1 Kings ix. 4). And the writer of the Chronicles sums up the life of any monarch who had turned into devious ways in such words as those of 2 Chron. xxviii. 1. 2. Now, God did not choose the Psalmist-warrior as we choose our friends, by a sort of self-blinding; discerning in them gifts and graces which to all other eyes they obviously lack. God will never prefer a man to hold such a position in His thoughts as David held, without some just cause of esteem. The assertion that God takes an unworthy man into His pre-eminent affection because He wills to do so carries in it its own contradiction. God, like

man, has to obey the law of His nature, and that law is that He can only choose what is right and good. Even the passage, "Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated," must not be interpreted to mean that He loved the less worthy and condemned the better. Otherwise we strip God of His noblest attributes, and make Him inferior to man in the moral equities of reason and conscience; and, in the words of Bacon, "It were better to have no opinion of God at all, than such an opinion as is unworthy of Him, for the one is unbelief and the other is contumely. Plutarch saith well to this purpose: 'Surely,' saith he, 'I had rather a great deal men should say there was no such man as Plutarch, than that they should say there was one Plutarch who would eat his children as soon as they were born, as the poets speak of the god Saturn.'" 3. Now, this representation of God's preference for David seems not to be justified when you turn to his life. Of course in estimating the man we must take into account the morality of his age, his moral superiority to the contemporary sovereigns, and the temptations kings were subject to, and we ought not to judge him by the light of these later times, but by the light that was given to him. But our purpose is not to extenuate or minimize David's sins, but to vindicate God's joy in him. Doubtless there were in David's life hours of nearness to God, times of serenest reliance, and trust, and joy in God, and faithful service, and prompt obedience. But there were also in this same man's life depths of infamy. What, then, was this something that dwarfed the glaring defects of the life? We shall understand this if we consider—I. THE PROPER WAY TO ESTIMATE THE SINS OF THE SAINTS. It is our custom to fix our eyes on any virtuous or vicious action we have found out in a man's life, not caring to inquire whether it is the expression of virtuous or vicious principle. Now, we ought to a great degree to overlook the outward details, be they blemishes or merits, and estimate the man by the principles on which he is deliberately endeavouring to mould his character—by the moral spinal column that in the main holds his life together. Neither Noah's act of drunkenness nor Moses' murder of the Egyptian on the one hand, nor Balaam's truthfulness nor Judas' penitence or remorse on the other, should depreciate or exalt them in our eyes, as neither of these actions or mental states are traceable to vital principle. Now, David's sins, gross and coarse though they were, were accidental; they belied the principle on which he was painfully endeavouring to mould his character; and so God, who looks upon such frailties "with larger, other eyes than ours, making allowance for us all," forgave and overlooked the casual blemishes, the life in the main being faithful and true. His sins brought awful retribution upon him, for God's forgiveness only cancels the alienation between the human and Divine mind. What he sowed, that he reaped; but, when the anguish of penitence filled his spirit, the enmity which the sin had established between his mind and God's became a thing of the past, and David was restored to the grace and favour from which he had temporarily lapsed. For there was in this man a soul that, often plunged in the mire, refused to abide there, and ever strove to rise up and take its flight to a serener and purer atmosphere. If I do the sin I would not, the sin which is not in keeping with the moral habits I am faithfully endeavouring to acquire, then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. And if I delight in the law of God after the inner man, and see another law in my members warring against this law in which I delight, and by which I aspire to live, and leading me into great and grievous sins, then, though with my flesh I serve sin, with my mind I serve God, and I claim to be judged to be what I am in my aspirations and hopes. II. WE SHALL UNDERSTAND GOD'S LOVE AND PRAISE OF DAVID IF WE REFLECT THAT LOVE AND PRAISE ARE DUE, NOT NECESSARILY TO THE MAN WHO LIVES MOST VIRTUOUSLY, BUT TO THE MAN IN WHOSE LIFE THE MORAL STRUGGLE HAS BEEN MOST FAITHFULLY MAINTAINED. There are many men virtuous because it is constitutionally easier for them to be virtuous than not. Purity that springs from a heart that keeps pure because it never warms, can lay no claim either to human or Divine admiration. There is nothing meritorious in automatic goodness. But there is something great and heroic in the life of the man who has had all his days to fight with moral infirmities and passions, and who, though often conquered and crushed, has risen again with resistance in his heart and defiance on his lips to renew the contest. This is what I find in God's love for David, and in the way Scripture always refers to him. No more difficult life-problem has been given to mere man than was given to him to solve. Look under what trying conditions he contrived to keep his heart subject to the fear of God. One day we find him a shepherd lad, the next the hero of Israel, and in rapid succession court musician, king's son-in-law, the freebooter of the wilderness, the leader of outlaws, the

mercenary soldier, the monarch, the exile, and finally the monarch again. And this leads me to conclude with a question which has often perplexed us—the unequal distribution of moral natures, one man receiving from God a nature prone to goodness, another a nature prone to evil. We have men with constitutional infirmities saying, "God has given me a nature that prevents me ever being a saint; why should God punish me for not being that which the rigorous necessities of the nature He has given me makes it impossible for me to be? I am not responsible for my nature. It is my fate." Yes; and David's life was lived and is written to be your answer, and throw light upon your case. There is your nature: easy to be brought within the power of goodness or difficult, it is your work. Others with a milder task set before them may march from moral victory to moral victory. But if you have not left the evil within you to govern you, but have resolutely essayed to drive it out, and subject your lower nature to the sovereignty of your higher, God will pronounce His "Well done" upon you. Failure is no sin, faithlessness is; and, judged by this standard, there may be more of the grace of God, more of the divinest moral energy, more conscience, reason, and love admitted into the heart, and shaping the life of a man fighting, like David, against the infirmities of his flesh and the savage bias of his nature, though the fighting be unsuccessful, than in the heart and life of many a saint to whom goodness comes easy. (*J. Forfar.*) **Of this man's seed hath God . . . raised . . . Jesus.**—*Christ, the Son of David, more than David.*—I. ACCORDING TO HIS SPIRITUAL DISPOSITION. 1. David a man according to God's own heart to do all His will (ver. 22). 2. Christ, God's own Son, fulfilling in perfect obedience His Father's work. II. ACCORDING TO HIS CAREER. 1. David ascended the throne through lowliness and hardships. 2. Christ humbled to death on the Cross, exalted to the Father's right hand (vers. 27–31). III. ACCORDING TO THE SPHERE OF HIS WORK. 1. David as king over Israel, a shepherd of his people, and a terror to his enemies. 2. Christ as the Saviour of the world, an Eternal Prince of Peace to His people, and a terrible Judge to the despisers (vers. 38–41). (*K. Gerok.*)

Ver. 25. **John fulfilled his course.**—*On the duty, happiness, and honour of maintaining the course prescribed to us by Providence:*—The life of every individual may be compared to a river: rising in obscurity, increasing by the accession of tributary streams, and, after flowing through a longer or shorter distance, losing itself in some common receptacle. Whilst a stream is confined within its banks, it fertilises, enriches, and improves the country through which it passes; but if it deserts its channel, by stagnating in lakes and marshes, its exhalations diffuse pestilence and disease around. Some glide away in insignificance: whilst others become celebrated. Some are tranquil and gentle in their course; whilst others, rushing in torrents, dashing over precipices, become objects of terror and dismay. But, however diversified their character, or their direction, all agree in having their course short, limited, and determined. Thus human characters, however various, have one common destiny; their course of action may be greatly diversified, but they all lose themselves in the ocean of eternity. Few have appeared on the stage of action whose life was more important than of John. His course was a very extraordinary one. John was called to a very singular work; his ministry formed an epoch in the history of the Church. It was the connecting link between the two dispensations. His career was brilliant, successful, short, and his end violent and tragical. I. THAT THERE IS A PRESCRIBED COURSE OR SPHERE OF ACTION APPOINTED TO EVERY INDIVIDUAL BY THE AUTHOR OF OUR NATURE. 1. We are not a race of independent creatures sent into the world to follow the dictates of our own will. We are not our own; we belong to another. To do God's will, to serve the end of His government, and to promote His glory; these are the great ends of our existence. Thus our Saviour Himself when in this world was devoted to His Father's will. "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me," *&c.* And we live to no purpose, or to a bad one, but as we conform to this. 2. But, although this is the universal principle by which all are to be actuated, yet it admits of great and numerous variations in its practical application. The manner in which an apostle, for instance, was called upon to do this, is not that in which an ordinary teacher is to do it; nor the manner of an ordinary teacher that of a private Christian. The duties of a sovereign are different from those of his ministers; and those again, from the duties of inferior magistrates; and of magistrates, from those of private subjects. Of the rich it is required "to do good and to communicate"; of the poor, to be prudent, diligent, careful; and so on.

Although the end is the same in all, yet the manner in which this end is viewed will be various: the rays of light, when blended in day, are simple and of a uniform colour; but when they are refracted through a prism, they exhibit all the colours of the rainbow. II. THAT THERE IS A SET AND LIMITED TIME ALLOTTED TO THAT SPHERE AND COURSE OF ACTION: "There is an appointed time to man upon the earth." 1. The course of man is not indeterminate, but has its limits. If "a sparrow falleth not to the ground without His knowledge," much less can the death of a human creature take place without His interposition. Whether we fall premature victims to disease, or perish by what men call accident, or sink under the burdens of age, still it is according to the will of God, "whose counsels shall stand, and who will do all His pleasure." 2. It is short. "Thou hast made my days as an handbreadth." Whether we drop in infancy, from the cradle to the grave, or are cut off in youth; whether we attain to manhood, or even to old age; still, we soon reach the end of our course, and often without passing through its intermediate stages. 3. It is rapid and impetuous; its waves follow each other in quick succession, and many are engulfed almost as soon as they appear. Early in infancy the stream glides away like a summer brook, and leaves the fond parent mournfully to recall the pleasure he received in contemplating its unsullied purity and its playful meanders. Of those who set out with us in this journey of life, how many have disappeared from our side! III. OUR HAPPINESS AND OUR HONOUR CONSIST ENTIRELY IN COMPLETING THE COURSE WHICH GOD HAS ASSIGNED TO US. Here we are liable to fall into two great mistakes. 1. That there is some other happiness and honour than that which is to be found in fulfilling our course, in occupying that sphere of duty which God hath been pleased to assign us. Some are looking, for their satisfaction, to the pleasures of sin; others to the gratification which the world affords; some attach their notion of happiness to some external situation not yet found, and imagine it is to be met with there. Settle it in your minds that the only happiness worth seeking—that which will live in all circumstances, and abide the vicissitudes of life, consists in fulfilling our course, conforming to the Divine will, and this fountain of water flows for the refreshment of the meanest peasant, as well as of the greatest monarch. 2. That we should be able to conform ourselves to the will of God, and to our own sphere of action, better in some other state; and being therefore dissatisfied with that precise state in which His providence has placed us. The wisdom of each consists in fulfilling His own course. The course of John the Baptist was difficult, obstructed with afflictions, and beset with dangers: but he fulfilled it. How many objections might he have formed against the precise course assigned him! The poor may easily imagine how amiably and liberally they should have acted if their lot had been cast among the rich; and the rich, on the other hand, how safely they should have been preserved from a variety of snares, if they had been screened by the privacy of the poor. The young will ascribe their errors to the impetuosity so natural to their age; and the aged wish for the energy which belongs to youth: their time, they plead, is passed; it is too late for them to change. But all these are great mistakes. It is not a change of state that we want, but a change of heart. The grace of God will keep us humble in prosperity, cheer us in adversity, sustain and direct us in life, support us in death, and go with us into eternity. Finally, let each of us attach himself with more seriousness, alacrity, and fervour than ever, to the proper duties of his station; let each consider in what instances he fails to fulfil his course. The memory of John the Baptist is perpetuated with honour, because he "fulfilled his course"; while that of Herod and Pontius Pilate are covered with infamy. Which of these characters will you imitate? Whenever the gospel is preached, this alternative is presented of "shining like the sun for ever; or of awaking to shame and everlasting contempt." (*R. Hall.*)

Ver. 26. **Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.**—*To you*:—I. WHAT IS THE WORD OF THIS SALVATION? 1. It is the testimony that Jesus is the promised Saviour (ver. 23). 2. The word which promises forgiveness to all who exhibit repentance of sin, and faith in the Lord Jesus (ver. 38, 39). 3. In a word, it is the proclamation of perfect salvation, through the risen Saviour (ver. 32, 33). (1) It is comparable to a word for conciseness and simplicity. (2) It is a word, as being spoken by God, and as being His present utterance even at this moment. (3) It is a word; for it reveals Him who is truly "the Word." (4) It is a word of salvation; for it declares, describes, presents, and presses home salvation. (5) It

is a word sent, for the gospel dispensation is a mission of mercy from God, the gospel is a message, Jesus is the Messiah, and the Holy Ghost Himself is sent to work salvation among men. II. IN WHAT MANNER IS THE GOSPEL SENT TO YOU? 1. In the general commission, which ordains that it be preached to every creature. 2. In the fact that the gospel is preached in our land, the Bible is in every house, and the word is proclaimed in our streets. 3. In the providence which has brought you this day to hear the word. Very specially may you be sent to the preacher, the preacher sent to you, and the special message be sent through the preacher to you. 4. In the peculiar adaptation of it to your case, character, and necessity. A medicine which suits your disease is evidently meant for you. 5. In the power which has attended it, while you have been hearing it, though you may have resisted that power. It would be a sad thing if we had to single out even one, and say, "This word is not only sent to you"; but we are under no such painful necessity. III. IN WHAT POSITION DOES IT PLACE YOU? In a position—1. Of singular favour. Prophets and kings died without hearing what you hear (Matt. xiii. 16). 2. Of notable indebtedness to martyrs and men of God, in past ages, and in these days; for these have lived and died to bring you the gospel. 3. Of great hopefulness; for we trust you will accept it and live. 4. Of serious responsibility; for if you neglect it, how will you escape? (Heb. ii. 3). It puts it out of your power to remain unaffected by the gospel. It must either save you, or increase your condemnation. IV. IN WHAT MANNER WILL YOU TREAT THIS WORD? 1. Will you decidedly and honestly refuse it? This would be a terrible determination; but the very idea of so doing might startle you into a better mind? 2. Will you basely and foolishly delay your reply? This is a very dangerous course, and many perish in it. 3. Will you play the hypocrite, and pretend to receive it, while in your heart you reject it? 4. Will you act the part of the temporary convert? 5. Will you not rather accept the word of salvation with delight? Suppose the gospel should be taken from you by your removal to a place where it is not preached, or by the death of the minister whom you so greatly esteem. It would be just. It may happen. It has happened to others. Refuse the heavenly message no longer, lest your day of grace should end in an eternity of woe. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *To you is the word of salvation*:—I remember when Mr. Richard Weaver preached at Park Street Chapel, in his younger days, he came down from the pulpit, and ran over the pews to get at the people, that he might speak to them individually, and say, "you," and "you," and "you." I am not nimble enough on my legs to do *that*, and I do not think I should try it if I were younger: but I wish I could, somehow or another, come to each one of you, and press home these glad tidings of great joy. *You*, my dear old friend, it means *you!* *You*, young woman, over there to the right, it means *you!* *You*, dear child, sitting with your grandmother, it means *you!* "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (*Ibid.*) *The word of salvation*:—I. THE GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE GOSPEL. The gospel is "the word of this salvation"—1. As being the sole authority on which we ascertain the possibility of that salvation. Without it we should be inextricably bewildered on the question whether or not our salvation could be made consistent with the character of God. (1) We may learn much respecting the Divine character without the aid of written revelation. The "heavens above, the earth beneath, the waters under the earth," startle us with the conviction that He who made them and still preserves them must necessarily be a God of wisdom and knowledge. We gaze on the stupendous structure and mechanism of the universe, and we perceive inscribed on every part of it the signs of an almighty hand. We look upon the creatures of various kinds that people this world of ours, and we remark indications equally expressive of the goodness of Him "by whom all things consist." And in addition there is, in the law He has promulgated, a revelation of His perfect purity and justice. (2) But whence are we to ascertain His mercy? Or by what means may we discover that "God may be just and yet the justifier" of those who have broken His commandment? From other quarters we look for information in vain. Or, if an answer come, it is to assure us that God "will by no means clear the guilty." (3) It is the gospel only, which satisfies us in this great inquiry. Here and here alone we learn that in the restoration of our nature, mercy and truth may meet together, and righteousness and peace embrace each other. 2. As it reveals to us the plan and means of our "salvation." It opens to us the very principle and motive in which the plan originated, by assuring us that "God so loved the world," and that it is "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He hath

saved us." Do we inquire in what manner the purpose of this grace and mercy was carried into practical effect? We are informed it was by the gift of His well-beloved and only-begotten Son. Are we desirous of knowing in what respect this Son was given? We learn that though, "being in the form of God," yet He "humbled Himself" and "took upon Himself the form of a servant," and finally was put to death. Do we inquire, what was the immediate issue of the amazing series of sufferings through which He passed? We are assured that on the third day He "rose again from the dead," and that therefore "God hath highly exalted Him to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins." Are we concerned to know by what means we are to receive the benefit of all this love and condescension? Directions clear and numerous are set before us, so that we need not miss our providential way. 3. As being the instrument by which it is effected. It is not merely the wisdom of God, or the grace of God, it is also "the power of God unto salvation." The gospel is indebted for its former and its present triumphs, not to the zeal or eloquence of its ministers, but to that Divine power which was breathed into it on its original promulgation, and which still continues to make it effectual. "Not by power, nor by might, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." 4. The character of the gospel as a "word of salvation," becomes still more strikingly apparent, when it is compared with preceding revelations. (1) Let it be compared, for instance, with the law of Moses. That law was eminently—(*a*) A word of terror. How different were the circumstances under which "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ to those under which the law came." Instead of being terrified and driven back with "thunderings and lightnings," we are encouraged to "come with boldness to a throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy," &c. (*b*) A word of condemnation. How different are the accents in which the gospel speaks to us. For, whilst it fully secures the glory of the Divine holiness, it assures us at the same time "that through this Man is preached unto us the forgiveness of sins." (2) And the gospel is distinguished from all preceding revelations, as in comparison they were at best but words of promise. In their clearest discoveries they were but as the dimness of the twilight which precedes the glory of the risen day. (3) And in contrast with false systems of religion, which, as regards their effects on the habits of civil life and of domestic society, are systems of destruction and cruelty, the gospel is a "word of salvation"; since it instructs us to "do ourselves no harm," and directs us to love our neighbour as ourselves. And if it be contrasted with such systems, with regard to their effect upon man's spiritual and eternal interests, they appear not only systems of cruelty to the body, but also systems of awful destruction to the soul. II. THE PRACTICAL DUTIES WHICH RESULT FROM ITS COMMUNICATION. It has not indeed been sent to you as it was sent originally to the Jews, by special revelation from heaven, or by the personal ministry of Christ. Still it *has* been sent. And the practical duties are—1. To receive implicitly the "form of doctrine" which that word inculcates. In matters which depend on human authority we have a right to doubt, and if we please, to contradict and to deny. But the "word of the gospel" is not "the word of men"; it is "in truth the word of God." As such, it is clothed with an authority which precludes at once all right on our part to question any doctrine it proposes. "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker." 2. To gratefully accept the benefits it offers. 3. To expect that salvation which constitutes the subject of it. The very reason why, notwithstanding your repeated rejection of this word, it has continued to be sent to you, has been that God willeth not the death of a sinner, but would rather that all men should repent and live. 4. To send it to others. For every benefit bestowed upon us involves an obligation to be "merciful even as our Father who is in heaven is merciful." (*Jonathan Crowther.*) *The word of salvation*:—I. NEEDED. "What must I do to be saved?" the question of questions. 1. Men are lost, and need saving from the consequences of their wandering. 2. Men are under condemnation, and need saving from the threatenings of the broken law. 3. Men are sundered from God, the Fountain of life and blessedness, and need saving from the death that never dies. 4. Men are in bondage to sin and evil habits, and need saving from that dire captivity. And where is the saving word? Nature is dumb on the subject of salvation; conscience emphasises the existence of the evil, but is silent as to the remedy; philosophy has grappled with the problem, but has left it where it was; educational and reformatory measures have removed a few symptoms, but left the root of the disease untouched. History is the arena on which many saving experiments have been tried; let the student say which has succeeded. II. SENT. 1. From whom? (1) Not from man. The patient is

unequal to effect his own cure. The declaration of the text is a disclaimer of originality to an age sick of original efforts to cure an inveterate disease—a disease, too, beyond the power of original physicians even to understand. The office of the gospel preacher is simply to tell what he has been told in the clearest way. (2) From God who knows the evil thoroughly; who pities and loves the sinner; who desires above all things his salvation, and has made abundant provision for it in Christ. 2. To whom. "You," whoever you may be. (1) Jews ineffectually striving to work out their salvation by the works of the law. (2) God-fearing Gentiles endeavouring to construct a salvation out of the elements of their morality. (3) Sinners of every degree. III. ACCEPTED. 1. Heard. Hence the need of Scripture study, and attendance on the ministry of reconciliation. Ignorance is inexcusable in a land of Bibles and churches. 2. Believed in. A sick man who has no faith in his doctor or his prescriptions will hardly be persuaded to take his prescriptions. So there must be an assent to the verity and divinity of the gospel message. 3. Embraced. Not simply with the intellect, but with the heart. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." When may the word of salvation be accepted? Now. For it is needed now; it is sent now. The need for it will not grow less by lapse of time; nor will time make it more acceptable. (*J. W. Burn.*) *The word of salvation*:—I. TO WHOM SENT. To all sinners, for all sinners need it, and it is suited to the case of all. II. FOR WHAT PURPOSE SENT. As a word of—1. Pardon to the condemned sinner. 2. Peace to the rebellious sinner. 3. Life to the dead sinner. 4. Liberty to the captive sinner. 5. Healing to the diseased sinner. 6. Cleansing to the polluted sinner. 7. Direction to the bewildered sinner. 8. Refreshment to the weary sinner. 9. Comfort to the disconsolate sinner. (*R. Erskine.*) *The word of salvation delivered*:—I. THE TRUE CHARACTER OF THE GOSPEL WHICH WE PREACH. It—1. Reveals salvation clearly. 2. Offers it freely. 3. Confers it actually on all who will receive it. II. THE COMMISSION WHICH WE BEAR IN RELATION TO THE GOSPEL. We must address—1. Those who on account of their attachment to the law suppose themselves not to need it. 2. Those who through their alienation from God and His law suppose themselves beyond its reach. (*C. Simeon, M.A.*) *Words of salvation*:—Even in the ordinary experience of life men are saved by words—the words of their fellows. When a blind man avoids a precipice, and turns into a path of safety at the warning voice of a benevolent passenger, he has been saved by words. When the various portions of an army make a combined movement by orders of its chief, they are saved from ruin, and placed in safety, by words. Words, false and meaningless, however reverently they may be received, will not save, and on the other hand, words true and Divine will not save those who despise and neglect them. (*W. Arnot.*) *A message of salvation*:—It has been stated that Addison, the great essayist, found peace by believing in Christ ere he died. But it has remained for a recent biographer of Addison to inform us how it came about, for he was never known to have had any clerical friends who would be likely to influence him. It is now stated that a pastrycook sent home a pie on Christmas Day, and under it he placed a page of Richard Baxter's "Call to the Unconverted." Addison, upon perusing it, purchased the whole book, which was the means of leading him to Jesus. *Words of salvation providentially sent*:—A young man in America was once at work upon his farm. He was careless about religion—indeed nobody had ever said a word to him about it; and as he had no Bible and only worldly friends, there seemed little chance of his ever hearing of Christ and salvation, and of heaven and hell. On this particular day, it was a bright morning in early summer, he had to take his cart, drawn by oxen, along the high road. He was thinking of nothing except his daily work and his daily bread. A gentle breeze was blowing, and as he went along it stirred a little piece of paper which had been lying by the roadside, so that it fluttered in front of him. But on went the young man, the oxen and the cart, all the same. When he had gone a short way farther, however, a thought came over him, "I wonder what that bit of paper was—I've a great mind to go back and see." And, stopping his team, he did go back. He picked it up and read it as he walked along. It was a leaf out of the Bible. The summer passed away with its flowers and sunshine, and the corn grew ripe, and was gathered into the garner; there was another harvest, too, standing ready for the sickle. The young man who had found the leaf lay upon a sick and dying bed. A sore disease had smitten him, and his parents knew there was no hope of his life. They were stricken with grief, but he—oh, *he* was rejoicing! And now his lips were open to tell them what he had never told before. The leaf out of the Bible had brought to

him first the sense of sin and then the knowledge of a Saviour. He sought for a whole Bible, and ever since it had been his constant companion, and now, though called almost suddenly away from life with all its happiness, he knew whom he had believed, and he was ready. He had an anchor, sure and steadfast, for the Lamb that was slain to take away sin had taken away *his* sin. And without a doubt or a fear he entered into rest. *Salvation, for all*:—If I were to come as an accredited agent to you from the upper sanctuary, with a letter of invitation to you, with your name and address on it, you would not doubt your warrant to accept it. Well, here is the Bible—your invitation to come to Christ. It does not bear your name and address; but it says, "Whosoever": that takes you in. It says, "All": that takes you in. It says, "If any": that takes you in. What can be surer and freer than that? (*T. Chalmers, D.D.*) *Salvation, common*:—The gospel river of life does not branch out into divers streams. There is not a broad sweep of water for the rich, the intellectual, and the cultivated, and a little scant runnel where the poor may now and then come and get healed by the side of its precarious wave. There is no costly sanatorium beneath whose shade patrician leprosy may get by itself to be fashionably sprinkled and healed. Naaman, with all his retinue watching, must come and dip and plunge like common men in Jordan. There is no sort of salvation except the one ransom and deliverance that is purchased for rich and poor together by the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ; and the poor beggar, his garment ragged from the havoc of a hundred storms, and his flesh bleeding from the ulcers of a hundred wounds, may dip eagerly into the same Bethesda, and emerge unscarred and comely as a child. (*W. M. Punshon, LL.D.*) *Salvation, neglecting*:—Most of the calamities of life are caused by simple neglect. By neglect of education, children grow up in ignorance; by neglect, a farm grows up to weeds and briers; by neglect, a house goes to decay; by neglect of sowing, a man will have no harvest; by neglect of reaping, the harvest would rot in the fields. No worldly interest can prosper where there is neglect; and why may it not be so in religion? There is nothing in earthly affairs that is valuable that will not be ruined if it is not attended to; and why may it not be so with the concerns of the soul? Let no one infer, therefore, that because he is not a drunkard, or an adulterer, or a murderer, that therefore he will be saved. Such an inference would be as irrational as it would be for a man to infer, that, because he is not a murderer, his farm will produce a harvest; or that, because he is not an adulterer, therefore his merchandise will take care of itself. Salvation would be worth nothing if it cost no effort; and there will be no salvation where no effort is put forth. (*A. Barnes, D.D.*) *Salvation, simplicity of*:—A physician who was anxious about his soul asked a believing patient of his how he should find peace. His patient replied, "Doctor, I have felt that I could do nothing, and I have put my case in your hand: I am trusting in you. This is exactly what every poor sinner must do in the Lord Jesus." He saw the simplicity of the way, and soon found peace in Christ.

Vers. 27–32. **For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew Him not.**—*The rejection of Christ*:—I. ITS GROUND. 1. Ignorance of Christ Himself. (1) Of His Divine Sonship. (2) His mediatorial authority. (3) His saving mission. Had they known all this, "they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." 2. Deafness to the voices of the prophets who predicted Him. Here we have the twofold ground of all rejection of Christ. If men only knew Him, and recognised the force of those many prophecies which find their fulfilment only in Him, the acceptance of His Person and saving benefits would be inevitable. II. ITS INEXCUSABLENESS. 1. Christ was with them, and demonstrated His Divine personality and mission by many infallible proofs—His sinless humanity, His miraculous works, His wonderful teaching. Christ is not with us in the same sense; but we have the record of His life, which renders His modern rejection none the less inexcusable. 2. They heard the prophecies frequently read; and had they listened without prejudice, they must have seen how they all converged in Him. So now. 3. There was no cause for His rejection (ver. 28). He did them no harm, but ever strove to do them good. Why do you reject Him? Is it not because you *will not* come to Him that you may have life? III. ITS FRUSTRATION. 1. Their rejection, in its most aggravated form, only fulfilled the prophecies which went before on Him (vers. 27, 29). 2. God reversed the humiliation of death which they inflicted on Him by raising Him from the dead. What to them was the end of His mission, proved only its beginning. 3. Their rejection proved the origin of that

gospel which Paul was now preaching to the wide world. Nor is this rejection any more successful now. "Whosoever falleth on this stone shall be broken," &c. (*J. W. Burn.*) **Nor the voices of the prophets.**—*The voices of the prophets:*—Some men ask, If the prophets spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, why did they not all speak in the same manner? Why these varieties of style? I will answer that by asking another question: Why do not all the pipes of the organ give one and the same sound? What awakens all the sounds but one and the same blast from the wind chest? If there be a mono-blast, why is there not a monotone? Because the pipes are of different shapes and sizes; the awakening breath is one; the intonation varies with the shape and size of the pipe. The inspiration was one, but the style and manner varied with the disposition and character of the individual employed. (*H. McNeile, D.D.*) *Messianic prophecy: its characteristics:*—Christ is the only Person whose life was written beforehand; as, *e.g.*, in the time, place, and manner of His birth; in the kind of life He was to lead, the kind of teaching He was to give, the kind of death He was to die. The strength of prophecy lies in its chain of references to Christ, from the first mention of the "seed of the woman" to the virgin-born Immanuel; from the sufferer whose heel is bruised in terms of the earliest promise, to the "Man of Sorrows" in Isa. liii.; from the peace-giving law-giver of a yet uncrowned tribe to the heir of David, who enters the long-established seat of rule as a king. Even the predictions that bear on the Church of God and its universal progress are but the sequel to those which foretell the personal Christ, and they then reflect the light of His exaltation; nor can the judgments of the Jewish nation be dissociated, as the depth of their fall is but the measure of the grace and truth that were in Christ, and for rejecting which they were to be cast away. (*Principal Cairns.*) *Messianic prophecy: its fulfilment:*—When we see the predicted mission of the Messiah so faithfully fulfilled; when we see the great world's history bending itself to the birth of Jesus in the "anno domini" of its dates and superscriptions; when we see that the world has moved as in deepest sympathy with the humble Nazarene, working ever in His behalf; when we behold all events marching onwards through the centuries to the beat of time, preserving, as Napoleon thought, "a celestial order," to accomplish one given result, the universal and final ascendency of the Son of David; when we see that all opposing systems can no longer hold comparison with the religion given to the world by Him than can the pale, thin, extended crescent ring of the setting moon hold comparison to the full blaze of the unclouded noonday sun; when we discover that this mighty One issued from the House of David before its fall, and from Bethlehem in the days of Herod, must we not acknowledge that He is the Being whom the prophets declared to be one with the Father Almighty? As we see Him standing alone among the millions of the race, the only pattern of absolute perfection, whose entire life, without inclining a hair's breadth to either side, pointed straight upwards to heaven—as all the separate and wandering rays of prophecy that had sparkled through the Divine Word are combined and concentrated, and rest, as with a sacred halo, on His head—how can we do otherwise than proclaim our convictions in that prophetic, startling, and sublime word, "Immanuel!"—"God with us"? (*Credo.*) *Ignorance of prophecy:*—I was visited by a very distinguished young Israelite, who had seen me distributing the sacred volume, and I proposed that we should read a portion of Scripture together. He agreed on the condition that it should be from the Old Testament; and I read the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. "But," said he, "that is in the New Testament." "No, no," I replied. "There, take the book. Read it with that true heart which I perceive in you, and you will find what you seek." He has found his Saviour, has accepted Him, and confesses Him with joy. (*Pasteur Hirsch.*) *Necessity of an unprejudiced study of prophecy:*—It is evident from this, and from Luke xxiii. 34 and chap. iii. 17, that the predictions of Holy Scripture may be accomplished before the eyes of men, while they are unconscious of that fulfilment; and that the prophecies may be even accomplished by persons who have the prophecies in their hands and do not know that they are fulfilling them. Hence also it is clear that men may be guilty of enormous sins when they are acting according to their own consciences and with a view to God's glory, and while they hold the Bible in their hands and hear its voice sounding in their ears; and that therefore it is of unspeakable importance, not only to hear the words of Scripture, but to mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, with humility and prayer, in order to understand their true meaning. Therefore the Christian student has great reason to thank God that He has given in the New Testament a Divinely-inspired interpretation of the Old, and has also sent the Holy

Spirit, the Divine Interpreter, to abide with the Church. If the Jews and their rulers had not been swayed by prejudice, but, in a careful, candid, and humble spirit, had considered the evidence before them, they would have known that their promised Messiah was to be the Son of God, and that He was thus revealed as such in their own Scriptures, and thus His miracles would have had their due effect upon their minds. (*Bp. Chr. Wordsworth.*)

Vers. 32–34. **And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise . . . God hath fulfilled.**—*The glad tidings* :—I. WHAT THEY ARE. The origin of the gospel conception is connected with Jewish history. The people were often assailed by enemies, and in Jerusalem they waited with anxiety to learn the issue. By agreement, a messenger was to be sent, and especially when God crowned them with victory. And as the watchman lifted up his eyes, and the people saw the sight, they cried, "How beautiful upon the mountains," &c. Hence, when the angel spoke on the plains of Bethlehem, he used words with which the shepherds were familiar. So when our Lord rose, He gave the disciples commandment to proclaim these glad tidings, to which Paul was obedient here. What, then, is the gospel? 1. It is news. Man did not know it—could not find it, or invent it. Not the least proof that the gospel comes from heaven is that it is beyond the intellect and contrary to the temper of man. 2. It is good news. All the attributes of goodness are in it. "Mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." 3. It is good news about a Person, and that Person the Son of God—the adequate revelation of the Father—and Son of Man—the typical manifestation of humanity. The Person also the atonement for the world's guilt, and its Deliverer from condemnation and death. II. TO WHOM THEY ARE SENT. "To you"—*i.e.*, every one. 1. To the sad heart. They come to the wakened mind, to the alarmed conscience, to the despairing spirit. What glad tidings to know that the burden of guilt has been borne and the punishment of sin endured by Christ! 2. To a sad world, whose disappointment, sorrow, and tears makes it a very Marah, which nothing can sweeten but the Cross. III. WITH WHAT END. To produce joy—pure, deep, everlasting. (*J. Aldis.*) *God's promises fulfilled* :—God is always true to what He promises to do. He will fulfil every word of what He has promised; yet how few take Him at His word! When I was a young man I was clerk in the establishment of a man in Chicago, whom I observed frequently occupied sorting and marking bills. He explained to me what he had been doing; on some notes he had marked B, on some D, and on others G; those marked B he told me were bad, those marked D meant they were doubtful, and those with G on them meant they were good. "And," said he "you must treat all of them accordingly." And thus people endorse God's promises, by marking some as bad, and others as doubtful; whereas we ought to take all of them as good, for He has never once broken His word, and all that He says He will do will be done in the fulness of time. (*D. L. Moody.*) *The resurrection of Christ glad tidings* :—He speaks of Christ's resurrection—I. AS AN ACCOMPLISHMENT OF PROPHECY (*cf.* Psa. cxviii. 22, with Luke xx. 17). We must not, however, suppose this to be an uninteresting fact; for the apostle further speaks of it—II. AS GLAD TIDINGS TO THE SOUL. To the disconsolate disciples the tidings of Christ's resurrection were doubtless exceeding joyful. But they ought to be no less so to us, since that event ascertains—1. The virtue of His sacrifice. Had He not risen, His death had been in vain (1 Cor. xv. 14, 17, 18). But His resurrection clearly proved that He had satisfied the demands of law and justice. 2. His sufficiency for our help. If He were still dead, it would be in vain to look to Him for help. 3. The certainty of our own resurrection. Because He liveth, we may be sure that we shall live also (John xiv. 19). As a further improvement of this passage, permit me to observe—1. How deeply are we interested in the writings of the Old Testament! In them are promises of which we receive the accomplishment. 2. What enemies are they to themselves who despise the ministry of the gospel! 3. What a near relation subsists between believers in all ages! (*Theological Sketch-book.*) *The resurrection of Christ the great promise* :—I. GOD PROMISED TO THE PATRIARCHS AND PROPHETS THAT HE WOULD RAISE CHRIST FROM THE DEAD. 1. To Adam, as we read in Genesis iii. The whole four themes of revelation are contained in these words: the first coming of Christ in the flesh; "her seed." His death; "thou shalt bruise his heel." His resurrection, and the present state of the Church; "I will put enmity between thee and the woman." His coming in glory, when He shall bruise the serpent's head. 2. To Abraham (Gen. xxii.; *cf.* Heb. xi. 17–19). Isaac was dead, in design; and on

the third morning he was raised up. In this transaction Abraham saw the day of Christ, and rejoiced. This would also be a promise to Isaac. 3. To Moses also. Let us examine some types. (1) The manna represented Christ coming down from heaven, that the Church might feed on Him and live. We learn that a portion of manna was to be brought into the holy place, and there set before the testimony of the Lord. Which teaches us that He who came down from heaven was also to go up thither again, to appear in the presence of God for us. (2) In Leviticus xiv. we read of the law of cleansing the leper. There was a bird killed, and a bird flying away. The living bird was to be sprinkled with the blood; the resurrection of Christ is available through the atonement, and the atonement through the resurrection. (3) So in the history of the two goats. One was to be slain; over the other the priest was to confess all the sins and trespasses of the people, and to send him away into the wilderness. So it is not on Jesus crucified merely that our sins are laid, or they would be there still. But the glory of the gospel is this: "He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." (4) In Leviticus xxiii. we read of the waving of the sheaf. "Christ is raised from the dead, and is become the first fruits of them that slept." And as the first fruits were to be waved the morning after the Sabbath, which was the first day of the week, on which day Christ also rose. 4. To David. The second Psalm is immediately connected with our text. On the morning of the resurrection, God owned His beloved Son: then He said, "Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee." Again, in Psalm xvi., "I have set the Lord always before me," &c. Then, again, in Psalm cxviii., "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner," &c. Which passage is also quoted by Peter, in Acts iv., when questioned as to the miracle performed on the impotent man. 5. To the prophets. In the context there is one remarkable quotation, from Isa. lv. 3. In that Christ is raised, never to die again; therefore He says, "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." 6. We are taught this promise also by the history of Jonah. "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." II. HE PERFORMED THIS PROMISE. He did what He said. The day after the crucifixion of Christ the priests and Pharisees, who were His enemies, came to Pilate and said, "Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again," &c. On the day after the Sabbath "there was a great earthquake; for the angel of the Lord came and rolled back the stone." What avails the vigilance of Roman soldiers against the angels of God! The Lord afterwards showed Himself alive, by many infallible proofs, to Mary, to two of His disciples on their way to Emmaus, to ten of His disciples when they were assembled with the door shut for fear of the Jews. To some of them at the sea of Tiberias, &c. But some will say, "Were the disciples proper witnesses?" In a court of justice, what are the requisites of a competent witness? He must have known the person of whom he speaks, so that he may know him again when he sees him. And also he must be trustworthy. Now the disciples were fully competent. They knew Christ. And that they knew themselves to be competent witnesses, and that they knew it was necessary that they should be so, is evident from the words of Peter (Acts i. 21). And they were trustworthy also. We know the nature of man too well not to know that he will say anything to gain favour. But what did they gain? Scourging, bonds, imprisonments, death. III. THEREFORE WE DECLARE UNTO YOU GLAD TIDINGS. And how is the resurrection of Christ glad tidings? Because—1. It has caused the gospel to be preached. It would not have been preached had it not been for this event. 2. It shows that the justice of God is fully satisfied, and sin fully expiated. 3. It directs our minds to our great Intercessor. "It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again; who has also appeared in the presence of God for us." 4. It excites and maintains a lively hope. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," &c. 5. Through this hope it draws up the affections of the soul, and mortifies the deeds of the body. The man who believes that Christ has died and rose again, and whose life is "hid with Christ in God," turns away with disgust from that which satisfies others. 6. It is the ground of our expectation of His second coming. If He be not risen, He cannot come again; but He is risen, and He will come again. (*H. McNeile, D.D.*) **The sure mercies of David.**—The words do not seem in themselves to have the nature of a Messianic prediction. To those, however, whose minds were full to overflowing with the writings of the prophets, they would be pregnant with meaning. What were the "sure mercies of

David" (Isa. lv. 3) but the "everlasting covenant" of mercy which was to find its fulfilment in One who should be "a leader and commander to the people"? We may well believe that the few words quoted recalled to St. Paul and to his hearers the whole of that wonderful chapter which opens with "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." The Greek word for "mercies" is the same adjective as that translated "holy" in the next verse, "holiness" being identified with "mercy," and so forms a connecting link with the prophecy cited in the next verse. (*Dean Plumptre.*) *Sure mercies*:—Consider—I. WHAT THESE MERCIES ARE. 1. The knowledge of God in Christ. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts," &c. Great is this mercy. By this alone we are delivered from idolatry. No man can worship the true God, except in Jesus Christ. The poor ignorant heathen is not the only idolater. The Deist, Rationalist, the man that flatters himself that above all men he is the farthest removed from idolatry, is nevertheless worshipping an idol, which he himself creates—the imagination of his own heart. 2. Forgiveness of sin by Christ. The present completeness of this blessing is the distinguishing feature of true religion from all false religion whatever. And therefore the very outset, the very A B C of the gospel, is—"By this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." 3. Renewal of heart in Christ. Unto the perfection of man's happiness, association is indispensable. Man cannot live alone; fellowship with God there cannot be without holiness of heart, leading to sincere obedience. Here, then, is a great mercy—that the man to whom God has given the knowledge of Himself, and to whom He has proclaimed forgiveness of sins, shall also experience in himself such a renewal of his affections, that, instead of shrinking from God, he shall now find a congeniality, a sympathy, an association, and begin to find a happiness of companionship, without which no man can really be happy. These are some of the mercies spoken of in this text. And they are at the same time, as you may observe in the margin of your Bibles, "holy or just things." They are "holy"—(1) Or God would never have done them. (2) As the purchase of the holy One. (3) As procured according to law. (4) In their results. II. HOW THESE MERCIES ARE OBTAINED. In answer to this inquiry, consult the prophecy in Isa. lv., the passage referred to by the apostle. Here is a threefold exhortation to hear: the first in connection with the satisfying of the soul—"Hearken diligently, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself"; the second in connection with coming to the Lord—"Incline your ear, and come unto Me"; the third in connection with everlasting life thus given—"Hear, and your soul shall live." Now, mark these: "hearken"—"incline your ear"—"hear." They are all explained by that great truth which the apostle proclaims when he says, "Faith cometh by hearing." We have all these mercies by faith, because we have Christ by faith, and in no other way. God has appointed this medium in order that the attainment might be manifestly of grace—not of study, not of time, not of hereditary descent, not of instruction by man. Now, see what is attained by the appointment of this medium. It is confidence. Faith is confidence; faith places God and man in their proper places—God in authority, man in dependence. Man fell through an attempt to be independent. Man is recovered through a willingness to be dependent. This is attained through the appointment of faith as the medium through which the blessings are conveyed; and "faith comes by hearing"—hearing "the Word of God." Hence the importance of the ministry of the Word. You cannot have the Word proclaimed without a voice to proclaim it; you cannot have a voice without a man to raise it; you cannot have a man without sustenance and support. III. THE DESCRIPTION HERE GIVEN OF THESE MERCIES. "Sure." 1. They are infallibly "sure" to rest on all for whom they were designed. 2. They are immutably "sure" to all on whom they rest. (*H. McNeile, D.D.*)

Ver. 36. **For David, after he had served his own generation.**—*The life, character, and death of David*:—I. THE GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE MAN. We shall not attempt to extenuate his sins. But let his penitential Psalms bear witness for him, that no judgment can be passed upon him more severe than that which he pronounced upon himself. Which of the saints has not been more or less guilty? But Scripture teaches us to form our judgment, not from one or two prominent particulars, but from a comprehensive survey of them all. Let us consider some of them. 1. In very early life David appears to have been a sincere believer. The incidents of the lion and the bear discover both his faith and his habit of ascribing all his success to the Divine help. Again, when Samuel was

directed to anoint a successor to Saul, the preference of David is expressly grounded upon the state of his heart. From these considerations we conclude that David, even among the sheepfolds, was a child of grace, and that the fields of Bethlehem echoed with the earliest effusions of that Divine harp which still contributes to the edification of the saints. 2. Remark the high principle under which David acted in relation to Saul. We find no schemes of daring ambition, no crooked policies. Twice, when his enemy was delivered into his hand, he only cut off a portion of Saul's robe, to use it as a testimony of his integrity. When, at length, the guilty monarch lay under the vengeance of Heaven, grief is the predominating sentiment which he expresses in a noble elegy. 3. Note the holy dispositions for which he was conspicuous throughout his life. His Psalms exhibit a heart supremely delighting in God. Who can deny his love to the Divine Word, his attachment to the services of the sanctuary? Happy is the man whose heart is filled with the same affections! 4. Remember that his conduct, though sometimes criminal, presents no permanent deviation from the path of rectitude. If he offends, it is not long before we hear him say, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Thy servant; for I do not forget Thy commandments." The general tenor of his life is not broken; but, for the most part, it is indisputably holy. 5. Survey him in his decline, when his head was white with age; what a fine picture does he exhibit of gratitude, humility, and devotion! Nothing is more impressive than the picture of this aged saint, in solemn convocation, delivering the treasures provided for the work of God into the hands of his successor. Like another Moses, he spends his last breath in faithful admonitions to his people and to his son. Thus, his course was emphatically as the shining light, admirable in his youth, troubled, yet not less illustrious in manhood, fruitful in old age: a glorious morning, a day overcast with long-continued tempests; but, at evening, like the setting sun, which seems to grow more ample and refulgent, in proportion as it draws nearer to the horizon; and, finally descending among the fleecy clouds which reflect its brightness, and curtain it with glory, leaves a long track of light behind—emblem of that grateful remembrance which a good man commands from his survivors, and of the rising again to immortality, with the prospect of which religion illuminates the sepulchre. II. THE DESCRIPTION GIVEN OF HIS LIFE. 1. Which suggests—(1) That the life of every man ought to be profitable to his contemporaries. God has bound up the race in families, societies, and kingdoms, that each may act in his sphere for the common advantage of all. Therefore the life of that man who has not served his generation is a public detriment, perhaps a pestilence. (2) That he who serves God takes the best and surest method of serving his generation. Our Divine Master declares that His disciples are "the salt of the earth." The righteous are lights to their own age, and often prove, like David, instructors of posterity. (3) That he who serves his generation upon right principles is serving God. All the actions of a pious man, whether secular or sacred, are religious, consecrated by the motives and sentiments under which they are performed. God sanctifies them, and converts them into sacrifices. (4) That to be acceptable to God our conduct must be governed by His revealed will. 2. Now let us survey David in his relations. In these we shall see that the eulogy of the text is fully justified. (1) To estimate his political conduct, it will be sufficient to contrast the kingdom when he received it with what it was when bequeathed to Solomon. In like manner the kingdom of his great antitype began in weakness and suffering; proceeds through rebuke and opposition; yet cannot but finally prevail, in virtue of that covenant which is "ordered in all things, and sure." (2) Consider David in his relation to the Church. The composition of the Psalms was a grand epoch in the history of revelation; and its illustrations of religious experience are so copious and exact as to express the thoughts and feelings of believers to the end of time. In addition to this great work, we find him at one time bringing the ark of God to the tabernacle; at another, appointing the settled order of public worship; then collecting materials for the future temple; but the noblest feature of all is the spirit of love to God, and zeal for His house, by which they were dictated. 3. Let us follow him into his family. We find him following his own determination, "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart." We can obtain but a glimpse or two, yet these are highly satisfactory. After a day of arduous public service, "then David returned to bless his household." The affecting terms in which he deplores that his house "was not so with God," shows us that it was not lost sight of in the multiplicity of his official engagements. 4. But, after all, David's eminence as a saint appears most in the regulation of his own heart. We will not dwell upon

the frequency of his devotions, nor upon his diligence in studying the Divine Oracles. But remember how careful he was to examine his own soul, and how earnestly he implores the scrutiny even of the Omniscient Eye! Remember his jealousy, lest "secret faults" should cling to him unobserved, and the sins of his youth pass unrepented and unforgiven. Oh! remember how, when sunk in depressions, he challenges his very griefs, lest they should prove unsanctified, and rouses his own spirit to a renewed exercise of trust! "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? hope thou in God." He was a sinner, I know; but it is through spiritual tribulations and tempests like these that every sinner must find his way to heaven. Great offenders that offer the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart, may mount to thrones of glory, when Pharisaic boasters shall be cast into "outer darkness." III. THE RECORD OF HIS DEATH. 1. Notice the terms employed. Death is a sleep, and the grave a house, where departed saints repose in honourable company. It is true that, under the Jewish dispensation, the future was wrapt in deep obscurity; but the darkness was not altogether impenetrable, or else how should David comfort himself? "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness," &c. The expressions of the text are full of consoling thoughts. We resign ourselves to sleep without fear. If we believe that death is but a sleep, why do we contemplate it with dismay? In both, the functions of life are but suspended, not extinguished. Whatever were the infirmities of ancient saints, they all left the world with holy dignity. Though they had but dim shadows of heavenly truth to guide them, they have taught us how to live; and, though their views of eternal glory were far less distinct than ours, by their example we may learn how to die. 2. David must go the way of all flesh. Neither the love of God, nor the admiration of His people, nor his eminent fidelity, can exempt him from the universal decree. The fairest, wisest, noblest, holiest heads must lie down alike in the dust. A day of mourning over fallen greatness or departed usefulness leads us to imagine that our loss cannot be repaired; but a Solomon rises in the place of David. Thus the work of God goes on. Never let the Church despair, though kings and prophets die. 3. The Son of David lives; "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." (*D. Katterns.*) *The service of the age*:—1. Few things are more painful than unfulfilled lives. A broken column is their expressive symbol. Beauty smitten in the springtime; little children taken; the promise of life cut off and blasted—all suggest painful mystery. 2. Some lives are morally unfulfilled; powers have been wasted. They did not "stir up" the gift that was in them, and their power was never fully ripened into fruitful service. 3. Others, while not accomplishing all their purposes, are not to be numbered with those who have failed. In the studio of the dead sculptor there is a statue wanting the last touches, a block just marked, works in various stages of their growth. But, we remember, the finished works whose beauty shall be the delight of the generations to come. That is not an unfulfilled life. 4. David served his own generation according to the will of God—rounded off completely the work given him to do. Illustrious as ruler, he was much more so as "the sweet singer of Israel." The figure is that of the sailor in the ancient galley, who served in the lowest tier of seats, where the work was most important and arduous. The generation is compared with the stately vessel thus impelled—David "rowed onwards" his own age, added his efforts to those of others to secure its progress and to render it illustrious. I. THE TRUE MAN'S VOCATION. He is set apart as "the servant of the age." Our own generation has immediate claims upon us. The dead are not touched by our influence or moved by our activities. The future we cannot reach save through present faithfulness. Now is our acceptable time. There is no work, or wisdom, or device in the grave. 1. In this service the force of individual character is of the utmost importance. Men affect and mould men more by what they are than by what they profess or do. But there is also a conscious service to which men are appointed. Each successive age presents the common human characteristics in some special development or relationship. The age has its special questions and needs, its special section of the purpose of the Almighty to fulfil. True men are born for the time, not of it. The age is philosophical, and the teacher is the prominent figure. It is warlike, and the soldier plays his part. It is instinct with the craving for something better, and the reformer comes to the front. It is longing for knowledge of the unseen or preparation for it, and the fervid evangelist answers the question, What must we do? Sometimes it is eclectic, and various actors crowd the stage. But one thing is amazing, whatever the general characteristic, the vastness of the work which may be, and often is, accomplished by single individuals,

Masses, generations, never move onwards by themselves. They follow a leader. Hence earnest natures force on reformations. Such men have removed mountains; created new philosophies; won a people's freedom, and raised their own generation to heights of renown. But where the results may not be as palpable, the service of the age may be as real and as effective. There are prayers to be offered, ignorant ones to be instructed, fallen ones to be rescued, errors to be corrected, lonely hearts to be ministered to, and wounded ones to be healed. Such services may not be meet subjects for the historian, but they are written in the books of Divine remembrance. 2. The service of the age implies living sympathy with its sorrows and sins; identity of interest and aim. True men are of generous heart. Acquiescence in things as they are destroys capacity for service. What a craving the true man has for something better! Greatness of heart, mighty energy, and patience are needed when the service of the age involves a climbing of Calvaries. The kingdom of Christ was founded when He hung upon the Cross. But the sorrow which wrung the Redeemer's heart was intense because of His identity with a doomed nation and a perishing world. He bore our sins, and carried our sorrows. Nothing essential to human well-being can be indifferent to us if we would serve faithfully. II. THE TRUE MAN'S SERVICE OF HIS OWN AGE IS DIVINELY CONDUCTED AND FASHIONED. "By the will of God." This implies—1. The inspiration of this service. God suggests the form of service, and guides the faithful to it. His own love in the heart prompts it. 2. The means of this service. There are Divine provisions and remedies for the age's necessities and ills. The special forms of service will harmonise with the great spiritual redemption God is working out in human history. All real human rights were consecrated in the Cross. All true reformations spring out of the Cross. Baptized into its spirit, the true servant becomes qualified for the highest achievements. 3. The Divine designation of the worker and his work. God distributes gifts, and suits men to His purpose. "There was a man sent from God." So Peter, Paul, Luther, the martyrs were sent. This is true of times. They are in His hands. The faithful live for the work's sake, and die for the work's sake. Life is prolonged, for service is to be continued. Life ceases, and the service becomes a memory because it is finished. III. THE REST OF THE TRUE SERVANT OF HIS AGE The long day of rowing is over; and tired with long continued exertion, David laid himself down and fell asleep, and was gathered to his fathers. 1. Sleep is the image of death in contrast with the activity of the working life; then, as a natural, orderly sequence to it; but also as a condition precedent to new activities for which its recuperative influence is essential. 2. But also there was a gathering to the fathers. This does not mean being laid in the family burying place, for David was not laid in it. He was gathered to the general assembly and church of the first-born in the realms unseen. At last the golden gates are thrown open for the servants of the King, who on distant fields upheld His cause, carried His banner, kept the faith, and they are all together in one assembly at home with the Lord. What a blest assembly to which our dead have been joined! What an august prospect opens before those who are faithful unto death! (*W. H. Davison.*) *A servant of the age:*—I. OUR AGE—the people of the nineteenth century now resident upon earth. For this lasting earth was destined to be the successive habitation of thousands of generations. "One generation passeth away," &c. The edifice has lasted for ages, and is much as it was in the morning of time; but its tenantry are ever changing. Notwithstanding the alterations in the material world, there is nothing new but souls. For each the Father of spirits builds an earthly house, and every one who has answered the Divine purpose of its short residence ascends to the "house eternal in the heavens." It is a solemn thought that earth as well as heaven is a world of spirits. These are the generation we are to serve. II. THE SPIRITUAL SERVICE WE OWE IT. Other services are demanded, but these are inferior in worth and consequences. Many serve their age not according to the will of God. There are, *e.g.*, those who investigate matter, study the human frame, shed fresh light on the origin, nature, and destiny of mind, dedicate themselves to education or reform; in a word, those who labour to promote man's temporal interests. Amongst these, indeed, are some of the holiest men in the world; but there are others who are wholly dead to God. Yet these latter often subserve the religious interests of the age, but without professing it or knowing it. III. HOW ARE WE TO SERVE THE SPIRITUAL INTERESTS OF THE AGE? We must—1. Be the servants of God. In Phil. ii. 15, 16, Paul described the moral character of his age. In its mind, morals, laws, institutions, &c., it was "crooked and perverse"; and he reminded

Christians placed in their age that it was their office, by living holiness and new truth from heaven, to direct their perilous course in the deep towards that land of life and glory. And finally he taught them that to be fit for this they must be and act as sons of God. Divine worship was then, and is now, the first qualification for serving souls. With God's power, love, and will within us what wonders may we do! 2. Study the age. An age does not know itself; just as an individual, it dislikes self-examination. The ages of Rome, Greece, Persia, Assyria, Noah, nay, even Paradise, did not know themselves. Yet every age has had its prophet. Enoch read his age, and served it. So did Noah, Abraham, Moses, John, &c. And if past ages were only efficiently served by those who studied them, how important that we should study our own! To do this certain qualifications are necessary. *E.g.*, there must be correct views of the Divine government, a clear, observant eye to discern the signs of the times, and, as a key to the interpretation of those signs, an acquaintance with the religious history of past ages. No two ages are alike, or can be. We must therefore study its peculiarities—its distinguishing privileges; its predominant virtues and sins; its moral tendencies and wants; and, above all, its first duties to the age which is immediately to follow. 3. Spread our affections over the length and breadth of it. Love for souls is one of the Divinest virtues which God breathes into our nature. The reigning philosophy of every age has denied or overlooked the spirituality of man. It is only the man whose spiritual nature has been divinely awakened that feels the love of heaven: it is only he who can send it forth on the world. Greatly as we value natural love, we must not mistake nor substitute it for spiritual love. Love for souls as souls is not a passion of earthly growth; love for their justification, renewal, and union with God is a holy fire from heaven. Let us take care lest the best things we have—our schools, benevolent societies, churches, religion, should have more to do with "the life that now is" than with "the life that is to come." This love we should spread over our age. And how numerous and constraining are our obligations! God has given us hearts capacious enough to embrace the human family, and can we reflect on the love of God who spared not His own Son without feeling our hearts burn for the restoration of all souls to their Father's bosom? 4. Ascertain the particular department of service assigned us by God, and be thoroughly devoted to it. By self acquaintance, by consulting the wise and faithful, by the teachings of Providence, by prayer, let us learn what our mission is, and then in the name and power of God let us live only to fulfil it. IV. WHY SHOULD WE SERVE OUR AGE? 1. It is the will of God. This is our law, but can we love and obey it without knowing what it is? God has not left us to infer His will from His works and ways. His paternal love has given us a book which reveals as much of His infinite will as it is necessary for us to know on earth. And if God wills us to serve our age it must be right to do so, and we may rely upon His help. He expects the right use of what He gives—nothing less, nothing more. To serve our age is a difficult work, but let us not be discouraged, for there is an infinite fulness of power for us in God. 2. It has faithfully served us. What have we that we have not received through the instrumentality of our age, either temporally or spiritually? Let, then, a holy sense of our numberless obligations to the age bind us to its spiritual service. 3. This is the only age we can directly serve, and both the age and ourselves must soon appear before the Lord of all ages. Let us work, then, while it is day. (*Caleb Morris.*) *Life: its mission and opportunity*:—I. ITS MISSION—to serve your generation. That is what the most worthless do, being slaves to the opinion, fashion, and spirit of the time. But the word is not bond service. David served his age not as a slave his master, but as a rower his captain. Others again, possessed by the spirit of the evil one, ask, "How can I make my generation serve me?" The Christian asks, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do that I, like Thee, may do good to this race?" This good must be done under the inspiration of faith in God and faith in man. What is this latter? Suppose yourself in a heathen city crowded with temples, priests, idols, and idolaters. Instead of looking on with disgust or despair, you must look upon them as God's degenerate offspring, but capable of becoming His true children once more. The good that God calls us to do is every work of His, no matter what. Some think that Christian good is only for the soul, but God regards man as one composite being. The great principle of the Mosaic legislation as much as of the gospel is that God sets Himself by the side of every man, and takes his part as long as he is in the right; and He invites to that man's side every other man to be his friend; and whatever a

man does to another in the way of benefit the Lord accepts it as a tribute to Himself: *e.g.*, the farmer is to leave the gleanings for the widow. Why? "Because I am the Lord of the harvest, of the rich farmer, and the poor widow." So with the prohibitions not to mock the deaf or put stumbling-blocks in the way of the blind. A wrong done to the poor is an offence to God. But always remember that man does not live by bread alone, and seek in all temporal benefit to wake up in a man some consciousness of Him from whom all blessings come. So, then, select your path according to the indications of Providence, but determine by the grace of God to leave the world better than you found it. II. ITS OPPORTUNITY—your own generation. David may have wished himself back in the days of Abraham. "I might have done something in that old time, but what can I do now?" So we say sometimes. And yet if we are to do anything it must not be for any other generation but our own. And how much ampler our opportunity! How long would it take for David to get his psalms known in his own dominions? How long did it take to get them known in Europe? Whereas a good man's thought in London to-day may be fermenting the whole world in less than twelve months. You cannot serve the past, you must accept it. But which past? In the case of David there was the past of Saul and the past of Samuel. And so to us there are two pasts, and the one you accept will determine your service of the present, and by serving the present you can serve the future. David is serving you to-day. Carry you on the grand succession. III. ITS SOURCE AND STANDARD. "The will of God." 1. There would be no working for the benefit of the world were it not that God's will is goodwill to men. He wills the salvation of the lost, the comforting of the mourner, &c. See that will expressed in the bounties of Providence, in the Bible, in the Cross. "He that spared not His own Son"—let that fill your heart and move you forward to seek the welfare and salvation of the world. 2. The will of God is the standard of the mission. That will appoints you your time to be born and to die, the bounds of your habitation, the sphere of your duty. God did not give to David the sphere of Samuel. Each man in his own place. Your point is not to do everything that is to be done, but what God would have you do; not what your romance or ambition would find to do, but "what your hand findeth to do." If you can lay your hand upon it, that is the proof that God means you to go to work. If you cannot reach it, pray that He may bring it nearer; but don't spend time in praying for the distant while you neglect the near. IV. ITS CLOSE. "He fell on sleep." What a blessed end to a life of labour! (*W. Arthur, M.A.*) *Public spirit*:—As God is pleased to employ human agents in carrying on His designs in this world, so He never fails to find those persons who are best qualified to answer His purpose (ver. 22). The Lord saw something in David which neither he nor Samuel saw when he was sent to anoint him and set him apart for the service of God. Nor was the Divine choice misplaced; for as soon as David appeared in public he seized every opportunity of promoting the cause of God and the good of his fellow men. Let us consider—I. WHAT IT IS TO LIVE A USEFUL LIFE. There is a sense in which all men are useful. Pharaoh, Haman, and the King of Assyria were instrumental in bringing about the designs of Providence. They intended to accomplish their own ambitious designs, but God overruled all. But in order to be useful in the sense of the text—1. Men must live in the exercise of supreme love to God. They must give Him the throne in their hearts before they can take their proper place at His footstool. 2. Men must have a spirit of universal benevolence. Every man ought to love his neighbour as himself, and live in the exercise of that charity which seeketh not her own. 3. Men must faithfully perform the various duties of their stations. As God has endowed different men with different talents, so He has assigned them different parts to act upon the stage of life. And it is only by moving properly in their proper spheres of action that they can become the most extensively serviceable to the world. II. SUCH A LIFE WILL TERMINATE IN A HAPPY DEATH. For—1. It contains a source of pleasing reflections upon what is past. 2. It contains a source of agreeable anticipations. Those who have taken delight in serving God on earth may look forward to the happiness of serving Him in a higher and nobler manner in glory. 3. It will meet a glorious and ample reward beyond the grave. Conclusion: It appears from what has been said—1. That real religion is necessary to qualify every person for the station he fills. 2. That usefulness forms the most beautiful character in the eyes of the world as well as in the sight of God. David, while he served his own generation by the will of God, was greatly admired and applauded. 3. The goodness of God in prolonging the lives of His faithful servants. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*) *Three great principles*:—I. THE

PRINCIPLE OF GREATNESS—to benefit others. II. THE PRINCIPLE OF SUCCESS—working in accordance with the will of God. Philanthropists may effect a temporary reformation. Philosophy may awaken thought. But only he who works out earthly information in the light of Divine revelation can benefit his generation. III. THE PRINCIPLE OF DESTINY. By benefiting his generation—1. David benefited the world in all ages. 2. Promoted his own eternal salvation; and—3. Glorified God. (*Homilist.*) *The work and the end of life*:—I. THE DUTY. 1. It may seem a humble thing to do, but what else is there for the greatest of us? To serve your generation. The next will have its own ways of thinking and acting. If anything of yours should survive, it will be but to be criticised, disparaged, incorporated and lost in the new. Be satisfied if you can serve your own generation, and when we have made generation mean only town or parish or family, we must be satisfied still. It is not for the creatures of a day to affect either universality or permanence. 2. To serve your own generation. Not to lord it over, not to stamp your mind or will upon your generation, but to serve it. How humbling, yet how salutary a description! The greater a man is the more has he to serve. A sovereign is but a servant. How much more a tradesman, a lawyer, a physician, a clergyman! If it is a humble it is also an honourable and even a sacred service. To do good to, to help forward the men, women, and children with whom it has pleased God that we should spend our few days or years on earth. What a summons is this to every possible work of charity! What a motive does this give to diligence in visiting the poor, in supporting schools, in trying to set forward every effort and enterprise of good! II. THE END. Sleep is the Christian name for death. 1. Because it is a gentle thing. It has already lost its sting by reason of the forgiveness of sins. The sting of death is sin; and he whose sins have been dismissed is set free also from the fear of death. 2. Because it is a refreshing and a restoring thing. The weary man wants rest. And the forgiven man who, in the strength of that forgiveness, has for many years been serving his generation, needs rest; he must renew his strength before he enters upon the occupations of the world of resurrection and of eternal life. 3. Because a Christian after a pause will awake, and be satisfied, when he awakes, with God's likeness. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *The true life ever worth living*:—I. THE SWEET REASONABLENESS OF THE TRUE LIFE. "David served." There was a man of like passions with ourselves; and he lived out his life, a truly human life, a life of rare powers, of rich and varied endowments, of widest-ranging experiences and most exquisite sensibilities; and of that life the simple but sublime summation lies in this spirit-given word, "served," and service, according to highest, holiest wisdom, is supremely reasonable and worthy of man; for still that voice is sounding, "I came to minister." Such a life of all "reasonable service" opens to every man. How, you ask me, has it then become possible for men to ask, "Is life worth living?" The possibility lies largely in the lives. There are lives, alas! which almost demand the grim reply of blunt-spoken Samuel Johnson, "I do not see, sir, the necessity for your living." Lives of service fit into this universe of reason, for our universe is most reasonable. All God-made things serve. Thus they show their reason. There is a need-be for them; they move to ends. Whatever truth may be in evolution, this for me is at present the chief truth—all the past has served unto this present, all this present is seen aiming at some coming fulness; and here I bow before the holy reason of an all-ordaining will. II. The RANGE of the true life. "Served his generation." This true life, lived with rational purpose and with heroic patience under law and by love, this reasonable life of Christ-like service, is no mean, contracted, slavish thing of low and narrow aims and dismal drudgery. It is wide. It is strong. It is joyous. It has the sweep and the freshness of the sea in it; round and round it courses, generously leaving the broad shores and stealing with a resolute gentleness into every little quiet nook. It has the beauty and the strength of the mountain in it; it gladdens every healthy eye, and uplifts the weary into fresh power. It has the outstreaming gladness and the beneficent onroll of the great continental river in it; it brings its rich tributes from afar and deals them out freely adown its long-drawn banks. It claims its "generation" for its field. With the boldness of purest charity it owns no bounds save the stretch of its own years and the outreach of its own love-constrained forces. David served his own generation. How variously he served! As the shepherd lad in the Judæan farmer's home; as the young minstrel before the maddening king; as the brave, cool, self-mastering soldier in days of trial and of triumph; as the faithful friend and the eager

patriot; as the singer of the deepest songs of the pious heart and unwearying worker for the coming temple; as the Prince of Judah and King of Israel; as the saint—ay, as the sinner. And how patiently he served! from elastic youth to decrepit age. Let us go and do likewise. Let us serve our generation, our whole generation; all the circles of life that, in wider and yet wider spheres, sweep around us. We are central. Souls are ever insular. My own selfhood is the centre of my possible activity. All around me sweep the concentric circles of impressionable life. Here we see the inspiration, the grandeur, the far-reaching projection, yes, the endless perpetuity, of the true life. Our lives go down the centuries and out into eternity in the following lives of those who have been blessed and uplifted by our own. Ideals of youth; yes, have them! cherish them! It is sometimes stingingly said, oftener sneeringly thought, that the man of ideals is not the man for the rough, real, practical work of his times. Young men, be not deceived! Never were there men of loftier ideals than the Hebrew seers. They were pre-eminently the men of and for their times. III. The RULE for the true life, "According to the will of God." Yes! according to this will; here we meet the regulative principle for these resolute, aggressive lives. Under the law of God: O surest bulwark of freedom! With the counsel of God: O sublime advice! After the pattern of God: O glorious ideal! It is the child recognising the paternal voice falling from the throne of love. The "I ought" of my soul is its answer to the "I will" of my King. Regulated movement is everywhere. Shall I not know it? "Thy will be done" is nature's universal cry. Shall I stand in the profane without? No "unchartered freedom" mine, for I am child and He is Father; therefore am I not without law, but under law. There is for me, as for all things, the chief end. My chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever. His plan then, His will, must be my law. Now, God's law is ever the same, for He is one and changeless. But that one will has its personal, special, individual applications to each man, and to each man in each age. The infinity of its author is reflected in that law's inexhaustible fulness and its endless variety of possible adaptations. Like Paul it can make itself all things to all men, and that, too, in order to win each to the high and blessed life which God would have him live. Like God's ever old yet ever fresh face of nature, the Word of God has new features for each new student, for each moral artist, each soul sculptor working out his own realisation of the one grand ideal—the true life for godlike man. The work varies with the man and with the varieties of the man's age. Innovations are the law and the life of human society, specially within its field of highest, intensest activity, which is, or ought to be, the Church. Paul's work is not the Baptist's; the Baptist's is not Malachi's; Malachi's is not Isaiah's; nor Isaiah's Elijah's; and yet to each the law of the Lord was a light and a lamp. "In that purest light of Thine we see all things clearly"—no shade of the many-coloured, ever-moving web of life left out of view! IV. The REWARD of true life. David's was twofold. It was both human and Divine. Men honoured him. God crowned him. Men honoured him; "he was laid unto his fathers." He passed into the ranks of the never-forgotten, the honoured, the beloved dead, whose memories make the past a power and the future a joy. Live in the Spirit; and so become the fathers, the progenitors of the progressive centuries; make them fresher, sweeter, saintlier; then, indeed, men will rise up and call you blessed, acknowledging that the potent wine of your loving, laborious lives is stimulating them. And God, your own God, will not be unfaithful to forget your works of faith and your labours of love. God did indeed remember David and all his travail. David won the Divine recognition; and, in signal manner, God has kept guard over his life-work; his royal line lives on in David's greater Son, and his sweet songs go singing down the centuries, the guide of our childhood to God and the comfort of the parting soul. God accepted David's work, and enshrined it in His holy places. That Davidic work was manifold, but its three highest manifestations were David's literary, political, and religious activities. A new literature, art, and song! How we need them! New states of society, and happier forms of national existence! How the world is crying for them, and the cry sharpens into agony in the lands most civilised! The new temple, the living temple of the Spirit-born, the Christlike! Oh, blest solution of a thousand, thousand problems! (*J. S. McIntosh.*) *St. Paul's epitaph on David:*—The text is capable of three different constructions. The Authorised Version gives it in the form just read to you. "David, after he had served his own generation by the will (counsel) of God, fell on sleep." The Revised Version gives it in another way: "David, after he had in his own generation served the counsel of God, fell on

sleep." The margin of the Revised Version suggests a third arrangement: "David, after he had served his own generation by the counsel of God, fell on sleep." In all forms of the sentence we have the threefold thought of a generation, a service, and a counsel of God concerning it. There may be longer, more detailed, more laudatory epitaphs—the fashion of the last century covered the walls of our churches with elaborate and fulsome panegyrics, amongst which this short sentence of St Paul's might have seemed scanty and grudging in its meed of praise—but the truer taste and more reverent feeling of our own age will appreciate the more expressive, and in reality the more majestic, brevity, "He served his generation, and fell on sleep." The text presents us with two pairs of synonyms: Life is Service, and Death is Sleep. I. LIFE IS SERVICE. One rendering says, the service of God. Another rendering says, the service of a generation. But the most ignorant of thinkers or scholars will see no conflict, scarcely a divergence, in this variation. The moment the idea of service has attached itself to the idea of life enough has been done to preclude any practical uncertainty as to its nature or object. To be told that this life is not self-contained, not self-centred, not dominant, and not independent, but, on the contrary, that it is a ministry and a service as much as if I were receiving the wages and wearing the livery of an employer, is a surprise and a shock at the first hearing, or would be so if it were heard in the heart, heard as a revelation and heard as a call. Who shall pretend to say that the service of the generation may not have in it the service of a second or a third or a tenth generation, by reason of the impression made by its elevation, by its purity, by its benevolence, by its wisdom, upon the very ideas and principles of human living? It is given to a few men to leave a memory behind them in the shape of immortal writings, powerfully affecting the thought of all nations and languages, sometimes starting afresh into a novelty of influence at some great crisis of history, and moulding the taste or the judgment of posterity by a power only strengthened by lapse of time. Such men are necessarily few and far between. But speaking of average men, and of men above the average, men who have not one of these exceptional embassies, whether of transcendent genius or of Divine inspiration, to a world-wide and age-long audience, it is true—painfully true, or instructively true, as they hear and as they read it—that they can, at the best, serve but one generation, and then must "see corruption." Great ability, great knowledge, great sagacity, great personal influence, great oratory, great generalship, great statesmanship, all are of the generation. There is nothing in any one of these of a nature to live on after the death of the possessor. We have seen all these by turns wield enormous power and yet pass away. In this place it is not inappropriate to speak of knowledge as ephemeral. The man who has only read, never written, the man who has spent his strength in accumulating from libraries and observatories—the man who has written, and written largely, and for a world of readers, while he was here to hold them—is as much lost to the succeeding generation (for there is a fashion, as well as a progress, even in knowing) as the brilliant talker who was the fascination of society, or the persuasive ecclesiastic of the pulpit or the confessional. Commonly, if life reaches anything like its natural limit of the threescore and ten or fourscore years, all these powers of which we have spoken wane and fade before the reaching. Not to mention probabilities of physical enfeeblement, the latter days of the life are, from perfectly distinct causes, less brilliant than the earlier—less active, less conspicuous, less impressive, less attractive, less influential. It is the rarest thing in the world if a man remains to the end so much as in sympathy with his generation. When at last the fulness of the time is come, and he is laid to his fathers to "see corruption," it is but in a very few hearts that he leaves either a void or an impression. "He served his own generation, and then fell on sleep." This is all that can be said of him. Shall we count this a small thing? Is it not enough if it can be said with truth of any man? If there is here the reproof of human vanity, is there not also here the repose of human restlessness? To serve one generation, is not this large enough and grand enough to satisfy any reasonable ambition? We fear rather lest some here should be saying, It is too large and too grand for such as I am! "He served his own generation"; yes, it is much to say of any man. A generation is a vast thing, an inconceivable thing, while we so speak of it. We must break it up into its elements before we can apprehend it. A generation in the mass and in the gross is the whole number of living and thinking beings alive at one time upon this great earth. How can a man imagine himself to be serving all that multitude? It is to fill the post assigned with diligence, with seriousness, with unselfishness, with God in sight. It may be done equally

by prince and peasant, by master and servant, by man and woman. No one touches his generation at more than a few points—most people touch it but at one. That point of contact is the place of service; he serves his generation who serves faithfully that particular town or village or hamlet, that particular neighbourhood or family or home which is, for him, the little fragment or morsel of the generation as a whole. There is this also to reconcile us to the humbler and less conspicuous places of service—that the smaller the surface covered the deeper commonly and the more intense is the influence exercised. These are the compensations of the humble service, and of the generous Lord who takes it for His own. There is another sense, also, in which the thought of life as service has a tranquilising and even equalising influence. We have seen that the extent or space covered by it is nothing—so is it also with the duration of time. Some of the most telling "services of the generation" have been accomplished within the span of a few years. The thought of the "generation" is pregnant with applications. It reminds us of the succession and series of the inhabitants of each spot of this earth. It reminds us that there is no standing still and no looking backward, but a perpetual movement and reaching forth, in the collective life of God's human family. To serve one's generation is to help it on. We ought to be ashamed of contributing nothing to the old sum, such as we found it, of human notions and of human practices. Each true servant of his generation does in some real, though to himself unconscious way, help to make the next generation after it better and happier. Certainly in this place of brief generations we have seen, we have felt it so! Something survives of each life of service. Something is immortal of each beautiful life! Some one is assisted in being good by each servant of the past. What has not David done for them that came after? The thought never came to him, but the thing was done. Who does not turn in trouble to that man's compositions? Who stays to say to himself, David lived so many hundreds of years before Christ, how then can he sound the depths of Christian sorrow and Christian ecstasy? He was as much the commissioned minstrel of the universal Church of God as Moses was its lawgiver or Isaiah its prophet. And yet David was no saint, if saintliness were perfection. Oh, if this thought of serving the one generation were once rooted and grounded in us—if the last suggestion of the manifoldness and unexpectedness of the ways and forms of serving were but worked out by each one in reference to his own experiences, the joyous and the grievous, as it ought to be, there would be an end in us for ever of all restlessness and all mortification, there would be a definiteness and a concentration of purpose in us all; we should know exactly where we stood and how, we should feel it honour enough and to spare for the like of us if it could be written by the finger of God at last on the tomb of our resting, "He served his generation . . . and fell on sleep." "He served his generation," and in doing so he served "God's counsel" concerning himself. How reassuring amidst all adverse appearances, how comforting amidst all misgivings and all gainsayings, to know that God has a will, has a "counsel" concerning each life! We are not the casual, accidental, haphazard things that infidelity would make of us. God had a "counsel" concerning each one, in fixing the place and the time, the conditions and circumstances of His being. Let us fulfil their high destiny! Enough if of one of us this may be the record, "He served the counsel of God, . . . and he fell on sleep." Who shall tell us, concerning one of whom this is God's record, that that sleep shall have no waking? The very words which tell of it, that it is a "laying" or "adding" or "gathering" to our fathers, seem to make the funeral itself a reunion. In the light of such revelations, death a falling on sleep, burial a gathering to the fathers, even the thought of "seeing corruption" shall lose for us its terror. (*Dean Vaughan.*)

Serving our generation:—I. First, then, WHAT IS IT TO SERVE OUR OWN GENERATION? This is a question which ought to interest us all very deeply. Though our citizenship is in heaven, yet, as we live on earth, we should seek to serve our generation while we pass as pilgrims to the better country. What, then, is it for a man to serve his own generation? 1. I note, first, that it is not to be a slave to it. It is not to drop into the habits, customs, and ideas of the generation in which we live. The gospel of Jesus Christ is not only for one generation, it is for all generations. It is the faith which needed to be only "once for all delivered to the saints"; it was given stereotyped as it always is to be. That man serves his generation best who is not caught by every new current of opinion, but stands firmly by the truth of God, which is a solid, immovable rock. But to serve our own generation in the sense of being a slave to it, its vassal, and its varlet—let

those who care to do so go into such bondage and slavery if they will. Do you know what such a course involves? If any young man here shall begin to preach the doctrine and the thought of the age, within the next ten years, perhaps within the next ten months, he will have to eat his own words, and begin his work all over again. 2. In the next place, in seeking to answer the question, What is it to serve our own generation? I would say, it is not to fly from it. If he shall shut himself up, like a hermit, in his cave, and leave the world to go to ruin as it may, he will not be like David, for he served his own generation before he fell asleep. If you do not take your stand in this way, it can never truly be said of you that you served your generation. Instead of that, the truth will be that you allowed your generation to make a coward of you, or to muzzle you like a dog. 3. If we ask again, What is it to serve our generation? I answer, it is to perform the common duties of life, as David did. David was the son of a farmer, a sheep-owner, and he took first of all to the keeping of the sheep. Many young men do not like to do the common work of their own father's business. The girl who dreams about the foreign missionary field, but cannot darn her brother's stockings, will not be of service either at home or abroad. But serving our generation means more than this. 4. It is to be ready for the occasion when it comes. In the midst of the routine of daily life, we should, by diligence in duty, prepare for whatever may be our future opportunity, waiting patiently until it comes. Look at David's occasion of becoming famous. He never sought it. If you are to serve God, wait till He calls you to His work: He knows where to find you when He wants you; you need not advertise yourself to His omniscience. If you want to serve the Church and serve the age, be wide awake when the occasion comes. Jump into the saddle when the horse is at your door; and God will bless you if you are on the look-out for opportunities of serving him. What is it, again, to serve our generation? 5. It is to maintain true religion. This David did. He had grave faults in his later life, which we will not extenuate; but he never swerved from his allegiance to Jehovah the true God. No word or action of his ever sanctioned anything like idolatry, or turning aside from the worship of Jehovah, the God of Israel. 6. To serve our own generation is not a single action, done at once, and over for ever; it is to continue to serve all our life. Notice well that David served "his own generation"; not only a part of it, but the whole of it. He began to serve God, and he kept on serving God. How many young men have I seen who were going to do wonders! Ah, me! they were as proud of the intention as though they had already done the deed. Some, too, begin well, and they serve their God earnestly for a time, but on a sudden their service stops. One cannot quite tell how it happens, but we never hear of them afterwards. Men, as far as I know them, are wonderfully like horses. You get a horse, and you think, "This is a first-rate animal," and so it is. It goes well for a while, but on a sudden it drops lame, and you have to get another. So it is with church-members. I notice that every now and then they get a singular lameness. Yet more is included in this faithful serving of our generation. 7. It is to prepare for those who are to come after us. David served his generation to the very end by providing for the next generation. He was not permitted to build the temple; but he stored up a great mass of gold and silver to enable his son Solomon to carry out his noble design, and build a house for God. This is real service; to begin to serve God in early youth; to keep on till old age shall come; and even then to say, "I cannot expect to serve the Lord much longer, but I will prepare the way as far as I can for those who will come after me." II. In the second place, let us ask a question even more practical than the first: WHAT PARTS OF OUR GENERATION CAN WE SERVE? It is truly written, "None of us liveth to himself": we either help or hinder those amongst whom we dwell. Let us see to it that we serve our age, and become stepping-stones rather than stumbling-blocks to those by whom we are surrounded. We shall serve our generation best by being definite in our aim. In trying to reach everybody we may help nobody. I divide the generation in which we live into three parts. 1. First, there is the part that is setting. Some are like the sun going down in the west; they will be gone soon. Serve them. You that are in health and vigour, comfort them, strengthen them, and help them all you can. Be a joy to that dear old man, who has been spared to you even beyond the allotted threescore years and ten, and praise God for the grace that has upheld him through his long pilgrimage. 2. The second portion of our generation which we can serve is the part that is shining. I mean those in middle life, who are like the sun at its zenith. Help them all you can.

3. Specially, however, I want to speak to you about serving your own generation in the part that is rising; the young people who are like the sun in the east, as yet scarcely above the horizon. In them lies our hope for the future of God's cause on earth. In the first place, they are the most reachable. Happily, we can get at the children. Moreover, the children are the most impressible. What can we do with the man who is hardened in sin? The salvation of the children ought to be sought with double diligence, for they will last the longest. Remember, too, that those who are converted when children usually make the best saints. We ought to look after the children, again, for they are specially named by Christ. He said, "Feed My sheep"; but He also said "Feed My lambs." Look after the children of this generation, again, for the dangers around them at the present time are almost innumerable. III. WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO US WHEN OUR SERVICE IS DONE? "David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep." The day's work is done; the worker is weary; he falls on sleep: what can he do better? It was all "by the will of God." To what part of the sentence do you think that clause belongs? Did David serve his generation by the will of God; or did he fall asleep by the will of God? Both. Guided by the will of God, he did his work on earth; and calmly resigned to the will of God he prepared to die. Even when passing away, he served his generation by giving Solomon some last charges concerning the kingdom, saying, "I go the way of all the earth; be thou strong and show thyself a man." Over both his life and his death may be written the words, "By the will of God." David is an example of what will befall those who know Christ, at the end of their service. 1. He did not go to sleep till his work was done. "David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep." Do not want to die till you have done your work. 2. But, next, we are told that when his work was done, he fell on sleep. Did his soul sleep? By no means. It is not his soul that is spoken of here, for we read that he "saw corruption." Souls do not see corruption. Paul is speaking of David's body. "He fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption." His body fell into its last, long sleep, and saw corruption. If you like to take the words in the wider sense, he was asleep as far as the world was concerned; he had done with it. No sorrow came to him, no earthly joy, no mingling with the strife of tongues, no girding on his harness for the war. 3. Does not this word further mean that his dying was like going to sleep? It usually is so with God's people. Some die with a considerable measure of pain; but, as a rule, when believers pass away, they just shut their eyes on earth, and open them in heaven. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Scriptural ideal of a good man's life and death:*—We have in the text an inspired representation. I. OF A GOOD MAN'S LIFE. 1. It is distinguished as a service on behalf of others. David "served" his own generation. The word is expressive of laborious usefulness. It intimates that the "man after God's own heart," was not content with idle wishes, fruitless theories, abortive projects. And still, wherever there is true goodness, there will be the effort to "serve." "No man liveth to himself." The grand model of holy living was among His followers "as one that serveth." He "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." 2. It is specially devoted to the benefit of his contemporaries, "his own generation." He acquired a familiarity with the wants and woes of the men and women around him, and laboured to supply and alleviate them. Though good men may, and must, do many things that will only yield fruit in after days, they will seek to have "understanding of the times," and to know what they ought to do to promote and conserve the welfare of those around them. Where there is want, they will strive to supply it; where there is ignorance, they will strive to dispel it; where there is weakness, they will strive to uphold it; and where there is guilt, they will be pitiful and tender, if by any means the wrong-doer may be reclaimed. Think how soon the opportunity of helping will have slipped away from us. Our own "generation," how it is diminishing every day! In a very little while, we ourselves, as members of it will have disappeared. 3. It is regulated by a paramount regard to the will of God. Of David, God said, "I have found a man after Mine own heart, which shall fulfill all My will." The early promise was not belied. Now, if there be one thing that is more distinctive of good men than any other, it is just this high regard for the will of God. To know that, is their most earnest desire; to do it, is their most strenuous endeavour. II. OF A GOOD MAN'S DEATH. Note—I. That little word "after." "After" he had lived his true life. "After" he had fulfilled his mission. "After" he had accomplished his day, then he died; not before.

We are thus taught that the time of a godly man's departure out of the world is definitely appointed. It is not an affair of chance. It is ordered of God. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints"—so precious that He pre-arranges all the circumstances of their death, directs its causes, and ordains its period. Each of us is "immortal till his work is done." "God's witnesses," says Henry, "never die till they have finished their testimony." 2. The peculiar character of a good man's death. David, when his work was done "fell on sleep"—as the tired labourer, when his daily toils are ended, wends his way to his much-loved home, and calmly lays him down to rest, without a thought of anxiety or dread; glad that the hour is come, thankful for its provision. (*C. M. Merry.*)

Vers. 38, 39. **Be it known unto you . . . that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him all that believe are justified.**—*The gospel message:*—I. THE BLESSINGS WHICH THE TEXT EXHIBITS—forgiveness and justification. 1. Forgiveness implies offence, and have not we transgressed the law of God, which is "holy, just, and good"? Divine forgiveness is a blessing of the highest worth. Whom the Lord pardons He pardons freely and completely. Hence He is represented as passing by transgression, not imputing iniquity, blotting out sin, casting it behind His back, sinking it in the depths of the sea, and remembering it no more. 2. But this leads to the other blessing—justification, "an act of God's free grace, whereby He pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone." It is not a work wrought in, but an act passed upon us. It is also an act of God—"It is God that justifieth": and His act, not merely as a gracious Sovereign conferring a favour, but as a righteous Governor and Judge doing that which is every way equitable. The blessing includes not only the pardon of sins, but the acceptance of our persons. It is not only exemption from punishment, but restoration to favour; not only release from danger, but admittance into a state of high honour and real safety. II. THE EXTENT TO WHICH THEY REACH. "The forgiveness of sins" means *all* sins; "justified from *all* things," *i.e.*, from every charge which from any quarter can possibly be brought against us. Their atrocity shall not hinder any more than their number. Hence this clause, "from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Moses justified from some sins. Sin-offerings were appointed to expiate smaller offences; but these did not avail in cases of more flagrant crimes; the sentence of the law against such offences was death, and no exemption was allowed. Nor could the legal sacrifices ever take away guilt from the conscience, except as the penitent offender, through them, had a believing reliance on the promised Redeemer. But the justification which the gospel sets forth extends to all classes of transgressions. III. THE MEDIUM THROUGH WHICH THESE BLESSINGS ARE CONFERRED. "Through this Man," and "by Him." 1. By Him these blessings were proclaimed. He preached the gospel with His own lips: He forgave the sins of many. He commissioned His apostles to announce the same things. And He has instituted the gospel ministry, whose grand object is the publication of what He Himself and His apostles published. 2. Through Him they are also procured. As it regards forgiveness, "we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." As it regards justification, "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous." He is, "made of God unto us, wisdom and righteousness." But all this implies the substitution of Christ. He suffered not only for our good, but in our place. "He who knew no sin was made sin," a sin-offering, "for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." IV. THE PERSONS BY WHOM THESE BLESSINGS ARE ENJOYED. "All that believe." On the doctrine of forgiveness this is the language of Scripture; "Through His name, whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." On that of justification it is equally clear, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ." And what is believing? It is not an inward feeling which cannot be accounted for. It is not a presumptuous persuasion, which a man acquires he knows not how, that his state is certainly safe. It is giving credit to the truth of God's Word; a resting of the soul on that which He hath graciously revealed, so as to fall in heartily with the method of salvation made known in the Scriptures. As to the influence of faith in the justification of a sinner, it is evident faith does not effect it—"It is God that justifieth." Faith does not procure it—"It is Christ that died." But faith receives it. But mark the expression—"By Him all that believe are justified"; whether young or old, rich or

poor, learned or illiterate, &c. Conclusion: From this subject learn—1. The encouragement which springs from the love of Christ! 2. How just is the condemnation of impenitent transgressors! 3. How free is the salvation of the righteous! It is "not of works, lest any man should boast." 4. What a motive to gratitude and obedience! (*T. Kidd.*) *Through this Man*:—I. THE WAY OF A SINNER'S FORGIVENESS—"Through this Man." And notice—1. There is no other way. 2. There is no need of any other way. This "Man" satisfied all the requirements of God and man. 3. God will accept no other way. "There is none other name given under heaven whereby men must be saved." II. THE NATURE OF THE WAY OF MAN'S FORGIVENESS. 1. It is rational—consistent with justice, with mercy, with weak men, and a great God. 2. It is gracious; free from cost, easily attained, a blessed gift only to be accepted, an offer of love. 3. It is complete. It makes a man holy as well as safe. It fits for heaven as well as separates from earth. 4. It is full. There is no distinction or separation of classes or sorts: all are admitted to partake of its provisions. There is no sin it will not cover, no hardness it will not overcome. 5. It is absolute. There is no revocation or withdrawal. It was a transaction made once for all between Father and Son. (*Homilist.*) *The true aim of preaching*:—Paul's mode of preaching, as illustrated by this chapter, was first of all to appeal to the understanding with a clear exposition of truth, and then to impress that truth upon the emotions with earnest exhortations. This is an excellent model for revivalists. They must not give exhortation without doctrine, for if so, they will be like men who burn powder but have omitted the shot. At the same time let such of our brethren as are passionately fond of mere doctrine, but having little of the marrow of Divine mercy or the milk of human kindness stand rebuked by the example of the apostle. He knew well that even truth itself must be powerless unless applied. We cannot expect that men will make an application of the truth to themselves. Let us now notice—I. PAUL'S SUBJECT, the subject of subjects—the great master-doctrine of the Christian ministry. The "forgiveness of sins" is a topic interesting to every one in proportion as he feels the guilt of sin. To those good people who fold their arms and say, "I have done no wrong either to God or man," I have nothing to say. You need no physician, for you are not sick. 1. The Christian minister tells men the exclusive method by which God will pardon sin. "Through this Man." The Lord Jesus has a monopoly of mercy. Into the one silver pipe of the atoning sacrifice God has made to flow the full current of pardoning grace. If you will not go to that, you may be tempted by the mirage, you may think that you can drink to the full, but you shall die disappointed. God will forgive sin, because the sin which He forgives has been already atoned for by the sufferings of His dear Son. You know the story of the young Roman who was condemned to die. But his elder brother who had often been to the front in the battles of the Republic, came and showed his many scars, and said, "I cannot ask life for my brother on account of anything that he has done for the Republic; he deserves to die, I know, but I set my scars before you as the price of his life, and I ask you whether you will not spare him for his brother's sake." Sinner, this is what Christ does for you. 2. It is our business also to preach to you the instrument through which you may obtain this pardon. All that thou hast to do is to come to Him as thou art, and trust in Him where thou art. Cling to the Cross, thou shipwrecked sinner, and thou shalt never go down while clinging to that. You will be saved, not by repentings and tears, not by wailings or workings, or prayings. When thy soul saith by faith what Christ said in fact—"It is finished," thou art saved, and thou mayest go thy way rejoicing. 3. We are also enjoined to preach about the character of this forgiveness of sin. (1) When God pardons a man's sins, He pardons them all, never half leaving the rest in His book. Luther tells us of the devil, in a dream, bringing before him the long roll of his sins, and when he recited them, Luther said—"Now write at the bottom, 'The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin.'" (2) It is a full pardon and it is a free pardon likewise. God never pardons any sinner from any other motive than His own pure grace. It cost the Saviour much; but it costs us nothing. (3) It is irreversible. Whom God pardons He never condemns. Let Him once say, I absolve thee, and none can lay anything to our charge. (4) Present pardon. It is a notion still current that you cannot know you are forgiven till you come to die. If you reckoned a clear profit of ten thousand pounds upon some speculation, and somebody said to you, "It's all foolery!" the proof would be unanswerable if you had received the amount. So the Christian can say, Being justified by faith we have peace with God. II. THE CONGREGATION WHICH PAUL ADDRESSED. Never mind the Jews and Gentiles. The

verse is quite as applicable here as it was there. "Unto you." My friend, it is no small privilege to be where this message can yet be heard. Tens of thousands have gone the way of all flesh, unpardoned. What would they give to have another opportunity? I said that this was a privilege; but it is a privilege which some of you have despised. Those who heard Paul had never heard it before. Many of you have heard it from your youth up. All the exhortations in the world are to you as if they were spoken to an iron column or a brazen wall! Why will ye die? When you die we shall have to think, "Ah, that man is lost, and yet unto him was preached the forgiveness of sins!" Well, notwithstanding that you have neglected the privilege, it is still preached unto you. Fain would I point with my finger to some of you, and say, "Well, now, we really do mean you personally." III. WHAT BECAME OF THEM. 1. Some of them raved at a very great rate, until Paul shook off the dust of his feet against them, and went his way. But there was another class (ver. 48). Here was his comfort—there were some upon whom there had been a blessed work, and those "some" believed. Now, you need not ask the question whether you are God's elect. If you are God's chosen ones, you will know it by your trusting in Jesus. But if thou believest not, thou art in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity. May eternal mercy bring thee out of that state at once. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Preaching the forgiveness of sins*:—I. AN ALARMING FACT IN MAN'S MORAL CONDITION IMPLIED. Sin is—1. Human. 2. Personal. II. A DIVINE METHOD OF PARDON DECLARED. 1. Forgiveness. 2. Justification. III. THIS BLESSING OFFERED ON EASY AND HONOURABLE TERMS. Not by purchase, doing, meriting, but by believing—1. In God's love. 2. In Christ's readiness and power to save. 3. In God's truth that He will save all who believe. IV. THIS METHOD AND OFFER OF SALVATION CONSTITUTED BY GOD A STANDING PROCLAMATION IN HIS CHURCH FOR THE WORLD. (*J. Ross.*) *The forgiveness of sins*:—1. Not the forgiveness of crimes. There may be sin where there is no crime. Crimes are social, between man and man, between man and human law. Crime can be measured, weighed, and punished. But who knows sin? Only God. I can forgive a crime, but I have no jurisdiction in the province of sin. If I have done you wrong and am sorry for it you can on the spot say, "There is an end of it"; but after that I must have some plain talk with God. After I have apologised I have still a grievous discontent with myself. How to get clear of that? and whilst I am debating this serious question a sweet voice says to me, "Be it known unto you," &c. That is the word which a self-convicted, sin-burdened soul most eagerly delights to hear. But he must have felt the bitterness and guiltiness of sin before he can feel the need of such a gospel. When his heart is in a right state then the Cross becomes heaven to him, and the gospel the cry of God seeking His lost child. 2. In making this statement I lay all who are not yet forgiven under a tremendous responsibility. A man cannot hear a gospel sermon and be the same after as before. You are on one side of a great swollen river and want to cross it to get home. I come and say, "Be it known unto you that I have found a bridge." The fact of my telling you so alters the complexion of the whole case. You must prove me a liar before you can get back to your former state of negative responsibility. You are bound to say, "Where?" I am bound to tell you where; and if, after having pointed out the bridge, you will not go home those on the other side have a right to condemn you. Brethren, you are on one side and truth on the other. An infinite distance lies between; but Paul says it is bridged by Christ. You are bound to accept or disprove the statement. If not—to die. You are suffering from a great plague. I come and say, "Be it known unto you, I have found a balm which has never failed." Your state of responsibility is changed from that moment. Prove me false, or accept the remedy, or die. We are dying, and Jesus is set forth as the forgiveness of sins. No man, therefore, can hear that statement, and be the same after it as before. 3. How little is this word "forgiveness" understood, however we may assume we understand it. We sometimes ignorantly say, "Why does not God forgive all men, and make an end of sin?" He cannot. You cannot. We must be willing to be forgiven. I may say, if you have wronged me, "Sir, I forgive you," and you may contemptuously refuse to be forgiven. "But if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive," &c. Did He forgive the Pharisee? How could He? The Pharisee confessed nothing. Whom did He forgive? The poor self-accusing creature who cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner." So it is with us. 4. When God forgives, what happens? He forgets. "I will remember no more." Where there is no forgetting there is no forgiving. What does God do with our sins when He has forgiven them? He casts them behind Him. Where is that? He puts them away as far as the East is from

the West. How far is that? 5. Here, then, is forgiveness. God is waiting I am authorised to say. Are you ready? "But I do not understand." Sir, your understanding will damn you, if you use it so. Do you feel your need? Then believe. The apostle distinctly says there is only one way—through faith in Christ. If there were but one door to this hall, and the guide said, "This is the door," what folly to seek elsewhere or try to climb up to the windows. To take his word simply is to save time and promote comfort. But Paul is only one man—then I call the innumerable multitude who have believed his word and been forgiven to corroborate him. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Full and free pardon*:—I. THROUGH THIS MAN. Such a man as there never was nor will be—"God manifest in the flesh," "the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person." In consequence of this union He becomes the proper object of our faith, and therefore the proper object of our preaching. If Jesus Christ were but a mere man, we could not have preached pardon through Him. What merit could there be in the actions or sufferings of a mere man? For, when he had done all, he would only have done what was commanded him. Gold in bullion is valuable, but it is not the circulating medium of the country, and, before it can become so, it must be melted down and stamped with the king's arms and image. Now, if Christ had been the best of mere men, His actions and sufferings would have been mere gold in the bullion, not the circulating medium. But when I consider the Divine nature in union with the human, then I see that they are stamped with the king's arms and image, and thus they become the circulating medium of salvation, and they will pay every man's debts on this side hell. II. WE POINT YOU TO THIS MAN ON THE Cross, and you there see Him bearing our sins in His own body on the tree. There is infinite merit in the sacrifice of this God-man. Prophets looked at Him on the Cross, and they saw and proclaimed pardon through Him, and the sole song of heaven's joy is, "He has redeemed us to God by His blood." We cannot tell why Jesus Christ did suffer and die, except on the ground of atonement. He could not suffer and die on His own account. "The soul that sinneth it shall die"; but, as Jesus Christ never had sinned, therefore He had no right to die. On the contrary, by the letter of the law, He had a right to live. "Do this and thou shalt live." Rationally, we can give no account except this: "He died, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." When you look at the Cross, and see the infinite value of the sacrifice, you need not wonder "that we preach through this Man the forgiveness of sins." III. THIS IS JUST THE VERY BLESSING WE WANT. Look at the poor man condemned to be hanged. A messenger might be sent to say, "His majesty has graciously taken your case into consideration, and I have brought you a purse with a thousand sovereigns." The poor man would say, "What good can they do me? I must be hanged to-morrow." "Well, but I have another message; he has considered your case, and sent you the title-deeds to an estate of £50,000 a-year." "What will that do for me? I may be hanged to morrow." "Stop; I have another proposition to make; I have brought you his coronation robe, the richest robe that ever covered a monarch." The man bursts into tears; he says, "Do you intend to mock me? What a creature I shall appear when I ascend the scaffold with the coronation robe! But what, no news—none at all?" "I have another word; his majesty has taken your case into consideration, and sent you a pardon, signed and sealed by the great seal of the king. Here, I have brought you a pardon—what do you say to that?" The poor man looks at him, and says that he doubts it is too good news to be true. Then he leaps and praises. But the messenger says, "I have not done; I have got you the pardon, and here is the purse of gold, the title-deeds, and the robe into the bargain!" So we preach pardon through the blood of the Lamb, and more than simple pardon. Not merely is the displeasure of God removed, but His favour enjoyed. Not merely is the pardoned sinner made a subject, but a child, brought to the king's palace, and made an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ. IV. AND HOW MUST WE OBTAIN IT? "Whosoever believeth." Where a sinner believes the testimony of God, that he is a guilty sinner, sees the evil of his sin, the danger of his state, and feels a deep abhorrence of himself, a deep hatred to sin, and breathes out his soul in prayer—I do not say that he shall obtain remission of sins, but that is a preparatory operation that must take place, more or less, in all our souls. Remission of sins is not attached to believing God's record concerning Himself, but the eye turns itself out of itself, out of its own sins, out of its own weakness, and fixes itself upon the Lord Jesus Christ, in the dignity of His person, the virtue of His sacrifice, the prevalence of His mediatorial office, the

riches of His love. And then, when it looks to Jesus, there is in Christ everything that the guilty sinner wants. Here is the pardon presented, but he can bring no price. What, then, can he do? Why, he can open his hands and receive the blood-bought, freely-offered pardon for all his transgressions. V. THERE IS NO OTHER SYSTEM IN THE WORLD THAT, AT THE SAME TIME THAT IT BRINGS PARDON TO THE SINNER, BRINGS THE HIGHEST GLORY TO GOD. Here is pardon, the fullest and the freest. Even in the Mosaic economy there were some sins for which there was no propitiatory sacrifice, and consequently those who lived under that economy could not be justified from all things. But the soul that believeth on Jesus Christ is justified from all things. And then it brings the highest glory to God, for He is glorified in the very exhibition of pardon to a ruined world. Some may say that to look for mere pardon and acceptance is a narrow and selfish principle; that we should look to a higher object, viz., the glory of God. Well, when I am pardoned, God is glorified, the plan of salvation, the merits of Christ, the goodness and holiness of God are glorified. When our Lord was a babe in the manger, angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest." I think we can sing it better now that He is a prince on the throne. We cannot glorify God without loving Him, and how can we love Him without being pardoned? Having much forgiven, we love much; and when we love much, we shall glorify God. We glorify God when we prize Him. When the sinner obtains pardon, he says, "I will praise thee, though Thou wast angry with me." God is glorified by our devotedness. We glorify God with our bodies and our spirits, which are His. (*W. Dawson.*) *Justification by faith*:—Consider—I. THAT MANKIND ARE NATURALLY, AND WITHOUT CHRIST, IN A STATE OF GUILT AND CONDEMNATION. This proposition is here implied; it is that upon which the whole statement of the apostle proceeds; for it would be idle to talk of "forgiveness of sins," and to press it on the acceptance of those who are not sinners. God made man holy. To holy man he gave a holy law, which partook of the nature of a covenant. The language of it was, "Do it, and thou shalt live; but in the day that thou transgresseth, thou shalt die." The first man, the federal head of the whole human race, did transgress, and by transgression forfeited, for himself and for our race, the blessing of obedience, the blessing of the covenant, and incurred the penalty of the law—that is, he forfeited the right to life, and he incurred the punishment of death. From him we all derive a nature which—like his after his apostasy—was alienated from God, and inclined to evil. The effect of this is that, when temptations occur, we all act again the part which he acted before us. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." "The wrath of God abideth on them." II. THAT FROM THIS NATURAL CONDITION MEN CANNOT EXTRICATE THEMSELVES. "Ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." This undoubtedly includes a reference to the sacrifices and other ritual observances of the law. But we are sinners of the Gentiles, and are in no danger of relying on Jewish ceremonies. It is necessary, however, that we be convinced that we cannot be justified by the works of the moral law. To show you this you have only to look at what kind of obedience it is that the law requires when it says, "Do this, and thou shalt live." In order to your justification by law, the law requires an obedience perfect—1. In its principles and motives. The law of God is spiritual, and will not be content with an external obedience. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," &c. This law of God is so spiritual that it charges an idle thought as actual wickedness, a licentious desire as adultery, anger of heart as murder. Now, will any man stand the scrutiny of such a law as this? 2. In its practice and performance. On the one hand there are some who appeal to what they think the very tolerable, or even commendable regularity, of their outward conduct, and they ask whether they may not claim to be justified. Our last observation met their inquiry. But there are others who allow they have done that which they ought not to have done, but appeal to the supposed goodness of their hearts. "We meant well. We have failed in the performance, but will not God take the will for the deed?" Now, the second observation is meant to correct that. The law will not take the will for the deed, or the deed for the will. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." There must be actual and perfect performance in order to sustain the plea on the ground of your own works to life eternal. It is not enough to say that you thoroughly approve of the law; you may approve of it, and yet transgress it. It is not enough to say that you really desire to fulfil the law; the law makes justification depend not on desiring to keep the law, but on actually keeping it. It is not enough to say you have really used your strenuous endeavours to keep the law of God. The question

is not whether you have been endeavouring, but whether you have performed it to the letter. Now how is it possible that any of us should stand on that ground before God? 3. In its extent. "In all things." It is not enough, therefore, to show that you have kept some of God's precepts. It is very possible that you may have continued in those parts of the law regulating your intercourse with the world, and yet have been extremely faulty in reference to those parts which relate to your feelings and conduct towards God. Now can you meet God on such ground as that? 4. In its duration. Think again of the passage already cited. Cursed is he that continueth not from the first moment at which personal responsibility commences to the latest period of his life "in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." Oh! how inconceivably vain are all self-righteous hopes! III. THAT WHAT THE LAW THUS FAILS OF ACCOMPLISHING, through no defects of its own (for it is in every respect perfect and good), but through the perversity and weakness of human nature, THE GOSPEL OFFERS FREELY TO IMPART. 1. "Forgiveness of sins," that is, the remission of the penalty due to the commission of guilt. (1) This is not the alteration or diminution in the slightest degree of that intense abhorrence of sin which God must ever feel. He does not come to the conclusion, upon a view of all the particulars, that because the law has been severe the sinner is to be excused. It is part of the imperfection of human laws that such things as these sometimes occur, but which never can occur in reference to the perfect law of an infinitely wise and righteous lawgiver, who makes no mistakes, who has no errors to correct. (2) But though there is no change in God's views of sin when He pardons it, there is great and almost infinite change in its consequences in His dealings with the sinner. When sin is pardoned, that curse is entirely taken away, and the blessedness of righteousness comes in. 2. The same transaction, substantially, is called "justification." To be justified is to be accounted righteous, and to be treated as righteous. And the pardoned man, being thus at the same time accounted righteous, becomes entitled to blessings of unspeakable value. He has peace, is adopted into the family of God, is entitled to the inheritance of children. IV. THAT FOR THIS GREAT AND UNSPEAKABLE BLESSING PROVIDED FOR US IN THE GOSPEL WE ARE ALTOGETHER INDEBTED MERITORIOUSLY TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. "Through this Man . . . and by Him." The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us for the purpose of saving us. You owe your pardon, justification, and all subsequent blessings—1. To this Man's holy and spotless life. The perfect purity of our Saviour was essential to His becoming an accepted sacrifice for the sins of men. According to the law none but a lamb without blemish could be accepted. 2. To this Man's death on the Cross. Not all the condescension implied in His assuming our nature, not all the sublimity of His doctrines, could have availed to the salvation of men. 3. To this Man's resurrection from the dead. He "was delivered for our offences, but raised again for our justification." Hence to the apostles "Jesus and the resurrection" was the great point to which they bare testimony. Not that His resurrection was the meritorious consideration on which God extended pardon, but that the resurrection bore a satisfactory attestation to the death which did atone. For if there had been no real death, there could not be a real resurrection. 4. To this Man's ascension and to His mediatorial administration of all the affairs of His spiritual kingdom. "He has ascended on high; He has led captivity captive; He has received gifts for men," &c. The dispensation of those blessings which He procured for our race is entrusted to His own hands; out of His fulness it is that we receive the grace of penitence and faith, and that seals the pardon by the Spirit of adoption. V. THAT, IN ORDER TO THE PERSONAL APPROPRIATION OF THE BLESSINGS THUS PROCURED BY CHRIST, FAITH IS REQUIRED AS THE APPOINTED INSTRUMENT. "By Him all that believe are justified." No unbeliever is justified. Let us learn from this that the forgiveness of sin is not a very rare and extraordinary thing. Some objectors say that the enjoyment rather belongs to persons of eminent attainments in religion, or that it is the recompense for some eminent sacrifice for Christ and conscience. But the text says that "all who believe are justified." And this is in accordance with St. John's testimony: "I write unto you little children, because your sins are forgiven you, for His name's sake." So that even the weakest believer has the forgiveness of sins. What, then, is that believing to which such important consequences are attached? 1. It is not merely education, the faith which results from our having the privilege of being born in a Christian land. It is not the historical faith merely which results from the exercise of our judgment upon Divine revelation, its evidence, and its contents. The heart must be brought to bear on the

truth thus apprehended, the will must embrace it, and the affections must be called forth and exercised by it. It is a "believing with the heart" that is "unto righteousness." There may be the "evil heart of unbelief" where there is not the smallest approach to theoretical and speculative infidelity. 2. And then, to come a little nearer still, it is not merely that going out after God in penitential desire, and with that measure of hope and anticipation which belongs to the true penitent. A man effectually convinced of sin cannot but go out after Christ in penitential desire, for he perceives that without Christ he is undone. This faith implies the actual laying hold upon Christ by the power of the Eternal Spirit with believing, trust, and reliance. 3. Do you wish to get a clearer and more distinct view of it? I tell you how it is to be done; you must make the experiment; you will never understand it till you practise it. In the exercise of penitent and self-renouncing and self-despairing feelings turn your eye to Christ; look on Him that you may be saved. Look off from everything else; look off from yourself, from every other pretended saviour; look to Jesus; and while you are thus looking, the aid of the Holy Spirit will be imparted to you, and you will perform that special and distinct act of faith which is trusting on Christ, which is believing with the heart unto righteousness; and while you are performing, when you thus perform it, you will understand it better. (*Jabez Bunting, D.D.*) *Forgiveness is free for all who believe*:—I recollect in Martin Luther's life that he saw, in one of the Romish churches, a picture of the Pope, and the cardinals, and bishops, and priests, and monks, and friars, all on board a ship. They were all safe, every one of them. As for the laity, poor wretches, they were struggling in the sea, and many of them drowning. Only those were saved to whom the good men in the ship were so kind as to hand out a rope or a plank. That is not our Lord's teaching; His blood is shed "for many," and not for the few. He is not the Christ of a caste, or a class, but the Christ of all conditions of men. His blood is shed for many sinners, that their sins may be remitted. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Salvation is through Christ only*:—I recollect a story told of William Dawson, whom our Wesleyan friends used to call Billy Dawson, one of the best preachers that ever entered a pulpit. He once gave out as his text, "Through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." When he had given out his text he dropped down to the bottom of the pulpit, so that nothing could be seen of him, only there was a voice heard saying, "Not the man in the pulpit—he is out of sight—but the Man in the book. The Man described in the book is the Man through whom is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." I put myself and you and everybody else out of sight, and I preach to you the remission of sins through Jesus only. I would sing with the children, "Nothing but the blood of Jesus." Shut your eyes to all things but the Cross. Jesus died, and rose again, and went to heaven, and all your hope must go with Him! Come, my hearer, take Jesus by a distinct act of faith this morning! May God the Holy Ghost constrain thee to do so, and then thou mayest go on thy way rejoicing! So be it in the name of Jesus. (*Ibid.*) *God's forgiveness*:—A Christian worker says: "We were asked one day to call and see a poor woman who was very ill. We found her worn and faint, in a state of extreme discomfort and poverty. In the room were screaming children, whose mother was loudly bidding them 'Be still, or she'd beat them,' so that at first it seemed doubtful whether the invalid would be able to listen to anything. 'It's all there,' said the poor woman, laying her hand on her chest, 'and don't leave me night nor day. I can't get rid of the burden!' Our efforts to arrange the pillow and straighten the rags meant for bed-clothes did not afford any relief. 'No, my dear, it's not that, it's not that. Its all my sins as I've done ever since I was a child; they come up before me, and lie there so heavy. They tell me I must die; but I can't.' 'Now, listen, and I will tell you of a man who felt just as you did, only perhaps worse. He was so bad that he could not keep from roaring day and night. He could not lie still as you can; and he said, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. When I kept silence my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me." 'Oh,' broke in the woman, 'that's like me; and what did he do?' 'I acknowledged my sin unto Thee. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord'; and on explaining what this was, the poor woman started up in bed, took hold of my arm, and, with an eagerness beyond description, asked, 'What did the Lord say? What did God say to him?' 'And Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin; for this shall every one pray unto Thee.' No more need be told. The woman acknowledged her sins, and David's God spake forgiveness to her heart through Jesus Christ. From that

day the burden was gone, and the praise that rose from that sick bed continuous." *Justification by faith*:—Luther sought rest for his troubled breast in self-denial and retirement as a monk, but did not find it. In 1500 he started as a delegate for Rome, hoping to find relief from his burden there. As he came in sight of the city he fell on his knees, exclaiming, "Holy Rome! I salute thee." He was disappointed and shocked at the wickedness which he found there. The people said to him, "If there is a hell, Rome is built over it." At last he turned to ascend Pilate's staircase, thronged by the superstitious crowd, upon his knees. He toiled from step to step, repeating his prayers at every one, till a voice of thunder seemed to cry within him, "The just shall live by faith." Instantly he rose, saw the folly of his hopes of relief through works of merit. A new life followed his new light. Seven years after he nailed his theses to the doors of the Wittenberg church, and inaugurated the Reformation. (*Christian Age.*) **From which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.**—*The superiority of the gospel to the law*:—The law cannot save, "for by the deeds of the law no flesh is justified"; but the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. The law is all righteousness—the gospel all grace. The law can only justify the just; the gospel justifies the sinner. The law is a royal chariot that will convey the perfect man to heaven, but it is a Juggernaut car which crushes the rebel under its wheels. The law can only declare a man just; the gospel makes him just. The law demands obedience, but it never helps men to obey; the gospel effectually helps those who cannot help themselves. The law cries out, "Do this and live"; the gospel, in gentler tones, says, "Believe and live." The law has a prison in which to punish; the gospel has a reformatory in which to save. The law is a taskmaster sternly commanding; the gospel is a philanthropist generously helping and inspiring. The law can only show the sins; the gospel, with an almighty fling, casts them into the depths of the sea. The law can say, "If Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, who shall stand?" The gospel gives the grand reply, "There is forgiveness with Thee." The law can say, "Sin hath abounded"; the gospel, "Grace hath much more abounded." The law has not saved one soul; the gospel has saved its myriads. Thank God that where the law fails the gospel triumphs. (*J. Ossian Davies.*)

Vers. 40, 41. **Beware therefore.**—*A solemn warning to the ungodly*:—We are, in this world, represented as being remarkably under the influence of self-love; but, with regard to the eternal future, the self-love of man is strangely perverted and enfeebled. One of the main objects of the sacred writings is to grapple with this fatal tendency, and one mode is to announce men's danger by reason of their sinful folly; and also the only method by which that danger can be averted. Notice—I. THE INFLICTION TO WHICH THIS SOLEMN CAUTION RELATES. What is it that we have to beware of? You will find in the context that it is "the anger," or "the wrath of God" (ver. 41; Isa. xxix. 14; Hab. i. 5). Observe—1. The cause from which the threatened anger arises. God created the universe for His praise, and filled it with all the elements of happiness. And when we find Him going forth amid the threatenings of vengeance, to what is the change to be ascribed? To the introduction of sin. The first transgressors were angels who kept not their first estate, and are reserved, under chains and darkness, unto the judgment of the great day! Afterwards man became a sinner, and "by one man's disobedience, many have been made sinners." Hence it is that there comes the threatening. Now, is there anything in this but an equitable arrangement of consequence as following cause? 2. The operations in which that wrath is manifested. (1) We have tokens around us of the anger of God against sin. In the barrenness of the wilderness; in the scorching of the summer heat; in the withering of the wintry frost; and in disease, pestilence, and death. (2) And then we must not forget that there are examples of His vengeance of a temporal nature. The deluge, the destruction of the cities of the Plain, the plagues of Egypt, the punishment of the Jews, &c. (3) And have there been no manifestations of the wrath of God against sin in modern times? (4) But is there nothing beyond? We have spoken of temporal evils, but we hear of many announcements in the sacred writings of "the wrath which is to come." II. THE CONSIDERATIONS BY WHICH THIS SOLEMN CAUTION MAY BE ESPECIALLY ENFORCED. Beware of this wrath—1. On account of the suddenness with which it is frequently inflicted. "Because there is wrath, beware lest He take thee away with a stroke." "He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." There are examples which God has

given, in order to illustrate and confirm these general declarations. For example, Nabad and Abihu, Korah and his company, Belshazzar, Ananias, Herod. And have we had no instance of the infliction of the wrath of God in our own times and amongst ourselves? Beware! for the wrath of God, on account of sin, may come upon you unawares. 2. Because when inflicted it causes irreparable ruin. We are not speaking now of temporal evils, but of the future state (Luke xiii. 24-30). III. THE CONDUCT TO WHICH THIS SOLEMN CAUTION SHOULD LEAD. 1. Men are to embrace the refuge which God has provided from the wrath to come. The Governor of the universe has, while preserving the honour of His justice, magnified the riches of His grace, and He is willing that none should perish, but that all should come to repentance. And if men, feeling their guilt and their danger, will but come unto Him in the exercise of faith, they shall be forgiven. 2. The resort to the remedy which has been provided must be without delay. Why should we delay? You have delayed long enough. You have often been invited, and often summoned to beware. Remember—1. The brevity and uncertainty of life. 2. The hardening influence of sin. (*J. Parsons.*) **Behold ye despisers, and wonder and perish.**—*The destruction of despisers:*—I. THE CHARACTER OF THESE DESPISERS. 1. There are some who despise all religion, and reject even those fundamental principles which revelation presupposes; such as the existence and providence of God, the difference between moral good and evil, and the freedom and accountableness of man. 2. There are some who pretend to believe the truths of natural religion, but despise all revelation. From the supposed sufficiency of human reason for all the purposes of religion, they conclude that no supernatural discovery ever has been or ever will be made. 3. There are some who acknowledge in general the truth of the gospel, but despise its peculiar doctrines. 4. There are those that profess to believe the gospel in all its essential doctrines, and yet in their hearts and lives oppose it. II. IN WHAT RESPECTS, IT MAY BE SAID, THEY WILL PERISH WONDERFULLY. Here are two things asserted. 1. Destruction awaits contemptuous sinners. Whatever may be the condition of heathens, who never heard of Christ, awful must be the fate of those, who, having heard of Him, despise and refuse the only Lord who bought them. "They who believe not, shall die in their sins"; they are "condemned already, because they believe not in the name of the only begotten Son of God." If obedience to God is necessary to salvation, faith in Christ must be necessary; for this is the command of God, "That we believe on Him whom He hath sent." 2. This destruction when it comes will be wonderful. (1) Unexpectedly. A punishment which they little thought of will therefore fill sinners with wonder and astonishment. It is said of Jerusalem, "Because she remembered not her last end, therefore she came down wonderfully." The Scripture represents the destruction of sinners, in general, as coming upon them by surprise. (2) Exceeding all present conception. There is a strange punishment for the workers of iniquity. Some temporal judgments are so great, that they are called strange and marvellous works. How much more strange and marvellous will be the future punishment of despisers? "God will perform a work which they would not believe, though a man should declare it to them." Who knows the power of God's anger?" We cannot conceive—(*a*) the great anguish of a self-condemning conscience. (*b*) That positive punishment which awaits sinners. (*c*) The distress of total despair. (3) Wonderful, compared with that of other sinners. Despisers will be distinguished in the world of misery from others. Moses having enumerated the singular privileges of the favoured people, says, "If ye will not observe to do all the words of this law, the Lord will make your plagues wonderful." The gospel abounds in warnings of this kind. "If the word spoken by angels was steadfast," &c. III. LET ME ENFORCE THE CAUTION IN THE TEXT. "Beware," &c. In mercy to our guilty world, God has sent His Son to make the purchase, proclaim the offers, and state the terms of eternal salvation. To us the word of this salvation is sent. The question now proposed is, Will you accept it? If you will accept the benefit you must submit to the terms of it. You must repent and yield to the government of the gospel of Christ. If you will not do this, you despise His gospel, and all the blessings which it reveals. Consider what it is that you despise. It is a gospel preached by the Son of God from heaven; confirmed by miracles, preserved in the world by a merciful providence, and transmitted to you by peculiar favour. How worthy, then, of your thankful acceptation! To despise this is to despise that pearl of great price, to purchase which you should be willing to sell all that you have. To despise this is to despise God's greatest gift, even the gift of His own Son, who came to seek and to save them who were lost. Judge, now,

what must be the consequence of this contempt. Know ye, that your judgmen lingers not. The Lord will soon arise, that He may do His strange work. (*J. Lathrop, D.D.*)

Vers. 42–52. **And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words.**—*Growth of apostolic power*:—1. There are always unexpected hearers arising to give encouragement to the preacher. Strangers are there, who spring up, and say, "This is the gate of heaven." The Gentiles hailed the Word as strangers might hail tidings of home. We know some things not by direct intellectual instruction, but by subtle and inexpressible sympathy. We feel that certain words are true. We may not know music technically, but surely the dullest man knows when the right tune is being sung. The Gentiles heard a strange speech that day, yet they knew it. The Lamb was slain before the universe was built. The gospel comes to a measure of preparation. Somehow in the most savage breast there rises up an answering voice, saying, "This is what I have been waiting for." 2. But preachers have to find out their hearers. Paul and Barnabas were no doubt amazed at the desire of the Gentiles. The invitation would have come naturally from the Jews. It would be a pleasant thing if our neighbours would invite us to this or that renewal of service, but they go away and leave us. But we are not alone; for God, who is able to raise up out of the stones children unto Abraham, raises up strange hearers, unknown hearts, and from them comes the cry which we cannot refuse to answer. 3. We think we have expressed the very last formula of science when we say the same causes produce the same effects; in all moral questions the axiom is not only doubtful but untrue. The Jews were "filled with envy," the Gentiles were "filled with joy." How do you account for that? It was the same Sabbath, preacher, doctrine, congregation. There the same cause did not produce the same effect. You are not dealing with cause and effect only in a case of this kind; you are dealing with the middle quantity, human nature. Like goes to like. The same preacher cannot minister to all people. A man may dislike this ministry or that solely because he may not understand it or be in sympathy with it, but to another man it is the very breath of heaven. Thanks be unto God, every true Paul has at least some few Gentiles who understand and love Him. 4. "Now, when the congregation was broken up" (ver. 43). Was it then all over? Congregations should never break up in the sense of terminating spiritual ministry. There were after-meetings. Beza says that herein is a justification for mid-week meetings and lectures. "Now when the congregation was broken up, the people dispersed, and referred no more to the matter." Does the text read so? It would read so if it had been written to-day. I never hear any one make reference to the solemn engagements of the sanctuary after they are over. It is a decency observed, a ceremony passed through, a fact accomplished. In the olden time Christian service used to be the be-all and the end-all of the life of those who engaged in it. Here is life in the olden time (vers. 44, 45). That was life! A man could preach then! Sermons were thunderbolts! Religious services were not opportunities for sanctified slumber; they were calls, as with the blast of a thousand trumpets, to the standard and to the sword of the Lord. 5. In the forty-sixth verse the ministers become new men. "Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold." There is history in these words; it was a critical moment; it was one of two things—the Jews by their blasphemy prevailing, or the apostles of Christ saying, "The day shall be ours." Some men are so easily put down. Paul and Barnabas were not made of such material; history is not made of such stuff! Somewhere, in symbol or in speech, you must find the heroic element in every true man. I know nothing of that marvellous love of Christ that never mentions His name, that never touches His memorial bread or wine; that never gives Him a cup of cold water. Be ours the Christianity that is heroic and self-sacrificing. Let the world know that we are followers of the Cross. When I read that Paul "waxed bold," I am not surprised; but when I read that Barnabas waxed bold, I wonder if he would have done so if Paul had not been there. Barnabas! take care that your strong brother is always nigh at hand when you go out to do Christian work, for in his strength you may be strong. 6. "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." How many poor souls have stumbled there, as if a door had been shut in their faces, whereas there is no door but an open one to the heart of God! Never found what you call good theology upon bad grammar. Happily these words, the most learned men tell us, might be read, "And so many as set themselves in order" were saved; as many as took up this matter; as many as accepted the Word; as many as disposed them-

selves in soldierly order and array went on to victory and honour. There can be no more terrible blasphemy than for any man to think that God has a spite against him, and will not let him be saved. God would have all men to come unto Him and be saved. 7. Notice an extraordinary expression. In ver. 46 "the Jews were filled with envy"; in ver. 52 "the disciples were filled with joy." It is always so with the gospel; it is a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death; it makes a man a worse man, or a better man. But "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." The apostles said, "It was necessary that the Word of God should first be spoken to you"; but after that comes the withdrawal of the opportunity, the taking away of the light, the shutting of the hospitable door. This may be our last chance! "He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The results of Paul's first reported sermon*:—I. A GENERAL SPIRIT OF RELIGIOUS INQUIRY (ver. 42). A sermon has done much when it has broken the monotony of thought, and excited the spirit of religious inquiry. II. THE CONVERSION OF MANY OF THE HEARERS (ver. 43). The fact that Paul and Barnabas exhorted them to continue in "the grace of God" implies of course—1. That they had received it. Had been converted. 2. That there was a danger of losing it. III. A GREAT EXCITEMENT AMONGST ALL CLASSES (ver. 44). The words of Paul had struck into the heart of the population, and set the minds of all alive. During the previous week his sermon was the one subject of talk in all circles. All felt anxious to hear more; so that now, at the dawn of the Sabbath day, they gather in crowds to hear the wondrous truths again. The gospel breaks the stagnant atmosphere of the mind, and unchains the strong winds of thought. IV. THE STIRRING UP OF A BITTER PERSECUTION (ver. 45). When the Jews saw the crowds of Gentiles flocking to the apostles, and treated by them as on terms of equality with the chosen people, their envy was kindled, the fiendish flame raged in their bosoms, and they began to contradict and blaspheme. They dealt in calumny, reviled them as heretics and false teachers. True and powerful sermons will excite antagonism as well as win converts. V. THE INCREASED POWER OF THE APOSTLES IN THEIR WORK (ver. 46). Like all true men, they grew greater in the presence of difficulties, and braver as perils thickened around them. Opposition never intimidates great natures in a good cause. On the contrary, it brings out their manhood in defiant attitudes. In the text we have three things—1. The gospel offered by a Divine plan. "It was necessary," &c. Why? Because Christ had commanded that the Jews should have the first offer. There were reasons for this. Their offer to the Jew "first" was—(1) The strongest proof of the sincerity of their own faith. The Jew lived on the very scenes where the great facts of Christianity occurred. They were eye-witnesses of the whole. (2) The strongest proof of the mercifulness of their system. The Jew was the greatest sinner; the Jews crucified the Lord of life and glory. 2. The gospel rejected by an unbelieving people. "Judge yourselves unworthy!" Is not this withering irony? The Jew thinks himself unworthy of eternal life! Proud spirits; they considered nothing too good in heaven or earth for them; they felt themselves worthy of heaven's choicest gifts. (1) Man's conduct is his true verdict upon himself. A man is not what he may think he is, or say he is, or what others may judge he is. His everyday life pronounces the true sentence upon himself. (2) Man's sentence upon himself when he rejects the gospel is terribly awful. "Unworthy of everlasting life." The man who rejects the gospel declares by the very act his thorough unfitness for eternal life. He dooms himself to eternal death. 3. The gospel promoted by earnest men. "Lo, we turn to the Gentiles." We have no time to lose. Souls by millions around us want the salvation we are commissioned to offer. We have offered it to you. You have rejected it. Adieu, we hasten to other spheres. Two things are suggested here—(1) A lamentable condition for a people. These unbelieving Jews are left—the apostles turn from them—the gospel is withdrawn. A greater calamity this than if the sun went down and left their heavens in sackcloth. Mercy will not always continue with a people. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." (2) An obvious duty for a ministry. It was right for these gospel labourers to leave a rocky, sterile, and unproductive soil, and try elsewhere. Their field is the world. Ministers are justified and often bound to leave their sphere of labour. That ministry which is unsuccessful in one sphere is often prosperous in another. The apostles wrought wonders amongst the Gentiles. 4. The gospel designed for the world by the mercy of God. "For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying," &c. They assured them first of God's special kindness to them. VI. A PRACTICAL

ACCEPTATION OF THE GOSPEL BY A LARGE NUMBER OF THE GENTILES (vers. 48, 49). The idea is, that as many as were disposed unto eternal life—the gospel—believed in it; and this is evermore the case. VII. THE EXPULSION OF THE APOSTLES FROM THEIR COASTS, AND THEIR DEPARTURE TO ICONIUM (vers. 50–52). "Devout" in the sense of being proselytes, "honourable" in the sense of social rank. The persecuting Jews used the influence of these women to banish the apostles. Women have often been used as tools in the hands of persecutors. The persecutors so far succeeded that the apostles withdrew. "But they shook off the dust of their feet against them." The act does not mean indignation. No fires of revenge or resentment glowed in their bosoms. It was a dramatic act expressing abhorrence of their conduct in desecrating the most sacred of missions. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) **Now when the congregation was broken up.**—*The congregation and its dispersion:*—I. THE CONGREGATION. 1. It is a wonderful thing when we reflect upon it. It differs from every other gathering. It is a mixed assemblage. Persons of all ages and of all ranks are here. Persons who meet nowhere else meet here. The house of mourning and the house of feasting alike contribute their quota to this one gathering. In this one place there is silence, except from certain authorised speakers, or at certain prescribed points. To the words of a man, one of themselves, all are bound to listen in respectful silence. 2. The inference which all must draw from such a scene is that there is a consciousness of a great want—the want of the knowledge of God, communion with God, directions from God. Men cannot do without a religion, and that religion must have its exercises. It could scarcely be accounted for, except on the supposition that there is a God, whom to reverence is man's first duty, whom to know is life. And this supposition condemns us. We do not (it may be) know God, and we do not reverence Him. What the congregation does, the individual does not. 3. We may well form a high estimate of this great institution. What is done here tells upon the life; yea, upon the eternal life. Carelessness of thought, the entrance of the world and the devil into the heart here, does involve consequences of which none can set the limit. When we come together, as St. Paul says, in one place, it must be either for the better or for the worse. II. THE BREAKING UP OF THE CONGREGATION. 1. He who sees the gradual emptying of this holy place, and pictures to himself the various scenes to which the worshippers are returning, may well look after them anxiously, and wonder where and how the seed sown is to have its development, if at all. Whither will the All-seeing eye track its dispersion? Shall there be any deed of darkness done by one who is now hearing the Word of God? Shall there be around any hearth thoughts of unkindness or words of dispute and bitterness? Or shall there be any lying down to sleep unblessed by prayer? Surely, if the sight of a congregation has its solemnity, the sight of its dispersion is more solemn and more anxious still. Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of devils. 2. In this case, an apostle had been the preacher, his topic was a new gospel, and the impression made had been such that the audience wanted to hear the same sermon again. And yet even when Paul preached, even when One greater than Paul preached, some believed the things that were spoken, and some believed not. It is even so now. Those who were satisfied with the hearing went away; those who desired to live by it stayed behind. Is there nothing now to correspond with this distinction? Where amongst us are the religious proselytes who follow the ministers when the congregation is broken up; use, in other words, the opportunities afforded them for a more private and personal instruction, link together the Sunday services by a chain of holy effort and assiduous devotion in the week between, and thus set themselves with all earnestness to grow in knowledge and in grace? 3. Paul and Barnabas felt that an attentive congregation, though a great blessing, is an ambiguous sign. They knew the precariousness, as well as the importance, of the spiritual life, and never rested satisfied with one symptom or evidence of a strong impression. They spoke to these new disciples, and persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. It is a great thing to set out well; it is more to run well: it is more still to end well. (*Dean Vaughan.*) **And the next Sabbath day came almost the whole city together; . . . but when the Jews saw the multitudes they were filled with envy.**—*Denominational envy:*—And are not religious bodies sometimes guilty of this sin? Has it no existence in the breasts of professing Christians of different denominations? Is there no envy in Dissenters towards the Church of England, or of the Church of England towards Dissenters? Of Baptists towards Pædobaptists, Pædobaptists towards Baptists? Of Methodists towards Congregation-

alists, and Congregationalists towards Methodists? What meaneth that disposition to suspect and traduce each other, which is but too common amongst all the divisions of the Christian Church? If one denomination prospers, are not all the rest too apt to look on with envious eyes, because theirs is likely to be eclipsed or diminished? Are not all the little arts of detraction most busily employed, and a hundred tongues made voluble to arrest the progress and limit the prosperity of the rising sect? And how much of this spirit is often seen in the conducting of rising congregations of the same denomination! What ill-will is often cherished by the members of the declining cause towards those of the prosperous one, and only because they are prosperous! They can never hear of the success of their neighbour society, their sister Church, without feeling and appearing uneasy and displeased, as if an injury were done to them; they profess to be incredulous of the fact; they suggest that it is more in outward show than reality; they do not scruple to mention drawbacks in the talents or perhaps the inconsistencies of the minister; detraction, yea, even slander, is employed against some of the members of this "prosperous" society, as it is sneeringly called. Such even in Christian Churches, or rather in the minds of some of their members, are the operations of envy. (*J. A. James.*) *Envy at the success of the gospel*:—A witness—I. AGAINST THE ENVIOUS. 1. Their secret pride. 2. Their evil conscience. 3. Their internal unhappiness. II. FOR THE ENVIED. There must be something in it. 1. A truth which cannot be denied. 2. A good against which we cannot contend. 3. A blessedness which cannot be mocked away. (*K. Gerok.*) *The opponents of the gospel injure only themselves*:—1. They disclose their evil hearts (ver. 45). 2. They make themselves unworthy of eternal life (ver. 46). 3. They disgrace themselves by the bad weapons they employ (ver. 50). 4. They do not arrest the victorious course of truth (vers. 48–52). (*Ibid.*) **Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, . . . seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life.**—*Unworthy of eternal life*:—I. THAT CLEARLY WE ALL ARE, however exorbitant may be our estimate of our own excellencies. Finite merit can never entitle us to an infinite reward. If it were ordained that for each year lived in perfect virtue we were to have meted out to us one year more of heaven, he would be a rash man who would affirm that the reward was insufficient. But suppose that for each such year we were to have a thousand years in glory, who would dare to say that the reward was not far in advance of our deserts? 1. Try and form some idea of everlasting life, that you may be the better able to realise how little you can merit it. (1) It stands contrasted with all forms of life in this transient world. We read of some who seem to have lived to an extraordinary age in primitive times. Yet each record ends with the words, "And he died." Even Methuselah had to come to this at last. I have seen trees in England that possibly may have been growing in the time of Cæsar, and there are trees in America that may have been young in the days of Moses, but even these have to die at last. Let your mind wander backwards until you reach the time when man first appeared, and back further through the long ages in which animal life assumed a thousand forms of wonder and beauty, while type after type appears only to pass away. Go back further still through those past ages whose history is written only in "scarpèd cliff and quarried stone," until you reach the period inconceivably remote, when the earliest forms of life began to exist. Look back beyond that to the time when the world was desolate and lifeless, and back beyond that to the time when it was but a stormy aggregation of gases and vapours, and back beyond that to a time when the planet had no separate existence; and as you contemplate these vast geological periods, which have to be measured by millions of years, reflect that all these are but as a watch in the night as compared with everlasting life, and then tell me who can merit such a destiny as that. (2) Try to present the wondrous vision of the future. Everlasting life! the glory of an age that has no period; a God-like life—a life in which existence itself must be an unmixed boon, because all that could interfere with its blessedness has passed away for ever; and as you contemplate the wondrous object, pause and ask, "What can I do that I should win for myself such a prize?" 2. But now look at the other side. Although eternal life is so glorious, yet there is not a man in this congregation who can bring his own heart to be satisfied with the prospect of anything less. Promise to yourself, if you will, a thousand ages, or multiply that thousand by any number of figures, yet let it be understood that there is to come a term at last, sooner or later, and at once there is a bitter drop in your cup of pleasure. 3. But now place these two definite conclusions side by side—that we none of us can deserve eternal life,

and that we cannot be satisfied with anything short of it. Bring these two facts together, and then you will find yourselves landed in one of two further conclusions—either that man is to be disappointed, and that human life is to be the victim of death, or else eternal life must become ours without our meriting it, that is to say, by deed of gift on the part of Him who alone has the power to impart it. Nothing can be more plain than the utterances of the New Testament upon this point (John x. 27, 28; Rom. vi. 23; 1 John v. 9–11). 4. But if God has given it, why is it that we do not possess it? The answer is, that a gift needs to be accepted as well as given. The gift has not been given to each sinner severally, but it has been treasured up in the Son for all. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." Over and over again we are taught that our eternal life is dependent upon our faith in Christ as God's provision for our need. Now it is obvious that this faith is not an exhibition of merit, but rather a confession of helplessness. Hence clearly it follows that this life is only to become ours by deed of gift. We may receive a gift by an act of simple faith, but something more than faith is required to earn it. If, for instance, the condition had been prayer, we might have felt entitled to some sort of favourable consideration because we had struggled so long and so patiently. Or if the condition had been fasting, &c., we should have felt that our penances had established some sort of claim upon God's mercy. Or had the condition been almsgiving, should we not have felt as if we had paid a very considerable, if not a sufficient, price for this wondrous boon? But faith is at once the simplest and the least meritorious of conditions, and in ordaining this God has not only proved that eternal life is a gift, but that it is a gift that none need find it difficult to appropriate. 5. And this leads to the next point, that there is no excuse for us if we do not possess ourselves of eternal life. If we had to earn it we might well despair. But what have we to say for ourselves if we are so blind to our own interests as to refuse to accept everlasting life as a gift? Are you possessed of eternal life? You have no right to remain uncertain about this. It is not too much then to say that you may become possessed of this blessed gift to-day. Will you spurn such a splendid gift as this? And will you barter this for fleeting trifles, and thus judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life? II. But you say, "HOW CAN WE AVOID JUDGING OURSELVES UNWORTHY OF ETERNAL LIFE IF, AS YOU HAVE YOURSELF SHOWN, THIS IS OUR REAL CONDITION? If we are unworthy of it, nothing is gained by our abstaining from judging ourselves to be so." This objection brings us to ask, "In what sense were these Jews judging themselves unworthy?" Obviously not in the sense in which we have used the words; had that been so, they would have been the more disposed to listen to the messengers who brought it as a gift. It is one thing to be absolutely unworthy of any particular benefit, and another to prove relatively unworthy of it when it is brought within our reach. If a benevolent man chooses to take a homeless street Arab and offer him the benefits of a comfortable home, it is clear that this fortunate boy is receiving treatment that he can lay no claim to; he is absolutely undeserving of it. If, however, his benefactor chooses to bestow all this kindness upon him, it is a deed of gift, and the unworthiness of the boy is no bar to his enjoying it. But suppose the silly boy does not know when he is well off, turns his back upon his benefactor, and prefers the gutter to the mansion—what do we say of him now? It is with quite a different meaning now that we affirm that he is unworthy of his benefactor's goodness; and so absolutely we are all unworthy of everlasting life. But when God brings this unspeakable gift within our reach, we judge ourselves relatively unworthy when we treat the priceless treasure as though it were not a thing worth having. Now this is the great sin of man. "Ye put it from you." Ah! that is how we pronounce sentence upon ourselves. Men put it from them—1. When they are too busy with other concerns to pay any attention to this. The making of money, the improvement of our social position, the politics of the day, the claims of science or of art, these things are allowed to absorb the attention, while the great question, besides which all other things are mere trifles, How shall I inherit eternal life? remains unanswered and unconsidered. 2. When they endeavour to feel satisfied with a religion that does not impart this gift. 3. When they allow themselves to be blinded by prejudice, or held in bondage by the opinions of others. This was the way in which these Jews of Antioch put it from them. The first thing to be settled before we touch doctrines or party creeds is the question of life. 4. When they treat it with contempt, sneering at it as cant and hypocrisy, instead of examining carefully the nature of the spiritual

phenomena occurring before their eyes. 5. By clinging to the sins and follies of which the apostle says so truly, "The end of those things is death." We cannot sow the seeds of death and reap the harvest of life. (*W. Hay Aitken, M.A.*)

Lo, we turn to the Gentiles.—*The apostles turning to the Gentiles:*—I. THE RESULTS of the apostles' labours are set before us in their variety. 1. We see their success. At Antioch "came almost the whole city together to hear the Word of God" (ver. 44). At Iconium "a great multitude, both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed" (ver. 1). The quality of this success was most encouraging. 2. This success was the cause of opposition. The Jews at Antioch, jealous over the impression made by Paul, contradicted what he said, and even cursed the name of Jesus and all concerning Him (ver. 45). Confront evil with the gospel, and you must expect an answer, as the sign that your challenge is satisfactory. A gospel which raised no opposition would be questionable. 3. Out of this opposition came failure. The apostles had to leave Antioch under the ban of the law with their work unfinished. Such is the mixed result of Christian work always. We know no place where the gospel has entered to convert every heart, where no opposition of any sort has arisen to check the peaceful conquest, where every soul has remained wholly true to the Lord Jesus Christ. No. The gospel wins its way by struggling with evil. II. THE CAUSES of this variety of results are hinted at. 1. Man is shown to be responsible himself for his attitude toward the gospel. The Jews, to whom Paul preached first, rejected the gospel, and Paul told them that they had judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life (ver. 46). The Gentiles of Antioch, on the contrary, by their deeds, by their gladness at receiving the gospel and their glorifying God for it (ver. 48), showed that they were worthy of it in Paul's sense. So there is a curious paradox in the coming of the gospel to men: men think it comes before them to be tested as to its truth, whereas it comes to test them as to their character, whether they are worthy to receive it or not. The responsibility for the result therefore rests with them. 2. At the same time Paul points to the mysterious fact that God works in the choice of men. Man chooses; and God is choosing in man's choice. For God works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. Therefore Paul says (ver. 48) that "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." He shows us first the earthly stage, with the will of men directing events. Then he draws back the curtain and shows us God at work directing things His way, through the direction of men. But how shall we reconcile the two, the sovereignty of God with the freedom of the human will? They are irreconcilable to a finite mind. III. THE CONDUCT OF THE APOSTLES in view of these diverse results should be noticed. 1. As opposition arose in the form of contradiction, the apostles "waxed bold" (ver. 46). They told the Jews of Antioch plainly that they were unworthy of everlasting life and showed it by their deeds. They were not afraid of men. The strength of Christian confidence needs opposition in order to be fully seen. 2. As they left Antioch they warned its inhabitants most solemnly: "they shook off the dust of their feet against them" (ver. 51). This was a common Jewish symbolical act. 3. But the apostles did not stay in hostile Antioch while other fields lay untouched; they went on to Iconium. And when this, too, showed itself hostile, they "fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about" (ver. 6). They were but human. They did what they could. When they could do no more they went to new places, and so on and on. In our Christian work we are to do the best we can, using our wisest judgment, going on from Antioch to Iconium, and from Iconium to Lystra, if need be. But in all we are to remember that God works in our presence and in our absence; and even by preventing our active work may do through us better things than we know. 4. For all their hardships the apostles had an abundant joy (ver. 52). And it was just when conscious of their failure that this joy was given. It takes the night-time and the prison to bring out the best songs. Earthly disappointment is God's opportunity. Luther wrote his hymns of Christian exultation when his enemies were nearest to overcoming him. IV. The GENERAL LESSONS of the passage are easily seen. 1. Humanity is a vast democracy in the presence of the gospel of Christ. There is no distinction of persons here. All fall short of the glory of God. All men are equal. The proclamation is to every creature. Let no man say ever that the gospel is not meant for him. 2. Salvation is of grace. The plan of it was formed away back in the counsels of eternity. 3. Every man is responsible to God for his relation to Christ. Our deeds are our own judges. 4. The Holy Spirit goes up and down the world seeking whom He may comfort. *Turning to the*

Gentiles:—In this brief declaration we gather—I. THE DELIBERATE JUDGMENT OF THE JEWS. Theirs was no hastily formed opinion. They had learned what were the central truths of the gospel, and they deliberately said, "If the Gentiles are to receive this message, we put it away from us." Abraham saw Christ's day, and was glad. The ritual of the old covenant was typical of what should come. The life and death of the Redeemer fulfilled the words of their prophets. It was such a people, with such privileges, who, in rejecting the fulfilment of their own faith, judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life, or decreed their own sentence of condemnation. The fact, historic in their case, is repeated every day. By our own deeds we decree our own judgment, by accepting or rejecting the truths of the gospel. No one will be condemned who has not by his own deliberate choice condemned himself. II. THE DECISION OF PAUL. It must be admitted that all his sympathies had been with the Jews. He too had once rejected Christ. He stood before the great crowd in Antioch, and heard their words of blasphemy. The Jews had formed their choice as between Christ and the Gentiles; the choice of Paul was made between Christ and the Jews. He chose Christ, and weaned himself from all his early associations. How keen a rebuke to many in all ages! Every one is called upon to choose between the gospel and its enemies. The question is not concerning family or business connections, how these would be affected by our choice. "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me." Paul's foes were "they of his own household." Thus is Christian heroism the highest of all, never asking man's opinion in order to follow it, but doing what Christ enjoins, whether men will hear or forbear. III. THE BLESSING OF THE GENTILES. It was the early dawn of the promised day. From henceforth there should be no difference between the children of men. "The light to the Gentiles" had come. It is no wonder, therefore, that "when the Gentiles heard this they were glad." No body of men can reject the Word and cover up its truths from others. Whom and what one class rejects, another class will receive. There is no faithful minister but can find work somewhere. Whom one Church refuses, another calls. But the Gentiles, among whom we belong, may exercise the same spirit in other ways. Christ came to seek and to save the lost. It is possible that many a disciple may forget those who live in the hedges, and for whom the gospel feast has been spread. It is possible for us to become so Jewish as to think God despises whom we, in our sinfulness, despise. (*D. O. Mears.*) *The use of opportunities of grace*:—Such was the speech of the apostles Barnabas and Paul to the Jews who dwelt at Antioch, in Pisidia. That an opportunity had passed by them; that, being solemnly offered to them, they had rejected it; and now that it had left them. This was being fulfilled at that time all over the world, wherever the Jews had been scattered—to them "first was the news of this salvation sent"—they were first to be called into Messiah's kingdom. But the Jews would not hearken, and so these gracious purposes of God were defeated—the offer of salvation passed from them to the Gentiles; their birthright departed from them. The first blessing was lost; and this was a loss which they could not now repair. It is a leading principle of that rule under which we are living—I mean, that all through our lives God is setting before us, at certain times, certain opportunities, upon our employment of which our after life will depend; that we are continually beset by opportunities which may be used, and which may be lost—but which, if lost, are lost for ever. And, first, see how this has always marked the dealings of God with man. Begin at the very first opening—when God created Adam and Eve, and blessed them, and placed them in paradise. They were placed there in a state of trial; they had the opportunity of obedience or of rebellion. If they obeyed, there were before them the choicest of God's blessings. We know that they transgressed, and that they lost this opportunity. And now look at God's dealings with the children of Israel, which we are told are expressly recorded to instruct us in His ways. God chose them to deliver them from their hard slavery in Egypt, and to plant them in the land of Canaan. Here was their trial, their opportunity; and if they had obeyed, doubtless they would have gone straight up into the land, and God would have prospered them so that they would at once have taken possession of it: but they rebelled, and they lost their opportunity. God threatened to destroy them; but upon their repentance, at the intercession of Moses, He spared and pardoned them. But to what were they admitted by this pardon on their repentance? Not to the same blessing which they would have had. This was lost, and lost for ever. Now they were told that, though accepted, they should not enter into the land of promise, but that their children should enter in if they

were obedient. And again, in the case of those children, when at last they got possession of Canaan; God promised to cast out at once all their enemies, if they made no alliance with them, nor spared them. Here was their opportunity, and if they had used it, they would have had ever after a peaceable possession of their land; but they neglected it, and what was the result? God forgave them, and told them their enemies should not overcome them; but they had lost the full blessing—He would not now cast out these remnants of the people of the land, but suffered them to remain to be a perpetual grief and trial to His people. And to take only one more instance from the Old Testament. We read in 2 Kings, chap. xiii., that the prophet Elisha, just before his death, promised, by a sign to the king of Israel, certain victories over his enemies, the Syrians, and he bade him, in token of his trust in the promise, smite on the ground with his arrows. Here was his opportunity; but, being weak of faith and faint-hearted, he "smote thrice upon the ground and stayed." And what was the prophet's conduct? He told him that he had lost this opportunity—that it was gone. "Thou shouldst have smitten five or six times, then hadst thou smitten Syria until thou hadst consumed it: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice." And now, from the history of God's dealings with men in Holy Scripture, turn to what we see in life around us. Here we may mark on every side the constant action of the very same rule. We may see it in the growth and strengthening of our bodies—childhood and youth are the appointed opportunity for this growth; if there be then provided food, and exercise, and the like, and so the frame is kept healthful and vigorous, the body reaches its full strength and stature; and, on the other hand, a starved and sickly childhood and youth will lead surely to a stunted and weakly manhood, and this can never be wholly replaced; a certain measure of health and strength may be afterwards regained, but not the full measure—that is lost, because the opportunity of growth is gone. And so it is in all around us. Seed-time comes but once in the year, and he who loses that, may weep in vain for a harvest, but he cannot reap. And so it is with a man's business and his fortune. See, then, how this principle runs through all of God's dealings with men; and now see how forcibly it applies to the higher and better life of our immortal souls. 1. First, then, it applies most awfully to the whole space of a man's life here, as a preparation for eternity. Here is his trial—his opportunity—extending over more or fewer years, as God may appoint; but, be it shorter or longer, forming altogether his only opportunity of preparing for eternity, and if lost, lost therefore for ever. 2. But this principle applies not only to the whole of our lives here, as our only opportunity of preparing for eternity, but also to all the particular circumstances of life, through some of which we are every day passing; and it is this which I would desire you more especially to notice. Take a few of them as examples of the rest, and begin with the very first. When by baptism we are brought into the fold of Christ, some measure of God's most Holy Spirit is then doubtless given to us. Now here is a special opportunity; for, if these strivings of the Spirit of God be attended to—if the child, is a holy child, and does not, by resisting the Spirit, drive Him away, his heart is purified in an especial manner; the habits grow up pure, and there is a meekness, and gentleness, a purity and simplicity, a tenderness of heart, and a deep quiet delight in God's service, which is most rarely known in its entire fulness by those who have wandered from God, and lost the first opportunity of a religious childhood. Here, then, is an opportunity of gaining a blessing, which, of God's mercy, may last all our life through, and which if lost cannot be regained. And this early blessing is the type and earnest of others which, all our life through, are waiting upon unnumbered opportunities to pour upon us in all their fulness. From the greater occasions of our life—from our holy vows at confirmation—from the marriage blessing, and the funeral separation, down to every duty and temptation of our common days—from the monthly eucharist to the Sunday's worship. And now, from this view of the character and condition of our life, there flow many and most important lessons. Two or three of the chief of these shall be pointed out to you in conclusion. 1. And, first, this subject teaches all of us a lesson of habitual watchfulness. What a picture is this of life! how full is it of the seeds of things! how great a blessing or how great a loss lie hid continually under its most common opportunities! 2. Let us learn, secondly, another lesson—and that, one of humiliation. Let the most watchful look back upon his course, and how thickly will he see scattered all along his path the memorials of too frequent negligence—lost opportunities; each one, like broken urns, with its blessing spilled upon the ground and its grace wasted. 3. Lastly,

with humiliation for the past, let us learn, for the time which yet remains, a lesson of earnestness and patience. (*Bp. Samuel Wilberforce.*) *Man's need and God's help*:—There is no great boldness in reading that now, and it does not precisely appear that it was a very bold speech in them; but it was. So we find constantly, in the apostle's ministry, that while he began with the Jews, they very soon turned against him, and he had his chief success among the Gentiles. It is very hard for old men or the ruling class to have young men or a new class come in and take the reins out of their hands. Among the Jews the word "Gentile" was a hedgehog, all bristling. It was one of those words of indignation which exist in every language, and which change in every period, by which men express the pent-up prejudices and hatreds which are collected in them with regard to certain classes and certain tendencies. It was very bold, therefore, in Paul and Barnabas to say what they did—that the Gentiles were more worthy of Christ than the Jews were, according to the testimony of the Jews. Now, by reason of changes that are going on I observe a good deal of disenchantment. It is a very painful thing, I think, for a man of any sensibility to give up that which has come down to him from his childhood, and which carries with it the memories of his father and mother and of his own early life. What you believe when you are young you cling to with great tenacity. All the mystery and charm that the imagination and the twining affections inject into any thought or belief renders it exceedingly precious and beautiful. As when Nature etches—in the winter—on panes of glass, pictures which no artist dare touch, because to touch would be to mar, so there are these natural inspirations of childhood's early days, which are exquisite, charming, and which, if they are marred, are beyond rectification. Alas! that the kindling of a fire in the stove for domestic uses should destroy all these pictures, and that the wonderful picturesqueness of Nature should melt with the growing convenience of the household! If you are losing all your early thoughts and imaginations, if you are losing all sense of sanctity, and nothing else comes to take their place, woe is you! Scepticism is to human life what the arid sands of the Great Sahara are in Africa—unpopulous, ungarden-like, useless, dreary, death-dealing to those who dwell in them. But if, while you lose the poetry of early impressions, you are somewhere else gaining a firmer foothold, and are subjecting yourself to impressions that are mightier—that is, that run more nearly with the educated tendencies of a just reason—then you lose no power over the moral sense: you even gain power over it. When I was a student in Amherst College I used, in autumnal days, to go up on the tower of the chapel in order that I might see the clearing off of those mists which would steal in with the darkness, and cover with a silver veil the whole of that magnificent panorama of the valley of the Connecticut—a beautiful valley full of sparking villages and undulations of land. When I came very early in the morning—though never before the sun had come up—this vast landscape had its own new mountains. I saw that the mist, following the secret touch and the warmth of the coming sun, had lifted itself up; and there were elevations here and openings there which, as compared with the shores of mist round about them, looked like deep seas. There were fantastic rifts and scarfs, and everything that was strange and weird, and shadows of hills as yet undispersed. As I stood and looked upon that picture, and made it more picturesque, I was filled, and I filled it, with my own work. The sun, steadily rising, and penetrating, and agitating, drank up the vision; and in half an hour the whole thing had taken wings and faded away into vacuity, and there was nothing of it to be seen; but when it lifted there were Mount Holyoake, Mount Tom, Sugarloaf Mountain, Hadley, Northampton, all the mountains and villages, and a great territory of peaceful and beautiful farms. The mist had gone, to be sure, but the landscape was as charming as the mist had been. So when men, looking back upon the beliefs of other days, see that they take wings and fly away, woe be to them if there is nothing under them; but blessed are they who, when the mist-picture is gone, see the substantial earth lying sweet and beautiful underneath their sight. Upon this state of facts I propose to give an account of what is the substance-matter of the New Testament teaching, and to ask you whether religion as it is taught there is not justified, by your experience and by your moral sense, to your reason. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Turning to the Gentiles*:—The history reminds us of—I. THE NARROWNESS OF ORTHODOXY. To be right in our opinions is immensely important; but history shows that orthodox people are apt to dislike the progress of opinions. Moreover, we are all apt to think ourselves orthodox; and so Protestants are apt to be grieved when they hear of the success of Popish

missionaries, and *vice versâ*. More is thought of the progress of the one or the other than of the overthrow of idolatry. So here the Jews instead of rejoicing that the Gentiles were leaving heathenism were envious at their becoming Christians. II. THE POSSIBILITY THAT EXCELLENT PERSONS MAY BECOME THE TOOLS OF BAD MEN (ver. 50). Otherwise, in this case, the envious Jews would have been harmless. The Jews persuaded these ladies, and the ladies their husbands, that the apostles were dangerous men. Just as priests in Roman Catholic countries stir up excellent people to persecute Protestant teachers. Similar things happen in this country. Always suspect those who incite you to dislike your neighbours. III. THE FATE OF THE BENEFACTORS OF MANKIND. We must not take it for granted that beneficence will be rewarded with gratitude, but that more often than not we shall meet with the fate of Paul and Barnabas. IV. THE RIGHT METHOD OF DEALING WITH PREJUDICED AND OBSTINATE SCEPTICS. After having placed before them the considerations which ought to convince them, let us go to others who will listen more readily. To argue further with them will only inflame their self-conceit; and there are multitudes yearning for the truths these men reject. Life is too short to be wasted in duels with men who will not receive the truth. V. THE GLORIOUS FACT THAT CHRIST IS THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD. Not of Jews only. Let this thought check us when we are inclined to be intolerant. He is the Saviour of all who believe—whatever their doctrines may be. Let this comfort us when we are suffering from intolerance; those who hate us may excommunicate us, but they cannot cut us off from Christ. VI. CHRISTIAN JOY IS INDEPENDENT OF OUTWARD CIRCUMSTANCES (vers. 51, 52). The loss of the apostle had its compensations. (*R. A. Bertram.*) *The severe farewell*:—1. Not the language of cowardly fear of men, but of resolute obedience to the intimations of the Lord. 2. Not an expression of proud contempt, but of commiserating pity towards the despisers of salvation. 3. Not a signal to a lazy retreat, but to a new field of labour. (*K. Gerok.*) *The gospel for the Gentiles*:—In Flanders there is a pretty legend told of a place called Temsche. A clear fountain was in a farmer's field. He was a churlish man, and would not let the villagers go into his field to draw water from it one hot summer, when the land was parched, and all the wells were dry. Then a holy maiden, living there, went and filled a sieve with water, and shook it over the neighbouring common, and wherever a drop fell, there sprang up a living fountain. Now the old Jewish nation was much like that farmer, that would keep Divine grace for itself alone. It would have the living fountain of spiritual life for its own use only, and deny it to the Gentile world. But then came the apostles, who took up the living water given them by Christ, and scattered it over all the wide earth. (*Baring Gould.*) *Gather the outcasts*:—If you have been mainly labouring with the children of godly parents, and these refuse, turn you to the slum children. If you have tried to bless respectable people, and they remain unsaved, try those who are not respectable. If those to whom it was natural and necessary that the word should first be spoken, have put it from them, turn to those who have hitherto been left out in the cold. Take the Lord's hint in this apostolic history, and distinctly turn to those people who are not yet gospel hardened. Turn to those who have not been brought up under religious influences, but have been looked upon as without the pale. That, I believe, is the Lord's mind towards the Church of to-day. Let her break up fresh soil, and she will have richer harvests. Let her open new mines, and she shall find rare riches. We too often preach within a little circle where the message of life has already been rejected scores of times. Let us not spend all our time in knocking at doors from which we have been repulsed, let us try elsewhere. If you work for Christ among those who are in our religious circles, and fail to win them, the field is the world, and the larger part of that field has never been touched as yet. We have laboured for London; but if London counts itself unworthy of eternal life, let us think of Calcutta, Canton, and the Congo. If these near ones will not reward our endeavours, let us be of enterprising spirit, and do as traders do, who, when they find no market at home, strike out new lines. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Light for men who are to see*:—If I saw a wise man going into a blind asylum, laying on gas or making preparation for the electric light, I should feel sure that he had a view to people who can see; and if none but blind people could come into the building, I should conclude that he anticipated a time when the poor blind folks would find their eyes again, and would be able to use the light. So, as the Lord has set Jesus to be a light, you may be sure that He means to open blind eyes. Jesus will enlighten the people, souls will be saved. (*Ibid.*) *Jesus a Saviour for all*:—God has not

appointed His Son to save a few dozen people who go to a particular meeting-house. He has set Him to be a light to the nations, and He means He shall be so. This encourages us to labour among all classes. Jesus is a fit light for the upper ten thousand, and some of them shall rejoice in that light: He is equally set to be a light to the teeming millions, and they shall rejoice in Him, too. What God has appointed must be carried out. Jesus is yet to be a light to outcast people—to the persons of whom we have never thought favourably, the classes whom even philanthropy has felt ready to abandon. This is God's set purpose concerning His Son Jesus, and His omnipotence will carry it out. (*Ibid.*) *Seeing the sun*:—The *Burman Missionary* tells the story of an old man who, years ago, when a heathen, came in possession of a copy of the Psalms, in Burmese, which had been left behind by a traveller stopping at his house. He began to read, and before he had finished the book he had resolved to cast his idols away. For twenty years he worshipped the eternal God, revealed to him in the Psalms, using the fifty-first (which he had committed to memory) as a daily prayer. Then, having occasion to go to Rome, he fell in with a white missionary who gave him a New Testament. With joy unspeakable he read for the first time the story of salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ. "Twenty years I have walked by starlight," he said. "Now I see the sun." *A light of the Gentiles*:—Dr. Vanderhemp was a Dutch military officer, and then a distinguished physician. For some years he was a sceptic, but he was converted. When converted, he gave up all for Christ, and, at the age of fifty-one, sailed for South Africa, where he laboured amongst the natives for thirteen years with singular self-denial. Well did the venerable Moffatt say of him: "He came from a University to teach the alphabet to the poor naked Hottentot and Kaffir; from the society of nobles to associate with beings of the lowest grade of humanity; from stately mansions to the filthy hovel of the grensy African; from the army to instruct the fierce savages in the tactics of a heavenly warfare under the banner of the Prince of Peace; from the study of medicine to become a guide to the Balm of Gilead and the Physician there; and, finally, from a life of earthly honour and ease to be exposed to perils of waters, of robbers, of his own countrymen, of the heathen, in the city and in the wilderness." *The great alternative*:—The Jews contradicted, the Gentiles were glad as effects of the same gospel. The gospel is a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death. As on the highest Alps, up there where the summits join the clouds, there are masses of ices which, when acted on by the sun, pass down as refreshing streams, beautifying and fertilising the country through which they pass, and side by side with those, other masses of ice which, when acted upon and loosened by the same sun, rush down as roaring avalanches, carrying death and destruction in their path, and at last dashing themselves to pieces on the crags beneath; so it is to men to whom the gospel comes. It may be with one man operating as "the power of God unto salvation," blessing him and making him a blessing, whilst with his neighbour, if it is not producing this benign effect, it is hardening his heart, adding fearfully to his power for evil in the present world, and preparing for him the darker condemnation of the next. If the gospel is not the sun to soften the wax, it is the sun to harden the clay. (*J. A. Macfadyen, D.D.*)

Ver. 48. **And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad.**—*Right relation to the truth*:—On hearing the gospel the Gentiles—I. WERE GLAD. 1. This should be, but alas is not, the uniform effect of gospel hearing. (1) Some are indifferent, for they feel no need of it. (2) Some are critical. They may feel their need, but are not disposed to receive the gospel as a supply for their need. (3) Some are hostile and reject the gospel utterly as a possible supply for their need, and look elsewhere—to formalism, infidelity, worldliness. 2. These Gentiles were glad. (1) They heard attentively, with candid minds, with eager desire. They were convinced and so they believed, and the Word of God had its proper effect on them; it became "Good tidings of great joy." (2) This gladness was that of conscious pardon, satisfied longing, Divine acceptance, joyful anticipation. 3. If the gospel has not made those who profess to have accepted it glad, it is probably for one or two reasons. (1) They have not received the whole of it. A spoonful of water will not quench thirst, but will only aggravate it. (2) They have received it in an adulterated form. II. THEY GLORIFIED THE WORD OF GOD. This was the inevitable result of their gladness. 1. They were thankful for it. Thanklessness dishonours the gospel. The least that a man can do who receives a gift is to express his gratitude for it. 2. They praised it. Specimens of such praise we

have in the Psalms—notably in Psa. cxix. It is refreshing to turn to this record in an age of Bible disparagement. When a man receives a gift he is not only thankful for it, but examines it, or puts it to some use, so that he may properly appraise its value. Every candid examination of God's Word, and self application of its truth, will give it enhanced worth. 3. They made it known to others (ver. 49). The gospel is not meant for its immediate recipients. It is a gift for men. Only as it has "free course" is it fully "glorified." Conclusion: Gladness is the inspiration of true service. It is as steam to machinery. Has the gospel made you happy? Go then and make others glad. (*J. W. Burn.*) *The first last and the last first*:—I. THE FIRST LAST. 1. Who are the first? Those who have earliest experienced the Divine love, and are considered most richly endowed. 2. Why do they become last? Because they do not use to their salvation the love of God, and become proud of their gifts. 3. How do they become last? By receiving, according to the measure of their small fidelity, only an inferior position in the kingdom of God (Matt. xx. 10), or, as the reward of their complete unfaithfulness, by being excluded entirely from the blessings of that kingdom (ver. 46). II. THE LAST FIRST. 1. Who are the last? Those who are called at a later period, and who possess inferior gifts. 2. Why do they become first? Because the knowledge of their defects makes them desirous of salvation. 3. How do they become first? By being themselves in the kingdom of God, and assisting in its wider extension (vers. 49, 52). (*Lisco.*) *The Word of God the revealer of the thoughts of many hearts*:—I. OF THE GENTILES—*i.e.*, of those who were hitherto at a distance and strangers to the Word of God (vers. 48, 49). 1. They rejoice in its contents. 2. They praise the grace of God. 3. They receive it by faith. 4. They taste the blessedness of believing. II. OF THE JEWS—*i.e.*, the self-righteous who will not be saved by grace (ver. 50). 1. They are inflamed with hatred against the evangelical message. 2. They interest others against it. 3. They persecute the messengers of salvation. III. OF BELIEVERS, who experience in themselves the power of the Word. 1. Their faith is not perplexed by calamity (ver. 51). 2. They experience holy joy (ver. 52). 3. They grow in the grace of God through the Holy Ghost (ver. 52). (*Ibid.*) *The gospel appreciated by the outcasts*:—The man who has grown accustomed to luxuries is the man who turns his meat over, and picks off a bit here, and a bit there; for this is too fat, and that is too gristly. Bring in the poor wretches who are half-starved. Fetch in a company of labourers who have been waiting all day at the docks, and have found no work, and in consequence have received no wage. Set them down to a joint of meat. It vanishes before them. See what masters they are of the art of knife and fork! They find no fault; they never dream of such a thing. If the meat had been a little coarse, it would not have mattered to them; their need is too great for them to be dainty. Oh, for a host of hungry souls! How pleasant to feed them! How different from the task of persuading the satiated Pharisees to partake of the gospel! Go for them, beloved! Lay yourselves out to reach poor, needy souls. They will come to Jesus, though the self-righteous will not. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.**—*Eternal life*:—1. The Jews put from them the Word of God, and thus judged themselves. This was not a Divine judgment; that came afterwards to ratify and give effect to what was done already. And the judgment that the Jews by the rejection of Christ passed upon themselves, unconsciously but really, was that they were unworthy of eternal life. Their case is typical. Men who despise the gospel do now for themselves what will be done for them at the Day of Judgment. 2. The Gentiles, on the contrary, accepted the gospel, and thus fulfilled the conditions on which eternal life was given. They thus judged themselves, and were judged worthy—*i.e.*, qualified, ready—for eternal life. "Ordained" is misleading. The original is a military word suggestive of the putting an army in order, drawing it up for battle—the disposition of the troops. "As many as were *disposed*"—*i.e.*, were in an attitude for—"eternal life, believed," *i.e.*, accepted it. The Jews were in no such attitude—hence their unbelief, and loss of eternal life. I. ETERNAL LIFE is—1. A quantitive term—everlasting duration. But this is its lower meaning. This is true of all souls. The wicked as well as the good will live for ever. But the life of the former will be "the death that never never dies." 2. A qualitative term. What sort of life? Not bare existence, but a life of eternal—(1) Union with God. (2) Holiness. (3) Happiness. II. THE DISPOSITION FOR ETERNAL LIFE. The Gentiles who were so disposed—1. Heard the Word of God with gladness. Then how indisposed must those be who in our modern congregations are indifferent to it, or who hear it captiously, or only to

reject it. 2. Accepted it, and more than that, they glorified it. It met their case thoroughly, and they felt and acknowledged that it did so. Thus they were in an attitude for eternal life, and so—3. Believed. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." 4. Enjoyed eternal life. "They were filled with joy"—the evidence of it, "and with the Holy Ghost"—its source. (*J. W. Burn.*)

Ver. 49. **And the Word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.**—*Gospel missions:*—We feel persuaded that all of you are of one mind in this matter, that it is the duty as well as the privilege of the Church to proclaim the gospel to the world. But we have not been successful to the extent we might have expected. What is the reason of this? Perhaps we may think we find that reason in the sovereignty of God. But still we must look at home for the cause. When Zion travails, she brings forth children; when Zion is in earnest, God is in earnest about His work. We must not, therefore, arbitrarily look for the cause of our failure in the will of God, but we must see what it is that renders our success so trifling in comparison with the tremendous results of apostolic preaching. I. WE HAVE FEW APOSTOLIC MEN. Here and there we may have one or two. We had a Williams, we had a Knibb, but they have entered into rest. We have one or two still remaining. We say, "God bless such men as Moffatt!" But cast your eyes around, and where can we find many such men? They are all good men; they are better than we; but we must still say of them that they differ from the mighty apostles in many respects. I am not speaking of missionaries only, but of ministers too. We have not men with—1. Apostolic zeal. Converted in a most singular way, by a direct interposition from heaven, Paul, from that time forward, became an earnest man. He had always been earnest, in his sin and in his persecutions; but after he had received the mighty office of an apostle you can scarcely conceive the awful earnestness which he manifested. His zeal was so burning, that he could not (as we unfortunately do) restrain himself within a little sphere; but he preached the Word everywhere. Where are the men like that man? We have no eyes now like the eyes of the Saviour, which could weep over Jerusalem. If ministers were more hearty in their work of preaching, then we might expect great success; but we cannot expect it while we go about our work in a half-hearted way. 2. Apostolic faith. What did Paul do? He went to Philippi; did he know a soul there? No. He had his Master's truth, and he believed in the power of it. He was devoid of pomp, or show, or parade; he did not go to a pulpit with a nice cushion in it to address a respectable congregation, but he walked through the streets and began to preach to the people. He went to Corinth, to Athens, alone, single-handed, to tell the people the gospel of the blessed God. Why? Because he had faith in the gospel and believed it would save souls, and throw down idols from their thrones. But nowadays we have not faith in the gospel we preach. How many there are who preach a gospel which they are afraid wont save souls; they insert little bits of their own to it in order, as they think, to win men to Christ! When I have faith in my doctrines, those doctrines will prevail, for confidence is the winner of the palm. He who hath courage enough to grasp the standard, and hold it up, will be sure enough to find followers. We want a deeper faith in our gospel; we want to be quite sure of what we preach. 3. Apostolic self-denial. We are mere carpet-knights and Hyde-park warriors. But I hear some whispering, "You ought to make a little allowance." I make all allowance. I am not finding fault with those brethren; they are a good sort of people; but I will only say, that in comparison with Paul, we are little insignificant Liliputian creatures, who can hardly be seen in comparison with those gigantic men of old. II. WE DO NOT GO ABOUT OUR WORK IN AN APOSTOLIC STYLE. 1. There is not enough preaching by ministers and missionaries. They sit down interpreting, establishing schools, and doing this, that, and the other. It is the tendency of the times to decry preaching, but it is "the foolishness of preaching" which is to change the world. 2. A great mistake has been made in not affirming the divinity of our mission, always holding out this, "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." The gospel is lowered by controversy. How did Mahommed come to have so strong a religion? He said, "I have received a revelation from heaven." It was a lie, but he persuaded men to believe it. Did he prove what he said? Not he. "You must," he said, "believe what I say, or there is no Paradise for you." There is a power in that kind of thing. 3. We have not enough of the Divine method of itinerancy. Paul was a great itinerant; he preached in one place, and there were twelve converted there; he made a church at once; he did not stop till he had five

hundred; but when he had twelve, he went off to another place. We, nowadays, go and settle in a place, make a station of it, and work around it by little and little, and think that is the way to succeed. No, no! ravage a continent; attempt great things, and great things shall be done. There should be fixed ministers and pastors, but those who are like apostles should itinerate far more than they do. III. WE HAVE NOT APOSTOLIC CHURCHES. 1. Where is our prayerfulness compared with theirs? 2. We have not the apostolic mode of liberality. In the apostles' days they gave all their substance. It was not demanded of them then, and it is not now; still we have run to the other extreme, and many give nothing at all. IV. WE HAVE NOT THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THAT MEASURE WHICH ATTENDED THE APOSTLES. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 50–52. **But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women.**—*Jewish tactics*:—The fact brings before us another feature of the relations between Jews and Gentiles at this period. They "compassed sea and land to make one proselyte." They found it easiest to make proselytes of women. Such conversions had their good and their bad sides. In many cases there was a real longing for a higher and purer life than was found in the infinite debasement of Greek and Roman society, which found its satisfaction in the life and faith of Israel. But with many, such as Juvenal speaks of when he describes ("Sat." vi. 542) the Jewish teacher who gains influence over women, "The trembling Jewess whispers in her ear, And tells her of the laws of Solymæ" (*i.e.*, Jerusalem). The change brought with it new elements of superstition and weakness, and absolute submission of conscience to its new directors, and thus the Rabbis were often to the wealthier women of Greek and Roman cities what Jesuit confessors were in France and Italy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Here we get the darker side of the picture. The Jews stir up the women of the upper class, and they stir up their husbands. The latter were content apparently to acquiesce in their wives accepting the Judaism with which they had become familiar, but resented the intrusion of a new and, in one sense, more exacting doctrine. (*Dean Plumptre.*) **But they shook off the dust of their feet against them.**—*When should a servant of God shake off the dust of his feet?*—1. When he has not only knocked in a friendly manner, but also boldly kept his ground. 2. When he has been called on to proceed, not only by men, but by God. 3. When not only the door here is closed, but when he also sees it opened elsewhere for successful work. (*K. Gerok.*) *Israel's temporary rejection*:—1. Wickedly caused by themselves, through pride and ingratitude. 2. Righteously ordained by the Lord in virtue of holiness and truth. 3. An admonitory example to Christianity, and also an impressive call to go after the lost sheep of Israel. (*Ibid.*) **And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost.**—*Holy joy*:—I. THE PROSPERITY OF THE WORD OF GOD IS A SPECIAL SOURCE OF REJOICING TO CHRISTIANS. It was not an ordinary gladness, but the special and overflowing joy which can only be stirred up by extraordinary manifestations of the grace of God. We are full of joy—1. Because we are saved. Deliverance from danger and death is ever a source of gratitude. A soul rescued from the power of sin and the consequences thereof, is a theme of the highest inspiration, whether we think of the value of the soul, or the price of deliverance. The brave rescuer risks his life to save others. Jesus died to save mankind. 2. Because Jesus sees of the travail of His soul. 3. At the prospect of seeing the glory of the Lord filling the earth. Every step onward which the Word of God takes, revives the hope of universal restoration. II. THE PRESENCE OF THE HOLY GHOST IN THE HEART IS A SPECIAL SOURCE OF SUPPORT TO CHRISTIANS. The Comforter sustained them in their trial. 1. They were full of holy courage. The circumstances of the disciples at Antioch were depressing. Devout and honourable women, with the chief men of the city, had raised the storm of persecution. The apostles were driven out of the city. The number of believers was small, and probably they were poor; but the source of their strength was the power of the Spirit in their heart. They could not be cast down while they were under such influence. There could be no darkness while the glory of the Lord shone within them. 2. They were full of consecration to their work. They were resolved to labour on until the name of Jesus would become universal. The light which shone on their path revealed the triumph of faith. 3. They were full of assurance that Jesus' name would become glorious in the earth. (*Weekly Pulpit.*) *Joy in the Holy Ghost*:—When I was a country minister in Scotland, some time ago, the most joyous person in my parish was a poor old woman whose every joint was knotted with rheumatism; her husband was a poor labouring old man, her home a

crowded hut, yet her life was bright and cheerful. When I was dejected I used to visit her, and after ten minutes conversation my load would be lightened. She diffused gladness wherever she was, because the Holy Spirit dwelt in her as a temple. (*Dr. Boyd.*) *Spiritual experience*:—The description is brief but noteworthy. I. IT RECORDS AN EXPERIENCE—SPIRITUAL, REAL, AND EXEMPLARY. There was emotionalism, high and holy; and it was visible. The elements were simple, but grand. 1. "Joy." 2. "The Holy Ghost." Each is suggestive, and both were prominent features of those early times. They are, too, co-related. Instead of spirituality and gladness being antagonistic, the soul is joyous just because it has the Holy Ghost; and the fruit of the Spirit's influence is a more perfect joy, so that the more largely we possess the Spirit, the greater becomes our joy. II. THE DEGREE AND MEASURE OF THIS EXPERIENCE deserves consideration. It was not the possession of a favoured few, but of the "disciples." By them it was possessed, not scantily, or partially, they were "filled" with it. These emotions did not spring from external circumstances, but were independent of them and superior to them: they were, despite outward adversity (see vers. 50–51, and chap. xiv. 22). III. THE ATTAINMENT OF LIKE EXPERIENCE can never be deemed impossible when we remember the exhortations of Scripture, and the testimony of "disciples"—learners in the school of Christ. "If ye being evil know how," &c. If possible, how advantageous to us would such an experience prove! joyous in itself; an evidence; an energy; a foretaste. (*J. P. Allen, M.A.*) *Full of joy and of the Holy Ghost* (chap. viii. 39):—There is a striking resemblance between the condition of the eunuch deprived of his teacher and of these raw disciples, in Pisidian Antioch, bereft of theirs. Both were very recent converts; both had the scantiest knowledge; both were left utterly alone. Now this phrase, "full of the Holy Ghost," is not an uncommon one in the Acts of the Apostles; and the writer is fond of connecting with it other graces, of which it is declared to be the cause. So they were to be "men full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom"; and of Stephen we read that "he was full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." The text traces the joy of these solitary Christians to the complete possession of that Divine Spirit. So filled, we shall have an all-sufficient Teacher for all our ignorance; a Companion for all our solitude; a fountain of joy in all our sorrow. And the stories before us may help to illustrate these three things. I. First, then, note here, THE ALL-SUFFICIENT TEACHER FOR OUR IGNORANCE. Think, for instance, of that Ethiopian statesman. An hour or two before he had said, "How can I understand except some man guide me?" And now he is going away into the darkness, without a single external help, knowing only the little that he had gathered from Philip. He had not a line of the New Testament. He had nothing but a scroll of the prophet Isaiah, but he went away with a glad heart, quite sure that he would be taught all he needed to know. And these other people at Antioch, just dragged out of the darkness of heathenism, with no teaching beyond the rudimentary instruction of the two apostles for a few days—they, too, were left by their teachers without a fear. We trust far too little to the educating and enlightening power of God's grace in the hearts of men who have no other teacher. And if Christian people more really believed the promise of their Master, "He will guide you into all truth," they would be more likely to realise the promise, and be all taught of God. Only remember the instrument of that Divine Teacher is the Word of God. And if we, as Christians, neglect our Bibles, we shall not get the teaching of the Spirit of God. And remember, too, that that teaching is granted to us on plainly defined conditions. There must be a desire for it. And there must be patient waiting and solitary meditation. Let us take the lesson, and whosesoever scholars we may be, let us enrol ourselves in the school of the Master, and learn from that Spirit who will guide us into all truth. II. Now, note, secondly, THE COMPANION IN ALL OUR SOLITUDE. Think of the loneliness of this man on the Gaza road, or of that handful of sheep in the midst of wolves at Antioch. And yet they were not alone. "Full of the Holy Ghost," they were conscious of a Divine presence. And so it may be with us all. We are all condemned to live alone, however many may be the troops of friends round us. Every human soul, after all love and companionship, lives isolated. There is only One who can pass the awful boundary of personality which hedges off every man from every other. Besides the natural, necessary solitude in which every human soul lives there are some of us, no doubt, on whom God, by His providence, has laid the burden of a very lonely life. God's purpose in making us solitary is to join Himself to us. Left alone, nestle close to Him. Beside the natural and the providential solitudes there is yet another. We must make a solitude for ourselves if we would have God speaking to us and keeping us company.

Solitude is the mother-country of the strong. To be much alone is the condition of sanity and nobleness of life. No man's religion will be deep and strong unless he has learned to go into the secret place of the Most High, and shut his doors about him, and there receive the fulness of that Spirit. III. Lastly, notice THE JOY IN ALL THE SORROW. "Full of joy and of the Holy Ghost," says the latter of the two texts. That collocation is familiar to the student of the New Testament. You will remember the apostle's great enumeration of the fruits of the Spirit, "Love, joy, peace." And in another place he speaks to the members of one of his Churches, and tells them that they had "received the Word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Ghost." So then, whoever has this Divine Guest dwelling in his heart may possess a joy as complete as is its possession of him. I need not remind you how that Divine Spirit, that enters into our souls by faith, brings to us the consciousness of forgiveness and of sonship, nor how it fits the needs of every part of our nature, and brings all our being into harmony with itself, with circumstances, and with God. But I may remind you that not only does this Divine Spirit in us make provision for joy, but that, with such an indwelling Guest, there is the possibility of the co-existence of joy and sorrow. It is no paradox that the apostle gave forth when he said, "Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." Even in the midst of the snow and cold and darkness of Arctic regions the explorers build houses for themselves of the very blocks of ice, and within are warmth and light and comfort and vitality, while around is a dreary waste. But remember that this joy from the Spirit is a commandment. I am sure that Christians do not sufficiently lay to heart that gladness is their duty, and that sorrow unrelieved by it is cowardice and sin. We have no business to be thus sorrowful. But remember the conditions. If you and I have that Divine Spirit within us we shall be enlightened, however ignorant; companioned, however solitary; joyful, however ringed about with sorrow. If we have not, the converse will be true. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Persecution not inconsistent with joy*:—As if a man should throw precious stones and jewels at another, with intent to kill him, and the other should gather them up and enrich himself with them; even so do persecutors enrich the children of God, that they may rejoice being worthy to suffer for Christ's sake. (*Cawdray.*) *Joy a Christian evidence*:—The ordinary idea is that a Christian is sombre, but that is a perversion of the gospel. The fruit of the Spirit is love and joy in the Holy Ghost, and if God comes into the soul, we may expect that the result will be the imparting of the element of joy which is so eminent in him. Sometimes through secular instruments God makes us joyful, for He employs the whole world to work out His purposes; but somtimes, by seemingly breaking upon the spirit of His people, He makes them joyful. You cannot tell why you are so musical at times. On some days you are full of music. There are some hours that are radiant above all other hours. And when these transpire among God's people, it is not an unfair thing to infer that they are signs of Christ's presence with them. (*H. W. Beecher.*)

CHAPTER XIV.

VERS. 1–18. And it came to pass in Iconium.—*Iconium*:—A considerable city of Asia Minor, generally considered as belonging to Lycaonia. It lay in a fertile plain at the foot of Taurus, on the great line of communication between Ephesus and the more eastern cities of Tarsus and Antioch, and the Euphrates. From Pliny's description it would appear to have been a populous and important city at the time of Paul's visit. Under the Byzantine emperors it was the metropolis of Lycaonia, was subsequently captured by the Turks, and made the capital of an empire whose sovereigns took the title of Sultans of Iconium. During this period of its history it acquired its greatest celebrity. It is now called Koniyeh, and has a population estimated at from twenty to thirty thousand. The houses are mostly of stone or sun-dried brick, and are poorly built, except the mosques and palaces. The place contains some remains and inscriptions, mostly of the Byzantine period. (*Lyman Abbott, D.D.*) *The ministry of the apostles at Iconium*:—Here are four things noteworthy. I. AN EXTENSIVE CONVERSION (ver. 1). The preaching that ends in enlightened practical faith is that which Christ ordained, and what the world wants. There is a preaching that produces—1. Mere passing emotion. 2. Superstition.

3. Scepticism. II. A VIOLENT OPPOSITION (ver. 2). The spiritual victories they won in the synagogue roused the antagonism of the unbelieving Jew, who used his great social influence to their injury. They "stirred up the Gentiles," *i.e.*, excited and embittered their minds with hostile passions. It is ever true that those who reject the gospel seek to deter others from accepting it. "Ye go not in yourselves, and prevent those who would," is a Divine allegation, ever true of the rejectors of Christianity. III. A DIVINE DEMONSTRATION. Opposition neither drove them at once from the sphere of their labour, nor lessened the displays of Divine power. Divinity appears—1. In their subject. The "Word of His grace," His gracious Word, the gospel. Whatever doctrines men draw from the gospel that are not gracious, are not true. 2. In their spirit. "Speaking boldly." They show a heroism more than human in continuing and speaking in the very scene of persecution. 3. In their miracles. The stronger the evil one appeared in Iconium opposing the mission of the apostles, the higher rose the manifestations of God in their behalf. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." IV. A SOCIAL SEPARATION (ver. 4). "Divided"—the Greek word from which schism is derived. There was a rent created through the ministry of the apostles. Such unity of sympathy as existed before in the population was divided, and part flowed towards the Jews and part towards the apostles. The searching ministry of the apostles made bare the hearts of the people. Those who took part with the Jews made "an assault" upon the apostles. The storm raised, however, was under the direction of God. It was a Divine breeze, to bear the precious seeds of truth to regions farther on. The apostles fled unto Lystra and Derbe, not from fear, but from the instinct of duty. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *At Iconium*:—I. WHAT THE MISSIONARIES DID. They went immediately to work. They did not stop to complain of the treatment they had received at Antioch. Persecution made them change their place, but not their purpose. Neither did they abandon their method of working. Though they had turned to the Gentiles, they had not turned away from the Jews. II. HOW THE MISSIONARIES SPOKE. So convincingly, that Jews as well as Greeks believed. Care should be taken so to speak as to give effect to the Word. III. HOW THE MISSIONARIES WERE OPPOSED. As was natural, the Jew who did not accept the gospel, was its bitterest enemy. The man who is acting against God and his own conscience must permit himself no rest. He cannot endure to see others accept what he has rejected. Hence he tries to make the souls around him "evil affected." IV. HOW THE MISSIONARIES WERE PROSPERED. 1. They continued their work. Not because of the opposition, but in spite of it, and for the reason that so many were believing. So long as a harvest was to be reaped, they would not abandon the field. 2. They spoke boldly. The threatening cloud of danger did not abate their courage. "Boldly in the Lord." Their courage came from Him, and not from themselves. 3. They were borne witness to by the Lord. He spoke through their hands as well as their lips. He made it impossible for any but the incorrigible to doubt that they were His ambassadors. 4. They divided the city (ver. 4). The division appears to have been pretty even. Whether evenly or not, the gospel always divides a community. Every one must be on the one side or on the other. V. HOW THE MISSIONARIES WERE DRIVEN OUT (ver. 5). They were not rash as well as bold. There was no call here to lay down their lives. So, being persecuted in this city, they followed the Saviour's injunction, and fled into the next. "And there they preached the gospel." Persecution was God's plan for propagating His gospel. Having furnished certain seeds with wings, God sends rough winds for their transportation. (*M. C. Hazard.*) *Mode of preaching the gospel adapted to success*:—I. THERE IS A MODE OF PREACHING THE GOSPEL WHICH IS ADAPTED TO SECURE THE FAITH OF HEARERS. The gospel itself is adapted to beget cordial faith and repentance in men. For evidence of this, I would call your attention to the fact that the Holy Spirit employs the gospel for this very purpose. II. TO POINT OUT SOME OF THE THINGS WHICH ARE ESSENTIAL TO SUCH A MODE OF PREACHING THE GOSPEL. I would remark that to secure a manner of preaching the gospel adapted to success, it seems essential—1. That it should be preached with a heart deeply intent on the very design of securing the cordial faith and obedience of hearers. Cicero has justly remarked, that if the feelings with which you represent a fact and the fact itself do not accord, you have not in reality presented the truth, but have misrepresented it to the minds of your hearers. 2. That it should be preached as a system of consistent truths, bearing with one harmonious design on the great object of repentance and salvation. 3. That it should be preached in a way of application to the hearers, so as to call for the decision of their hearts at the time. From this

subject I remark—1. The dependence of preachers of the gospel on the co-operating power of the Holy Spirit to give success to their labours, is of all reasons the weightiest why they should speak in a manner adapted to beget repentance and faith in their hearers. 2. We may learn what are some of the important qualifications for a skilful and successful handling of the Word of life. (*E. T. Fitch, D.D.*) *Iconium and Lystra*:—The work done in these two places, together with the varied experiences of the missionaries, may suggest that—I. THE MANNER OF PRESENTING GOSPEL TRUTH HAS MUCH TO DO IN PRODUCING RESULTS ON THE HEARERS. They "so spake that a great multitude believed." Paul afterward told the Corinthians, "that he came not with excellency of speech," &c. He evidently did not disregard the character of his audience, the kind of evidence he should produce, and the manner of expressing his thoughts, any more than he showed carelessness as to his subject, which was always "Christ, and Him crucified." Increase depends more upon the good seed and soil, and warm rains and sunshine, than upon the sower, yet the skilful sower is the successful husbandman. So in the economy of grace the teacher and his methods have a prominent place in the production of results. To the teacher the responsibility of speaking rightly is as great as the responsibility of trusting supremely. II. PRESENT THE TRUTH AS WISELY AS WE MAY, DIFFERENT RESULTS WILL BE PRODUCED AMONG THE HEARERS. "Part held with the Jews and part with the apostles." There were divisions in Iconium before, but so soon as the Word was spoken the people were newly classified. III. THE WISDOM OF PRESERVING AN UNTARNISHED REPUTATION ON THE PART OF THOSE WHO WOULD WIN SOULS TO THE TRUTH. We read, "long time therefore they abode." Wherefore? Because the "Gentiles had been stirred up and their minds evil affected against the brethren." Whatever the allegations were, the two resolved to stay and confront those who circulated them, and live down their calumnies. It took a "long time," but the end to be gained was worth the time it took to reach it. Very often the enemy tries to weaken the power of the teacher by damaging his reputation. It may take a "long time" to lift the name fairly above the cloud, but for the sake of the truth we love and the souls we would help it may be duty to abide where we are till this is done. IV. POPULARITY NEED NOT, AND MUST NOT, TURN FROM STEADFASTNESS TO THE TRUTH. At Iconium they were bad men, to be shunned. They stood that test, and by their lives gave the lie to the base charge. At Lystra they are not men, but the chief among the gods, the great Jove and his attendant. But they refuse the homage and make the offering a text from which to preach a telling sermon against all forms of false worship. V. MIRACLES, EVEN WHEN ADMITTED, HAVE BUT LITTLE INFLUENCE IN LEADING BITTER OPPOSERS OF THE TRUTH TO ACCEPT IT. They deified the worker, and then stoned him. Miracles strengthened the faith of those who believed on other testimony; but neither where philosophy ruled, nor where untutored Nature guided, did the supernatural lead the mind set bitterly against God to accept him. VI. GOD'S CLAIMS MAY BE FEARLESSLY MAINTAINED ANYWHERE. It is the first time the gospel has met idolatry pure and simple, and it promptly and confidently offers a better God than the greatest in their list. Notice the marked difference between Paul's method of attacking idolatry and that adopted by the modern opposers of the God Paul worshipped. He would take every idol out of Lystra, but he would leave a God far better in their stead. But these would take away our God, and then leave us alone and hopeless with the ruin they have wrought. VII. How FICKLE IS THE FAVOUR OF MEN! The distance is short between the garlands and the stones, between "Hosanna!" and "Crucify him!" but the favour of God endureth, and it satisfies the soul. VIII. LET US BEWARE OF WRITING ALL ADVERSE THINGS AS DISADVANTAGEOUS. I doubt if there was a place in all Paul's wanderings to which he looked back with such delight as Lystra, because it was the home of Timothy, the best beloved, the choicest fruit ever given to his ministry. "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong come forth sweetness." (*T. H. Hanna, D.D.*) *Perils of missionary life*:—The peril of—I. MISCONSTRUCTION. It is always easy to pervert what a preacher says, and so arouse prejudice (ver. 2). We are not told just how these jealous Israelites sought to inflame the Gentiles. In one instance (chap. xix. 26), opposers raised the workingman's question. In another (chap. xvi. 20, 21), it was wickedly suggested that an attack on social and political institutions was concealed under the pretence of inculcating religion. There is a tale considered authentic in the papal church, of one called "St. Thekla," who was converted by Paul. She had been previously betrothed to a heathen, but now refused from conscientious scruples to marry him. So the ingenious opposers might have told the populace that this was the way in

which Christianity was going to break up their closest relations. Anything can be started among ignorant people. II. POSITIVE VIOLENCE (ver. 5). No one can recall one of a hundred histories of cruelty and death inflicted by popular outbreak under malicious instigation, without knowing that there is always the one danger, in every land and generation, of losing life (Mark viii. 35). III. SPIRITUAL DISTRUST OF GOD. The day of miracle-working has passed away, but great risks have to be run, and now and then the hearts of God's people fail them through fear. We detect here nothing of this sort; Paul stands up and works a stupendous miracle, without apparently a misgiving or a tremor. *Characteristics of apostolic preaching*:—I. PAUL MADE HIS PREACHING FIRST. He performed miracles. But the miracle was a secondary thing—but a bell-ringing. The disciples were commissioned to preach, and the triumphs of the gospel are owing to that. But the term covered teaching and "religious conversation." The Saviour preached to the woman of Samaria. But that mode of discourse is peculiarly preaching in which the truth is presented to masses of hearers. At Iconium, at Lystra, and in fact everywhere, with Paul preaching was the first and the leading agency. God has honoured this above all others. II. PAUL PREACHED BOLDLY, *i.e.*, fearlessly, unequivocally, but especially with power. The preacher should be persuasive, but above all, powerful. This trait Paul very highly valued. He urged his disciples to pray for him, that he might speak the Word boldly. The Spirit endues us with this holy boldness. By this we commonly intend plain speaking upon politics, temperance, morals, &c. But in nothing do we so need boldness as in the preaching of the simple truths of redemption. III. PAUL'S PREACHING WAS WATCHFUL. He had spiritual discernment to see the effects of his preaching (ver. 9). Preachers of his discernment are ready for digression. Earnest preachers are bent upon saving, not sermons, but men. Paul stopped his discourse when he saw that the cripple had faith to be saved. He saw an opportunity to extend the interest in his message. How much fruit we lose from lack of spiritual watchfulness! Deacon Safford was deeply interested for a young man in his Sunday-school class. One day Dr. Kirk preached a sermon which seemed to the deacon precisely adapted to reach his young friend. He watched him. He thought he saw the evidences of conviction in the intent face. In passing out of church he said in a low, earnest tone, "What are you going to do about it?" The impression was fixed. By that timely word the young man was saved. The gift of the Spirit is as needful to make us watchful as to make us bold. IV. IN HIS PREACHING PAUL FOLLOWED UP IMPRESSIONS MADE. Long time he tarried in Iconium. The ability to follow up a work is quite distinct from that to begin it. Many persons can make an impression, but want the knowledge, the patience, or perhaps the interest, to develop it. Revivalism outside the Churches involves the danger of producing a class of immature, weak, enthusiastic disciples, who may be left at critical stages of experience; ready, with proper care, to become established Christians, but ready also, without long and wise nurture, to become enemies or schismatics. Faithful Christian work in the pulpit, the Sunday school, the home, will aim at two ends—conversion, and the training of converts. V. THE THEME OF PAUL'S PREACHING WAS THE GOSPEL. When the first Moravian missionaries were about leaving for Greenland, a solid and pious minister advised them to give the natives "a sound body of divinity, beginning with the being and attributes of God, following with the doctrine of sin, and thus leading on at last to Christ and the Cross." This learned counsel was followed, and for several years their labour was in vain. One day, at a funeral service, quite by accident, a missionary told the story of the Cross, and explained its meaning. To his astonishment the truth made a profound impression. Conversions followed. Thereafter the missionaries began with the Cross. (*G. R. Leavett.*) *Strike, but hear us*:—Themistocles, the Athenian general, by warmly urging a point in a council of war, is said to have so provoked the displeasure of Eurybiades, the Spartan, the commander-in-chief, that the latter lifted up his cane over his head in a menacing posture. "Strike," said the noble Athenian, "but hear me!" He did hear him, and the country was saved. And why may not a Christian act, or rather forbear to act, on the same principle, and for an infinitely greater end, even the eternal salvation of his enemies? What else has been the language of the noble army of the martyrs from the beginning? Have they not practically said to an enraged world, "Strike, but hear us"? (*A. Fuller.*) *The courage of devoted Christians*:—The Shanghai correspondent of the *Bombay Guardian* narrates the following suggestive item of information: "The captain of a steamer, plying on the Yangtse river, told me that when he stopped on a dark night at one of the

stations on the bank, several of the inland missionaries came on board among a crowd of Chinese seeking a passage in the steerage, as they invariably do. They had encountered a mob of anti-foreign natives, which it is still very easy to do in this country, and had been well pelted and bespattered with mud. One of the ship's officers, seeing especially the ladies in their humiliating condition, exclaimed with the customary profanity, that he wondered they did not leave the Chinese to go to hell if they preferred to do so. That is the world's view of the case; and, as I said to the captain, there would have been no other view in the world to-day if Jesus Christ, the Son of God, had not taught it and set an example of it, and bestowed the grace for the imitation of it." *Courage requisite in reformers*:—There is nothing which the world resents so much as an attempt to carry out a better measure than existed before. A man who would benefit the world must take leave of his own reputation first; for the world never let a man bless it but it first fought him; it never let him give it a boon without first giving him a buffet. If with one effort you should raise a tree twenty feet high, so as to make it forty feet high, you would not do more violence to its roots than you do to society, when you attempt suddenly to elevate it above its former level. If there were a hundred violins together, all playing below concert pitch, and I should take a real Cremona, and with the hand of a Paganini should bring it strongly up to the true key, and then should sweep my bow across it like a storm, and make it sound forth clear and resonant, what a demoniac jargon would the rest of the playing seem! Yet the other musicians would be enraged at me. They would think all the discord was mine, and I should be to them a demoniac. So it is with reformers. The world thinks the discord is with them, and not in its own false playing. All those rosy philosophers who go dancing along the ways of life, and expect to reform men through ease and pleasure, and are surprised when at first snow-flakes are thrown at them, and then icicles, and then avalanches, had better fold their gauzy wings at once. They are not wanted. They are not of that heroic race who advance the world. (*W. H. Beecher.*) *Effects of gospel preaching*:—Wherever the gospel is proclaimed with power—1. It secures believers. The Word of God does not return to Him void. 2. It secures some bitter enemies. It divides every community into two parties. 3. People are not content with merely rejecting the gospel for themselves. They stir up the minds of others to make them evil-affected against its preachers. 4. The Lord is sure to bear witness unto the Word of His grace. 5. Its preachers must expect personal attacks of some kind or other. (*S. S. Times.*) *Proper witness bearing*:—I. WHEREIN IT CONSISTS. 1. Not in the degree of the external sufferings endured on account of faith, but in the measure of the fidelity displayed for Christ. 2. The apostles waited on their ministry with perseverance and joyful courage, and therein lay their fidelity. 3. They forsook the places which had become dear to them as soon as they were made away, that the Lord had no further use for them there. II. WHY IS IT SO DIFFICULT? Because—1. There is nothing in it to flatter our refined selfishness. There is wanting the "halo before the world," for fidelity is clothed in homely garments. 2. It destroys self-will. Perhaps death was easier than flight. III. IN WHAT LIES ITS BLESSING. 1. It secures God's will, not man's. 2. Therefore it is rich in fruits of all kinds—(1) Faith (ver. 1). (2) Divine manifestation (ver. 3). (3) The conversion of calamity into blessing (ver. 7). (*Lisco.*) *Persecution turned into inspiration*:—The apostles had finished their work at Antioch in a storm. Can that be true; the gospel dividing quiet cities into hostile camps? Surely the heavenly Word will bring heavenly peace along with it. No! The Son of man came not to send peace on the earth, but a sword. But now that the apostles have come to Iconium they will act in a different manner and correct their mistake. No; there again we have angry division, and stoning! How is this? These histories throw some light upon—I. WHAT IS CALLED UNANIMITY. Unanimity is no virtue, nor sincerity, nor earnestness; we must ascertain what the unanimity is about, and what men are sincere and earnest in, because good fire may be used for forging of bad instruments. Surely it was a pity for two wandering tent-makers to go from town to town disturbing the unanimity of families and of townships! Why not let families and corporations alone? Why this propagation of a fighting faith? This is the way of Christianity. It will not let people alone. Hence we find some light thrown upon—II. CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE. It was not a little puzzle to please the fancy, nor a pyrotechnic display to gratify children. It saves or slays. What wonder if it came upon sleepy towns like a thunderstorm? Christianity is not a compromise; it does not propose to give a little and take a little, and make a pacific arrangement with anybody. Christianity insists upon

having everything; it makes room for nothing else. What wonder, then, that everywhere it broke up families. Seeing your hand locked in evil friendship, it does not hesitate to rend your hearts asunder. Christianity says, "Behold, I make all things new." It will not say to a man, "Hand me your work, and I will complete it; it comes with a mighty hammer, and shatters our idols and all our best performances. III. CHRISTIAN SERVICE. Christian service—1. Is the supreme passion; it puts out everything else, it has no partnerships, no relations except those which it can press into its own sacrifice. 2. Exposes to daily danger. If we have escaped the danger, it is because we have escaped the service. When did we ever rebuke a wrong-doer? We have talked about him when he was not there—that I admit; and that has proved our unchristianity. When did we ever say to a man face to face—"You lie"? That would now be called discourtesy; but when were we ever licensed to be courteous to falsehood? Christianity is not a book of etiquette—it is a book of commandments, a gospel of righteousness as well as a gospel of compassion. When did we ever stand before a house and say, "This house must come down if the price be fivefold what it will fetch in the market; it is a trapdoor into hell, and it must fall"? Let a man say that, and he will soon see that England is like Antioch and Iconium. But if we come into the church, pass through the services, and lose ourselves in controversy that has no heavenly savour, I wonder not that, lulled by some theological narcotic, we think we are going to heaven. It is no heaven we are going to! It may have written heaven above its portals, but that inscription is a lie! "If any man will live godly in Christ Jesus, he shall suffer persecution. 3. Divides public opinion (ver. 2). That is how it ought to be always. There are those who say they do not believe in sensationalism. What do they believe in? Are they in sympathy with the ministry of their own professed Lord and Master? If Christianity were amongst the Churches to-day, men, instead of criticising sermons, would go out and borrow any chair, or stand on any stone at the street corner, and if they could not preach the gospel, they could at least read it. Fifty thousand men at the street corners to-day reading, with one voice, the third chapter of John!—why, apostolic times would have come back again! Nothing divides society like Christianity: its voice is, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate; the good to the right, the bad to the left." 4. Survives all ill-treatment. The time had come when the Jews determined to use the apostles despitefully. And as soon as the apostles became aware of it they "fled unto Lystra and Derbe"; and then in ver. 7, as if nothing had happened before, "there they preached the gospel." They preached better for their persecution. We should have wonderful preaching if we had more stoning. We should, too, have wonderful hearing as well as wonderful preaching! If we had to steal into the church by some backway, and had to listen in fear and trembling lest the oppressor should lay his iron grip upon us—oh, how we should listen! Do not say that Antioch was at peace until the apostles visited it; there is a so-called peace that is only a false name for death. IV. So-CALLED HERESY. The heretics may be Paul and Barnabas with modern names. If men come amongst us denying the Bible, then have no part or lot with them; but if men of spotless character and sacred devotedness arise and say, "We have found the interpretation of this Scripture or of that," hear them, though many an old notion may be displaced. We use heretics of that kind most basely! What was the fault of Paul? This: that he said a prophecy has been fulfilled—nothing more; and so he was stoned. And Christianity has its prophecies; Christian doctrine has yet its issues brighter than our fancy has measured; and if any man shall say, "Let us together read the Holy Word, and hear what I believe to be its true meaning," let us not take up stones against him, but listen, knowing "that God hath yet more light and truth to break forth from His Holy Word." (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Which gave testimony unto the Word of His grace.—*God's testimony to the Word of His grace*:—I. THE PROPRIETY OF THIS APPELLATION: "the Word of His grace." The gospel is so called, because—1. It originated in unmerited mercy, and was sent to us as a matter of free favour. 2. It is a proclamation of grace and mercy. *The law* is a ministration of wrath, accusing, convincing, and condemning the sinner. The gospel reveals the grace of God, as abounding in our salvation. 3. It is grace alone that renders it effectual. Sinners own their conversion, saints their edification, mourners their comfort, and the oppressed their relief to it. But it derives all its influence and energy from the grace of the Holy Spirit. The gospel reaches only the ear; grace renews and sanctifies the heart. The gospel is a means, but God performs the work, and to Him we must ascribe the glory. II. THE WAY IN WHICH

GOD BEARS TESTIMONY TO THE WORD OF HIS GRACE. 1. By miracles wrought in confirmation of it. 2. By raising up a constant succession of ministers to propagate and defend it. He who sends the message, can be at no loss for want of messengers. As soon as one earthern vessel is broken, the heavenly treasure is put into another; and though the grass withereth, and the flower thereof fadeth away, yet the Word of the Lord endureth for ever. 3. By the awe impressed upon the consciences even of wicked men. God will magnify His Word, whether it be a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death. Felix's trembling, Agrippa's being almost persuaded, and Simon Magus's hypocritical profession, were so many testimonies, though involuntary ones, to the truth of the inspired Word. 4. By rendering it effectual to the salvation of all them that believe. Having tasted its sweetness, and felt its power, the believer has the witness in himself. When the dark understanding is enlightened, the conscience awakened, the heart softened, and the sinner truly converted, what greater proof can we have of the power and efficacy of the gospel, or of its being worthy of its Divine Author? 5. By the life and conversation of such as walk worthy of the gospel. The grace of God revealed in the gospel, teaches "men, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly" &c. What can be a stronger confirmation of the reality of religion, than the change it produces in the lives and manners of its professors? 6. By the triumphant deaths of His saints. To see a Christian exulting in death is an amazing instance of the power of faith, and of the reality of true religion. Many an unbeliever has turned pale at this, and been confounded with the evidence which he had not power to resist. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) *God's testimony to the Word of His grace*:—I. THIS GOSPEL IS THE WORD OF GOD'S GRACE because—1. It is the revelation of His grace. Its very errand is to make known that "by grace are ye saved, through faith" &c. 2. It is the history and delineation of the grace of God. Study the Bible with this key, then, from the first promise to the last you find that the key-note of grace sounds through the whole glorious concert. 3. It is the great instrument of grace; for God works by His gospel; and it is "the power of God." II. THE LORD GAVE TESTIMONY TO THE WORD OF HIS GRACE, AND HE DOES SO STILL. 1. God has given testimony to the Word of His grace—(1) In that wondrous chain of prophecy of what was come upon the world. The chain is still unbroken, though we may not always see it—as is the case sometimes in a chain across a river, the two ends are visible, but the chain is in the depth of the river—but it is not the less knit together because you cannot trace it. (2) By miracles. 2. But it is said with some plausibility, these supernatural signs were wrought in times past; show us some now. Now, this challenge may be fairly met. Surely every reflecting and reasonable man will admit that, as far as mind surpasses matter, so much further must the mighty power put forth in the mind surpass that put forth in the body. Therefore, whether is it the greater miracle, to make the deaf spirit to hear, the dumb spirit to sing, the dead spirit to have life return to it, or to raise the bodily infirm or dead? But were these miracles confined to the past? Could we not show these scornful philosophers who tell us there is nothing wonderful or preternatural now, the infidel, who has become devout and humble? not the drunkard, who has become sober, the publican and the harlot, who have become just and pure? 3. God bears testimony to the Word of His grace, and to that only. It is natural that He should be jealous of His own blessed specific, lest it should be either marred or corrupted by human traditions, or macerated by man's vain and subtle explaining it away, or destroying its miraculous nature. Wherever the simple grace of God has been set aside by self-righteousness on the one hand—as it is largely by the Church of Rome—or, on the other hand, its mysterious and miraculous character denied by those who deny the divinity of Christ and the efficacy of the atonement, there may have been some moral influence; but where are the results that show the new creature? The apostles, reformers, martyrs, with one voice proclaimed that God bears testimony to the Word of His grace. Application: It is in the power of the humblest and plainest to give one of the very best evidences of the power of the gospel that ever can be given, by leading a holy life. (*H. Stowell, M.A.*) *God's testimony to His Word*:—I. THE MIRACLES WHICH THE APOSTLES WROUGHT IN ATTESTATION OF THE TRUTH OF THEIR DOCTRINE. And when the infidel sneeringly asks, "What connection is there between truth and power, or can the truth of a doctrine be established by a miracle?" we reply, by asking him, "What connection is there between a man's signature and the validity of the bill or bond which he has subscribed? What connection is there between the credentials of an ambassador and his right to transact the business of his sovereign?" Miracles are God's sub-

scription to the truth of Christianity; and as no man could have wrought them unless God was with him, so in proportion to their number was testimony given to the gospel of grace. II. THE SUFFERINGS TO WHICH THE APOSTLES AND FIRST CHRISTIANS WERE EXPOSED. III. THE EARLY AND RAPID PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL. Considering the circumstances in which Christianity was introduced, we should not have been surprised had it made but slow progress in the world. Not only are its principles distasteful to the natural feelings of mankind; it opposed itself to the firmest prejudices, to the most established opinions of those to whom it was first addressed. IV. GOD STILL TESTIFIES TO THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL BY ACCOMPANYING ITS PROCLAMATION WITH A SPIRITUAL INFLUENCE. (*Jas. Jeffrey.*)

Vers. 4–7. **But the multitude of the city was divided.**—*The effects of the gospel*:—I. DIVISION. "Behold I come not to cause peace, but division." So said the Master; so felt the disciples. 1. The gospel causes division in—(1) The man himself—between inclination and conviction; interest and conscience; intellect and passion. (2) Families, between parents and children; brothers and sisters, &c. (3) Society. The gospel has often sundered life-long friendships and associations. 2. Why? (1) Because of the incessant vigilance and activity of the great enemy of the gospel, who stirs up opposition to it. (2) Because of the revolutionary power of the gospel. Men do not like to have the old convictions, customs, &c., disturbed. There is no objection *per se* to the existence of the gospel, if its possessors will only keep quiet. Professing Christians who make no effort to disturb existing arrangements live quietly enough. (3) Because of the intolerance of the gospel. Had Christians in ancient times been content with a place for Christ in the Pantheon there would have been no persecutions; it was because they claimed for Christ the only place, that excited the ire of heathendom. And men of all shades of opinion to-day would allow Christianity a place as a system of thought or ethics; but it is when she claims for herself absolute and undisputed supremacy in politics, society, business, &c., that the conflict begins. II. OPPOSITION. "Part held with the Jews." 1. Sympathetically. There is an opposition nowadays which does not proceed to active antagonism. Indifference to the gospel is sympathy with its foes. "He that is not for Me is against Me." This form of opposition is the most difficult to deal with. An army would sooner meet its enemy than pass through a country secretly at league with the enemy. What the gospel has to dread is not infidel propaganda, or blatant vice; but mere intangible negativism. This we find not only outside the Churches but within. 2. Actively. This opposition exists in various forms. (1) Intellectual—controversy. (2) Political—bad laws. (3) Moral—vicious influence. (4) Social—evil customs. (5) Physical—persecution. III. ACCEPTANCE. "Part with the apostles." This acceptance is—1. Secret. There are thousands like Nicodemus, in heathen and Christian lands, whose whole sympathy is with the gospel, but who, for domestic or social reasons, withhold profession. This is not to be commended, but condemned; nevertheless, in estimating the forces for and against the gospel it should be considered. If it shows a heart yet unrenewed, it is evidence of feelings touched, intellect convinced, and perhaps will trembling in the balance. Such should be encouraged to not only hold with the apostles, but to stand boldly by their side. 2. Public. To take part thoroughly with the apostles is—(1) To defend their gospel. (2) To assist them in their work. Something more is required than to listen to their teaching and to attend ordinances at which they preside once a week. Yet how many who profess to be decided Christians do no more. The work of the gospel requires the help of every disciple; as a matter of fact an average congregation yields one worker to ten members. (*J. W. Burn.*) **And when there was an assault made . . . they . . . fled unto Lystra and Derbe.**—*The permitted flight of the servant of God*:—How it takes place. I. AFTER THE CONFLICT, as with the apostles here; not before, as with Jonah. II. IN OBEDIENCE TO THE LORD, and not from fear of man or carnal tenderness. III. WITH WEAPONS IN THEIR HANDS, as the apostles continue to preach with unbroken courage, not after having cast their weapons away. IV. TO A NEW FIELD OF CONFLICT (Derbe and Lystra), not to rest. (*K. Gerok.*) **And there they preached the gospel.**—*Gospel preaching*:—A new and characteristic incident in the life of that sweet singer of Israel, Miss Havergal, comes to light in the recently published autobiography of her sister. The former was conversing with a minister who was not disposed to press home the gospel message. "Oh, why don't you preach the gospel of Christ?" she exclaimed. "My congregation are

well educated and well acquainted with the truths of salvation; if they were Zulus, I should preach differently," was the reply. "Then let me be a Zulu next Sunday," was the rejoinder, "and just preach at me." A real gospel sermon was the result. It might pay a minister now and then to imagine some Zulus among his auditors, and prepare his sermon accordingly. *The preaching of the gospel:*—I. THE NATURE OF THE GOSPEL. In etymology, the term signifies "glad tidings." In theology, the thing signified is the glad tidings of salvation through Christ. The gospel is the new law as distinguished from the old; for there is much gospel in the old, and much law in the new. The gospel is the foundation of a sinner's hope as distinguished from the rule of the creature's conduct. It is called "the gospel of the grace of God," because the whole system originated in the free and unmerited favour of God; "the everlasting gospel," because it occupied the mind of God from eternity, and its blessings extend to the end of time; "the ministration of glory," because it combines the attributes of Jehovah; "gospel of the kingdom," because it is the basis on which the whole empire of the Redeemer rests. It includes in itself our Lord's divinity and atoning sacrifice, the justification of the sinner by faith, the renovation of the heart by the Holy Spirit, the universal invitation to all sinners to avail themselves of its provisions, the promise that all that believe shall be saved. II. TO PREACH THE GOSPEL IS TO EXHIBIT—1. The crucifixion of Christ as a fact, in connection with the design of that fact, as connected with the moral government of God. 2. Christ in the divinity of His person. The divinity of Christ is essential to His atonement. 3. The atonement and righteousness of Christ, as the exclusive foundation of the sinner's hope of acceptance before God. 4. The death of Christ as the great means, in the hand of the Spirit, for the sanctification of the sinner's heart. 5. An invitation of mercy co-extensive with the aspect of the atonement, and both as co-extensive with the wretchedness of human guilt and misery. 6. The supreme and ultimate object of the Christian's hope, namely, the second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ, when He shall come without sin unto salvation. III. THE IMPORTANCE OF PREACHING THE GOSPEL. Consider—1. The sublimity of its ultimate design—the salvation of the soul. The proudest monuments of genius are not worth a thought, compared with the salvation of one of those children that belong to your Sunday school. 2. Its collateral benefits on the individual and society. I am aware that education is the idol of the day, that knowledge is sounded forth; and let it be sounded forth, for it is not good for the soul of man to be without it; but we are mistaken if we suppose that anything short of a preached gospel will purify society or elevate the human race, and meet the moral necessities of men. 3. Its adaptation to effect these things. Where can we find such a message from God to engage us? Where such power calculated to subdue our hearts? Where such a token of good-will towards the sinner as in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ? 4. Its effects in the world. Conclusion: Learn—1. The main purpose of a Christian place of worship—the preaching and hearing of the gospel. 2. The great business and duty of the minister of religion to preach Christ. 3. How important it is to private Christians, to feel their obligation to provide places of worship! 4. If it is our obligation to preach the gospel, it is yours to receive it. (*J. Angell James.*) *The gospel ministry:*—I. THE SUBJECT WHICH THE TEXT PRESENTS TO OUR ATTENTION—"The gospel." If you examine the gospel as it was preached by Christ and His apostles, you will discover that merely to inculcate Christian virtues or to describe a future state, is not preaching the gospel. Every system must have some leading principles which are essential to it, and when these are renounced or overlooked, the system itself is opposed or concealed. Look at the meaning of the word "gospel"—"Glad tidings of great joy," &c. Therefore, to preach the gospel is to imitate the angelic host, to preach Christ. If there be not a full and plain declaration of "Christ and Him crucified," then there is an awful void in the preacher's message. We are as the heralds of mercy, to exhibit the atonement and righteousness of Christ, as the exclusive foundation of the Christian's hope of acceptance before God. Without the doctrine of justification by faith there can be no gospel. Let it only be alleged, or even hinted, that there is something more than the work of Christ necessary for the reconciliation of a sinner to God, and the silver trumpet falls from the lips of the preacher, and, to be a little more particular, we may remark that the Christian minister must proclaim Christ to his hearers as—1. A suitable Saviour. We are enslaved, and need a Redeemer; diseased, and need a physician; perishing, and require a benefactor; condemned, and want pardon. Christ is our King, Benefactor, Physician, Redeemer, Saviour. 2. An Almighty Saviour. He is

the maker and upholder of all things. "It pleased the Father that in Him all fulness should dwell." See whom He has saved! Many of the most guilty of the human race. And this assures us that He can "save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him." 3. A willing Saviour. His invitations are given to all sinners, without exception. 4. An everlasting Saviour. He "is the Author of eternal salvation"; He gives "a kingdom that cannot be shaken"—"a crown of glory that fadeth not away." II. THE MANNER IN WHICH THE GOSPEL IS TO BE PROCLAIMED, namely, by preaching. When the Saviour ascended up on high, He "received gifts for men." "And He gave some apostles," &c. But for how long was this to continue? "Until we all come to the unity of the faith," &c. The gospel trumpet is to be blown until its sound shall be succeeded by the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. The office of preaching is not only a wise institution, but one of paramount importance. This will be seen if we appeal to—1. The declarations of God. What was to crown, according to Jeremiah, the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity into their own land? "I will give them," says God, "pastors after Mine own heart," &c. What does Isaiah consider as a compensation for all the calamities of life? "Though the Lord give you the bread of adversity . . . yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more." 2. The adaptation of preaching to extensive usefulness. There is no mode of communicating information that can awaken half the attention, or excite half the interest, that the ordinance of preaching does; it is not only the understanding speaking to the understanding, but the heart speaking to the heart, and the conscience to the conscience. So that by this engine, if rightly used, every power of the mind is effected, and every feeling of the soul is touched and excited. 3. Its design. The profession of a lawyer is important, because it affects our property; and that of a physician, because it concerns our health; but these are nothing, when compared with the soul and eternity; and with these, the ministerial office is peculiarly concerned; and by these, it is infinitely dignified. III. THE CONDITION OF THOSE PLACES IN WHICH THE GOSPEL HAS BEEN PROCLAIMED. 1. Every such place is peculiarly favoured. In other places there is no heavenly bread, no water of consolation for the support of the soul. Capernaum, a little fishing-place, was "exalted to heaven," because there Christ preached the gospel. You should think of this when you change your residence, and when you make excursions for health. On such occasions ask, not only, "Is there a good air? Is there delightful scenery?" but also, "Is the gospel proclaimed there?" 2. Its inhabitants are awfully responsible. If you perish, you will have no cloak for your sin, and no alleviation of your punishment. "It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, at the day of judgment than for you," if you neglect the gospel. (*T. Gibson, M.A.*) *The gospel for all:*—"Go into all the world," was our Lord's command to His disciples, "and preach the gospel to every creature." They might have said in objection, that some parts of the world were philosophical and refined; that other parts were uncivilised and rude. Their Master held those objections to be nothing worth. Hence we find them in Jerusalem, for one place; we find them by and by in Ephesus and Athens; and here in what may fairly be called a rural and outlandish place. There, exactly as in other places, they just did what that text declares. "There they preached the gospel." Where? Anywhere. I. Because IN EVERY PLACE THE GOSPEL IS WANTED. Man may be regarded as addicted to religion. Man has never been found without having as to his intellect the power, and as to his heart the solicitude to use that power, of trusting to some objects which are superior to himself. Hence it is, that we have all manner of religions very generally. The Hottentot has his religion, and the Esquimaux has his. But now, how comes man to be thus affected everywhere? I believe that it is by a necessity of his nature. Men want to have strength found them for their weakness, and light for their darkness, and wisdom for their ignorance, and pardon for their sin. You may find Atheism trying to get that instinct out of man's nature; but you will find humanity revolting from it; and, if it has not got the true religion, it will somehow or other try to content itself with a false. Why is it that men will put up with heavy self-denial and sacrifice of the very best, and sometimes to an unknown God? Here lies the mystery of it all—"they have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." They want to have their relations with their Maker rectified into the position whence sin took them. And unto that position the gospel offers to bring them. Whether a man be a peasant or a prince, whether he be a Pagan or a nominal Christian, the man stands in need of that gospel; let that be preached to him, and he accept it, and the aspirations of his humanity are all met; his troubled

heart is tranquillised, and his guilt forgiven. "There they preached the gospel": in the antipodes; here, in some mission room, aye, and by the side of some sick and dying bed, in a London attic, "there they preach the gospel": why? Because nothing but the "glad tidings of great joy" would avail for the misery and spiritual want that are discovered there. II. Because IN EVERY PLACE UNDER HEAVEN THE GOSPEL MAY BE PROCLAIMED. Different forms of religion to a large extent have arisen out of the circumstances of the particular place, or have got associated almost exclusively with the peculiarities of some time, or apostle. There is, *e.g.*, Hindooism, that needs such a place as Hindostan with its great rivers. The religion of the Caffre is well adapted to all the region of Caffraria. Mahometanism tells all its votaries that they are not to touch food from sunrise to sunset. Now, how could that be attended to in those lands where the sun never sets and rises for weeks together? A disciple of Vishnu or Brahma could not proclaim his religion here so as to carry into operation all its requirements. It was not made for man, it will not do for man. But this heaven-born gospel of ours, the land does not exist to which you could not take it; the man cannot be found by whom its sacred precepts and doctrines might not be received and followed out. Spiritual in its nature, and simple in its ritual, it can go anywhere. "There they preached the gospel." There among the luxurious groves of the Asiatic; there among the consolidated snows of Lapland. III. For EVERYWHERE THE GOSPEL IS ADAPTED TO ALL THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF MANKIND, BE THEY WHAT THEY MAY. 1. There are peculiarities touching age and with all those peculiarities there come corresponding necessities. The young man looks forward to his life; everything appears to him bright and auspicious: he is brimful and overrunning with human life. Now the gospel puts before him another medium, and in God's light tells him to see light; tells him to understand that there are difficulties and adversities and vicissitudes, but bids him trust, and not be dismayed, for all that. There is the man of business, and there the gospel stands, not telling him to exchange commercial life for conventual, but to buy, sell, and get gain as seeing God who is invisible. Then there is the mother in the midst of her family, the old man, &c. "There they preached the gospel." To be sure they did; whatever may be the variety of our necessities, the gospel has a word, and has provision for them all. 2. There are the differences of constitutional temperament. Some men are lively, others taciturn; and there are gradations between these two extremes. "There they preached the gospel," because it was not a thing for a great occasion, or for the salvation of the soul only, but in this present evil world to be as a portion in due season. Is impulse required, or restraint, or equanimity? The gospel provides it all. I have seen it take a selfish man and make him generous; take a timid man and make him brave; take a man proud and austere, and make him congenial and kindly. 3. There are peculiarities in intellectual power, and in corresponding intellectual attainment. Now, take the man that is not very intellectual, and the man that is profoundly intellectual; they both want the glad tidings; to both of them are the tidings preached. There was "The Dairyman's Daughter," and there was Sir Isaac Newton. When the one was weary with his intellectual work, and the other with her unintellectual work, where did they go? They sat down by the same Book, read about the same Saviour, and both of them set their seal to it that God is true. 4. There are peculiarities as to guilt and criminality. All men are not alike bad; there is the minimum and there is the maximum of human guilt. The gospel is adapted to the drunkard, to the profane, to the voluptuous, to the outcast of every kind; not that he may go on living in sin that grace may abound; but suited to him, to "bring him up out of the horrible pit and the miry clay." IV. Because ANYWHERE THE BLESSINGS OF THE GOSPEL MAY BE PROFFERED UNIVERSALLY, AND TO INDIVIDUAL PERSONS. We must not call uncommon what God has called common; we must not restrict what God has left unlimited. (*W. Brock, D.D.*) *The insufficient and the efficacious:*—What will convince and convert men? What will revive and enlarge the Church of God? Many means are useful; one only is efficacious. 1. The voice of God in nature is not sufficient. 2. Miracles do not avail. 3. Zeal, however ardent, comes short. 4. Machinery, perfect though it be—good preaching, a strong Church, all the ordinances of God's house, Sunday schools, &c.—does not convert souls or give life to the people of God. The only efficacious instrument is God's truth, the gospel of the grace of God, the gospel faithfully preached and made efficacious by the agency of the Holy Ghost, as it was at Lystra and at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, and as it is now wherever the conditions are faithfully observed. (*Homiletic Review.*)

Vers. 8-18. **And there sat a certain man at Lystra.**—*Paul and Barnabas in Lystra* :—I. THE INCIDENT. 1. The case of the cripple resembles that of the man at the gate Beautiful; and a particular statement of it is given, to show the reality and the greatness of the miracle. It was not an incidental, but a radical infirmity which was removed. He had been lame from his birth. His cure, therefore, would appear to all to be the effect, not of superior skill, but of supernatural power. Thus the design of the miracle would be gained, which was not only to relieve the patient, but to demonstrate that God was present with Paul and Barnabas, and consequently that their doctrine was true. Miracles are a sign "to them that believe not." They are not merely prodigies intended to raise wonder. To the Jews the argument from prophecy was sufficient; and accordingly, we find the apostles insisting much upon it in their discourses to that people. But to the Gentiles it would not have been addressed with propriety, because they were not acquainted with the prophecies. Miracles, however, were an obvious and easy species of evidence. 2. Paul perceived that the lame man had "faith to be healed." This faith seems to signify either a general belief of the power of Barnabas and Paul, or rather of Jesus Christ, whose ministers they were, to cure his infirmity; or a persuasion that a cure would be performed upon himself in particular. In the former case, his faith was founded on the account which he had heard of the character and miracles of Christ, and of the gifts of healing which He had bestowed on His apostles; in the latter it was the effect of a supernatural impression on his mind. This faith Paul perceived by the power of discerning spirits. "Paul therefore said, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked," and the cure instantly followed the command. 3. Paul said, "with a loud voice." The circumstances in which the miracles of the gospel were performed leave no room for suspecting that they were dexterous impositions on the credulity of mankind. They were not done in a corner, but in the chief places of concourse. The juggling tricks of heathenism need only to be strictly examined to be rejected with contempt; whereas the miracles of Christianity are displays of omnipotent power, which will be the more admired the more closely they are considered. 4. The evidence of miracles is not irresistible, but may be counteracted by the power of prejudice. The Jews attributed those of our Saviour to Satanical influence; the Gentiles believed that those of the apostles were operations of magic; and the inhabitants of Lystra were disposed to turn this miracle into an argument in favour of their own idolatrous religion (ver. 11, &c.). As soon as the idea was adopted, that Paul and Barnabas were gods, the people assigned to them their respective names. If the gods had condescended to visit the city of Lystra, religion required that they should be received with appropriate honours; but the sacrifice was prevented by the zeal of Barnabas and Paul, who "ran in among them, saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We are fellow-mortals." Their being of "like passions" with themselves would not have appeared a good reason why Paul and Barnabas should not be worshipped: for Jupiter and Mercury, and all the rest, if history might be credited, had given many shocking displays of them. But if they were fellow-mortals, beings subject, like others, to disease and death, it was evident that they were not gods. Mortals, indeed, there have been, who demanded religious honours; and base flatterers have not been wanting to comply with the extravagant request. Some of the Roman emperors were deified during their lives. But, surely, the worshippers and the worshipped must have secretly regarded one another with mutual contempt. Jealous of the glory of the true God, the apostles rejected, with abhorrence, any honour offered to themselves which intrenched on His prerogative. 5. In the Old Testament the heathen gods are frequently styled vanities. Of the deities, whom the blinded nations adored, some had no existence except in the imagination of their worshippers; and the rest were dead men and women, whom the gratitude and admiration of posterity had consecrated. Their images, in which a Divine virtue was supposed to reside, were alike unworthy of religious honours and incapable of doing good or evil, as inanimate matter in any other shape (Psa. cxxxv. 16–18). These pretended gods, and their unprofitable service, the apostles call upon the men of Lystra to forsake, and henceforward to worship "the living God"—Jehovah, the self-existent Being, the source of life to all who breathe. 6. But if the God, whom Paul and Barnabas preached, was the true God, why was He so late in asserting His claim to their homage? To obviate this objection against the Christian doctrine as a novel system, the apostles add, "Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways." Although He did not leave Himself altogether without a witness, yet He employed no extraordinary means to stem the

torrent of apostacy. No prophet arose among them to reprove their errors and restore the knowledge and service of the Creator. "The times of this ignorance He winked at," seeming to take no notice of it, as a man closes his eyes that he may not observe what is passing around him. Every nation was suffered to adopt whatever form of religion was most agreeable to its taste. Idolatry seems to have begun early after the flood. It was practised in the family of Abraham prior to his call (Josh. xxiv. 2). 7. But this idolatry was inexcusable, because "God did not leave Himself without a witness," &c. No man, who consults his reason, can consider the productions of the earth as the result of chance, because chance signifies no cause of any kind, but merely expresses our ignorance. It is not less irrational to imagine that vegetation is the effect of certain independent qualities or powers of matter. Wherever we observe design, reason and experience point to an intelligent agent. The process by which "our hearts are filled with food and gladness," consists of so many steps all conducting to a specific termination, that no person can survey them without an immediate conviction of the existence and providence of God. The heathens, amidst all their ignorance, were not so atheistical as some modern philosophers. They erred only in overlooking the true Author of their enjoyments, and returning thanks for their fruitful seasons to Jupiter, and Ceres, and Pomona, instead of acknowledging the various productions of the earth to be the work of one God, "from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift." II. ITS LESSONS. 1. We learn from this passage that the contemplation of nature should be rendered subservient to the purposes of piety. Man is delighted with the view of what is sublime and beautiful, and with instances of curious contrivances and exquisite workmanship; but the ultimate design of this delight is to conduct him to the knowledge and love of its Author. Philosophy will afford us much entertainment by unfolding the secret operations of nature; but the pleasure of the unlettered Christian is incomparably greater when he traces, in the grand outlines of creation, the footsteps of his Father, and the smiles of His goodness. 2. Let us give thanks to God for our deliverance from idolatry. It is not to reason that we are indebted for this deliverance. We indeed find no difficulty in proving that there is only one God, who ought to be worshipped; but to demonstrate a truth already known is a much easier task than to discover a truth buried under the rubbish of prejudice and superstition. The wisest and greatest men of antiquity were polytheists. Were Christianity banished, the absurd and exploded systems of Paganism would be restored. No sooner had the French nation renounced the religion of Christ than they began to worship the Goddess of Reason. 3. As we profess to be the servants of the living God, let us remember that it is a pure and spiritual worship which He requires. He must not be treated as one of the idols of the Gentiles, to whom their votaries presented the empty homage of ceremonies and oblations. Then only do we serve Him when we present to Him the offering of our hearts, commit ourselves to the direction of His wisdom, submit to His authority, and regulate our thoughts and actions by His law. (*J. Dick, D.D.*) *Apostolic service and temptation*:—1. This man would not be admitted into a drawing-room; he would be a spot on any feast of high conviviality; but Christianity always begins with the cripples. It will begin anywhere. Its one cry is, "Give me a man," and in reply to this the cripple has always been given. This is the defence of the Church, that it shuts out no man, but finds a seat even for the cripple who cannot stand. 2. Paul perceived "that he had faith to be healed." That man is here; don't tell me you are not a Christian; your being here means Believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. What you want is the faith to use faith, confidence to use the power you have. The great, kind sea waits for you. It is a great easy nurse, and says, "Come, throw yourselves right upon me, and you shall not sink." Who can tell but that some poor soul now may say, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief"? If so, this will be the day of miracle. 3. I wish we could be as sure that Paul is here as that the cripple is. You have here an illustration of Paul's insight into character. Not long since we noticed that Barnabas "saw the grace of God." What eyes those men had. They knew faith when it was only a light in the face, a gleam in the eye. There is more faith in the world than the preachers have yet conceived. We make great mistakes in confounding one character with another, and in mistaking the symptoms that are offered in order to deceive the very elect. Many a man laughs to keep you off the scent; whilst under his assumed gaiety his heart is suffering from the bite of an adder. Many a man is silent who wants to speak. You have thought him cold, distant, indifferent, whereas in his heart he has been saying, "Would God I knew how to begin." Let us pray for the spirit of discerning,

and so use that spirit as to bring men who have taken one step on the right road forward on their journey. 4. Why did Paul speak "with a loud voice"? Some people object to loud voices—they say they could hear quite well if the preacher did not exert himself so. It is not enough to hear—you must overhear. An utterance must not deliver its own syllables only, but take with it heart, fire, life. If you had spoken with a sublimer audacity you would have elicited a nobler reply. People knew that Christ spoke with authority, and Paul's heart went with his voice, and his every syllable was glorified into a power. 5. Not only had Paul keen insight into the character of others, he had also keen insight into his own spirit. That kept him right. The high-priest of Jupiter was prepared to offer sacrifice to him; but he cried, "We also are men of like passions with you." Their self-knowledge was, humanly speaking, their salvation. If we knew ourselves we could not so inhale the incense of adulation as to lose our balance. Let all men know themselves to be but men, and then eulogium will bring with it honest encouragement, and instead of offering sacrifices, we shall offer the nobler homage of confidence and love. 6. This narrative throws some light upon Christianity itself. Christianity makes people do what they never did before. The man had never walked. Christianity does not make us do things a little better than we did them before; it makes us do things we and the world thought it impossible for us ever to do. When the priest of Jupiter saw what was done, he was prepared to put the knife to Jupiter's own throat. Christianity must vindicate itself by the men it makes. Convince the priests of Jupiter, not by eloquent reasoning, but by noble manhood. 7. The man "leaped and walked." You cannot leap long—the law of gravitation is against that—but you can walk all your lifetime. A man leaping always is beside himself; a man walking has serious business, and he is going to do it. We cannot live in raptures, but we must leap at first. Those who have seen God, and have received of His strength, mount up as on the wings of eagles: then they run, then they walk. It would be pleasant to see some of us leaping a little. Without enthusiasm, what is the Church? It is Vesuvius without fire; it is Niagara without water; it is the firmament without the sun. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Worship: the false and the true*:—I. MAN WORSHIP. Look at—1. The great miracle. (1) The cripple. His condition was, humanly speaking, hopeless. So the sinner (Rom. vii. 18; Psa. li. 5). (2) The cure. Look at the steps. (*a*) "The same heard Paul speaking." The gospel came with healing to the soul before healing was given to his body. (*b*) Perceiving how undoubting was the man's faith in Christ as a Saviour, Paul saw that he would have just as much faith in Him as a healer. (*c*) "Stand upright on thy feet." To that clarion call all the energies of the lame man's being responded. The sense of impotence gave place to a sense of power. There was a second miracle in the leaping and walking; for with man walking and leaping are the result of many trials and failures. 2. The great mistake. The miracle set the people reasoning. By no mere human power could such a wonder be performed; therefore these men must be gods. Even the priest of Jupiter himself came to do priestly homage. II. TRUE WORSHIP. Some would have let the people suppose for a time that their surmise was true. It would give them influence, and gradually, they could turn attention away from themselves to Christ, &c. But the false never can represent the true. How did Paul and Barnabas act? 1. Self-worship rejected. (1) The apostles' horror. Evidently no such temptation had appealed to them. (2) The apostles' declaration. "We also are men," &c. Capable of suffering, and hence unlike gods. (3) The apostles' mission. "Bring you good tidings, that ye should turn from these vain things unto the living God." The worship of the living God is the only one that brings returns. All other worship is empty of results—a waste of time, of means, of energy—an eternal disappointment. 2. True worship enjoined. The sermon of the apostles is short, but it presents God—(1) As Creator. "Who made the heaven," &c. God was "living," while their gods were of stone, or of their own imagination. He was self-existent—their gods were "vanities." (2) As Father. (*a*) Indulgent. "Who suffered all nations to walk in their own ways." He would not compel their adoration, but left it to themselves to find out that evil was hurtful, idolatry nothing but vanity, and that the wages of sin is death. (*b*) Faithful. "Yet He left Himself not without witness, in that He did good." The apostacy of the nations did not cause God to turn away from them. With infinite patience, born of infinite love, He continued to treat them as though they were His children. (*c*) Provident. "And gave you from heaven rain," &c. With wonderful kindness our Father "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good," &c. His love and goodness continually plead with men to repent. "And with these

sayings scarce retained they," &c. The heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. It is as hard sometimes to turn them as it is to turn the course of a river. (*M. C. Hazard.*)

Vers. 9, 10. **The same heard Paul speak: who . . . perceiving that he had faith to be healed, said . . . Stand upright.**—*Faith to be healed:*—I. WHAT PRECEDED HIS FAITH? Faith cometh by hearing; but the hearing of what? The gospel (ver. 7). Yes, he declared to these ignorant, superstitious fanatics the very same truths which he spoke to his enlightened Jewish brethren. He makes no difference between the education of his hearers in different places. To Ephesian sorcerers, to philosophic Athenians, to Corinthian merchants, to rustic Leptrians, his only message is the gospel. What, then, was this gospel which Paul preached everywhere? 1. It was a gospel of facts. Every time Paul preached he told the following unvarnished tale: God beheld men lost and ruined. Out of love to them He sent His only-begotten Son, who lived a life of innocence and perfect obedience. He was crucified, rose again, and ascended up to heaven, where He sitteth at the right hand of God, from whence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. 2. There were certain doctrines flowing out of the facts. To wit, that Jesus Christ had offered a full atonement for the sin of His people, so that whosoever would believe on Him should be saved. Then would come the doctrine of pardon, how God could be just, and yet the Justifier of him who believeth. 3. And out of these there sprung certain commands: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." "Well," says one, "do you think the world will be turned upside down by this?" It has been, and will be again. In vain do men attempt to find a nobler instrument. This is the great battering-ram which shall yet shake the bastions of error. This is the true Excalibur, which, if any man knoweth how to wield it, shall cut through joints and marrow, and make him more than a conqueror. Do ye ask, then, where this man's faith came from? It came from Paul's preaching of the gospel. II. WHEREIN LAY THIS MAN'S FAITH? 1. Paul perceived "that he had faith to be healed." As he listened to Paul he thought, perhaps, "That seems to be the truth; it is the truth; I am sure it is true; and, if so, perhaps I may be healed; I—I—I think I may; I hope I may; I believe I may; from what Paul says of Christ's character, I think He must be willing to do it." Then Paul said to him, "Stand upright on thy feet," and he did so in a moment, for "he had faith to be healed." 2. You say, "It does not appear that Paul had any previous communication with the cripple." Now I know from my own experience that it is no uncommon thing for some one to arrest the preacher's attention. The group of countenances before him might to the first glance of a stranger look confused and inexplicable, as a Chinese grammar to those who know not the language. But a practised eye can learn to read the one as well as the other. The languor and indifference of some; the curious inquiring look of others; the cold, critical attention of more, form a picture which often reacts upon us, and kindles a desire to reach those who, for a brief hour, hang upon our lips. But there will sometimes be one who has faith dazzling in his very eyes, seeming to drink in every syllable, till the preacher becomes as absorbed in that man as the man had been in the preacher. And while he pursues the discourse, he perceives that at last this man has heard the very truth which meets his case. Preacher and hearer, unknown to all the rest of the audience, have secretly saluted each other, and met on the common ground of a vital faith. 3. Shall I describe this "faith to be saved"? You have "faith," but you have not fully exercised it. Now, you believe that Jesus Christ is God's Son? "Yes." That He has made a full atonement? "Yes." That He is worthy to be trusted? You depend on nothing else? "No." Then you only need that gracious command—"Stand upright on thy feet." III. THE SPIRITUAL TEACHING OF THE MIRACLE, AND OF THE BLESSING CONFERRED. Are there not many, who though they have "faith to be saved," are still limping? The reasons may be different in different cases. 1. Some have been so stunned by grief on account of sin, that while they do believe that Christ is able and willing to save, they cannot get a hold of the fact that they are saved. "Stand upright on thy feet," thou trembling sinner. If thou believest in Jesus, whatever thy fears may be, there is no cause for them. 2. Some are still lame, though they have faith, through ignorance. They are waiting for something, they hardly know what, to embellish their faith, or to fortify it with signs and wonders. All that you have to do with is this—"Do I believe in Jesus?" If you do you are saved. Stand upright on your feet. 3.

How many, too, are kept lame because of a fear of self-deception. Away with that affectation of modesty, saying, "I hope"; "I trust"; but "I feel such doubts, such fears, and such gloomy misgivings," that is a vain unseemly questioning of God. 4. Others, again, cannot stand upright because they are afraid that if they did begin they would go back again, and so bring dishonour to Christ. This would be a very proper fear if you had anything to do with keeping yourselves, but Christ gives you His promise to preserve you even to the end. 5. Then possibly there is one here who cannot stand upright because of his many sins. Sinner, stand upright on thy feet, for "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Faith to be healed*:—1. Faith is the one condition indispensable whenever one would receive blessings from God. 2. We must be willing to look for and recognise even feeble faith (Isa. xlii. 3). It requires alertness and charity, 3. Christians must instantly honour true faith when they find it, not stop to question, and to search, and to disturb it. 4. He who has greatest faith of his own will detect faith in others most quickly. 5. Our Lord is wont to see faith sometimes when we declare we cannot. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The efficacy of faith*:—Take a piece of wax and a piece of gold of the same magnitude; the wax is not valuable with the gold; but as this wax is placed at the end of some will, by virtue of which some great estate is confirmed and conveyed, so it may be worth many hundred pounds. So faith, considered purely in itself, doth challenge nothing more than any other graces: nay, in some sense it is inferior, it being an empty hand; but as this hand receives the precious alms of Christ's merits, and is an instrument or channel through which the blessed streams of life flow to us from Him, so it doth challenge a superiority over, and is more excellent than, all other graces whatsoever. (*J. Spencer.*) *Essential faith*:—Why is faith so essential? It is because of its receptive power. A purse will not make a man rich, and yet, without some place for his money, how could a man acquire wealth? Faith itself could not contribute a penny to salvation, but it is the purse which holds a precious Christ within itself, yea, it holds all the treasure of Divine love. If a man is thirsty, a rope and a bucket are not in themselves of much use to him, but yet if there is a well near at hand, the very thing that is wanted is a bucket and a rope by which the water can be lifted. Faith is the bucket by which a man may draw water out of the wells of salvation, and drink to his heart's content. You may sometimes have stopped a moment at a street fountain, and have desired to drink, but you found you could not, for the drinking cup was gone. The water flowed, but you could not get at it. It was tantalising to be at the fountain-head, and yet to be thirsty still in want of a little cup. Now faith is that little cup, which we hold up to the flowing stream of Christ's grace; we fill it, and then we drink and are refreshed. Hence the importance of faith. It would have seemed to our forefathers an idle thing to lay down a cable under the sea from England to America, and it would be idle now were it not that science has taught us how to speak by lightening; yet the cable itself is now of the utmost importance, for the best invention of telegraphy would be of no use for purposes of transatlantic communication if there were not the connecting wire between the two continents. Faith is just that; it is the connecting link between our souls and God, and the living message flashes along it to our souls. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 11-13. **The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men.**—*The theology of heathendom*:—In the words and acts of these heathen Lystrians, there comes out the native theology of human hearts everwhere and in all conditions. There are three great theological beliefs involved in their conduct: I. THAT THE DIVINITY IS ALWAYS MANIFEST IN THE MIRACULOUS. Though logically, perhaps, it could not be proved, man everywhere believes it. Whenever anything extraordinary in nature occurs, the human spectators, as well in civilised as savage states, involuntarily feel that God is at work. This doctrine, thus held by the heart of depraved humanity, accords with the teachings of the Bible. II. THAT THE DIVINITY ASSUMES HUMAN FORMS. "In the likeness of men." This was the general belief of heathendom. This may be regarded—1. As a dim memory in the soul of paradise, where God held fellowship with man. 2. As a prophetic sentiment of that grand incarnation "when the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us." III. THAT THE DIVINITY IS TO BE WORSHIPPED WHEN APPEARING IN THE HUMAN FORM. These heathens, believing that Barnabas was Jupiter, and Paul, Mercurius, began their worship. Now, the theology which comes out from the hearts of these

heathens, and which is written in the souls of all, serves several important purposes. 1. As an eternal hindrance to the reign of atheism. Atheism is a contradiction to the profoundest faith of the human heart. Whatever system of doctrine is contrary to the intuitions of humanity cannot stand. 2. As indicating the responsibility of heathens. "There is a light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." God has left no man without some measure of inner light. 3. As presumptive evidence in favour of the gospel. The gospel agrees with the primitive beliefs of human hearts. 4. As a guarantee for the spread of Christianity. The congruity of Christian theism with the theism of the soul is a pledge of its ultimate triumph. The gospel brings God to man in miraculous works and in a human form, and all this that he might worship. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The worship of success*:—How ready the world is to pay tribute to apparent success! If a physician works a startling cure; if a commander wins a great victory; if an author writes a popular book: if an inventor contrives a wonderful machine; if a financier rolls up a vast fortune—the world looks up to him and calls him great. There are, indeed, those who are ready to give him homage beyond what mere man ought ever to receive. It is rarely an intelligent tribute which is paid to such a man. The display of his power dazzles the eyes of those who observe him, and they are ready to worship him because he possesses what they lack and long for. (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) **And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius.** A well-known legend recounts how Jupiter and Mercury had once wandered through this region in quest of shelter and entertainment, which was everywhere refused until they came to the cottage of Philemon. When, then, the people saw the miracle, and heard the words of Paul and Barnabas, they thought that the gods of their old legend had again come down to them. In calling Barnabas Jupiter it is supposed that they were guided by the greater age, and probably the more dignified appearance of this apostle over his companion, whose bodily presence was weak, while the greater eloquence of Paul procured him the name of Mercury—the God of eloquence. (*W. Denton, M.A.*)

Vers. 15–18. **Sirs, why do ye these things?**—*Apostolic sincerity*:—In a position similar to that of Herod, they act in an opposite manner (chap xii. 22). And yet there was no small temptation in the matter. They might think this idolatrous prejudice must be excused: there is a spark of truth in it; the esteem for our persons may be serviceable in the spread of the gospel; the idea of the appearance of gods on earth may lead to the doctrine of Christ the Son of God. But that would be nothing else than to suppose that the end sanctifies the means. How often do we thus act? And always to the detriment of the truth and honour of God, which we thought to promote. The apostles took vigorous measures; they tore asunder the web of this delusion when it was yet forming itself, instead of helping to complete it; and God permits them to succeed. (*G. V. Lechler, D.D.*) *The danger of accepting false homage*:—Let no one say, this is nothing, for a creature, conscious of his infirmity and mortality, to refuse to be worshipped as a god. Alas! we have painful evidence that it is something. For, not to mention the deification of emperors, one of our own countrymen, Captain Cook, suffered himself to be taken for Oro, the god of war, in the Sandwich Islands, and to be worshipped with idolatrous ceremonies, thinking it afforded a fortunate opportunity of swaying the savage mind. Alas! the savages killed him whom they had adored. (*J. Bennett, D.D.*) *The flatterer repulsed*:—When the French ambassador visited the illustrious Bacon in his last illness, and found him in bed with the curtains drawn, he addressed this fulsome compliment to him: "You are like the angels, of whom we hear and read much, but have not the pleasure of seeing them." The reply was the sentiment of a philosopher and language not unworthy of a Christian: "If the complaisance of others compares me to an angel, my infirmities tell me I am a man." (*Biblical Museum.*) *Effects of turning to God*:—"I saw with mine own eyes, when in Africa two or three years ago," says the Rev. W. Allen, "the notorious skull temple, or Juju house, not long ago the scene of the most ghastly horrors; I saw the very men who had been the high priests of Juju, and ringleaders in all kinds of atrocities; I saw the accursed grove where human victims were constantly slain, and twins cast out to die; but the temple had fallen into ruins, the skulls were crumbling to dust, the idols lay grovelling on the ground, the grove was the highway to God's house, and the once cannibal priests and people were all assembled in church, and joining with earnest fervour in the worship of Almighty God. And since then, and within the last two years, the tottering temple has been deliberately

razed to the ground, the human skulls decently interred, and all the detestable tokens of their former idolatry, some of which had been procured at a tremendous cost, and had been regarded as of priceless value, were handed over to Bishop Crowther, forwarded by him to me, and are now in London. In lieu of their former skull temple the natives have erected at their own expense, at a cost of not less than £2,000, a church which seats two thousand people, which is now Bishop Crowther's cathedral, and at the consecration of which over three thousand natives were present." *The sublimity of Christianity and the worthlessness of human popularity:*—I. THE SUBLIMITY OF CHRISTIANITY. This is seen—1. In the spirit it generates. It is the characteristic of mean-natured men that they seek homage from their fellows. Many of the heathen emperors put themselves up as gods; and there are those now in every circle who are craving to be the idols of their sphere. But here you have two men to whom the highest honours were unanimously and enthusiastically offered—repudiating them with a holy indignation. What gave them this spirit? Christianity! The man who has this spirit is too great, not only to seek, but to receive the honours which worldly men covet. 2. In the God it reveals. (1) The absolutely living One—"the living God"; not like their gods, dead idols. His life is the life of the universe. (2) The universal Creator. (3) The patient Governor of men. Their conduct was offensive to Him, and opposed to His requirements; but He allowed them full scope for the play of their intellect, genius, and passions. (4) The constant Worker in the universe. The operations of nature were only His power in action. He works everywhere in nature, always doing good, and all His works are "witnesses" of Himself. This discourse of the apostles shows how they adapted their subject to their hearers. When they address Jews, they deal with the Hebrew Scriptures; when they address heathens, they expound the Bible of nature. 3. In the revolutions it effects. The work of Christianity is to turn souls from the false to the true, from the shadowy to the real, from the creature to the Creator. The gods of men are vanities, whether Jupiter or Mercurius, or worldliness, fashion, pleasure, or pride. What a grand thing, then, is Christianity! All the systems of men to it are as tapers to the sun. II. THE WORTHLESSNESS OF HUMAN POPULARITY. How long did this public desire to worship the apostles continue at Lystra? It had a very brief existence (ver. 19). What a rapid reaction! The enthusiastic adorers are transformed to malignant foes; the men who are honoured as gods one hour, are treated the next as wretched criminals deserving death. This is popularity. "Hosanna" to-day, "Crucify" to-morrow. What a worthless thing! How much beneath the man to value, still less to court. He who worships popularity worships—1. A corrupt god. So long as the world is depraved, the popular thing must be wrong. 2. A capricious god. It approves to-day what it denounces to-morrow. Little men go after popularity, and their little souls adore it; great men are followed by popularity, and their great natures care nothing for it. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The apostolic testimony against heathenism:*—Derbe and Lystra would be as different from Iconium and Antioch as villages in India would be from the larger towns of the presidencies. But we need not go so far to find illustration. In spite of railways, telegraphs, newspapers, and cheap postage, there are many quiet places in our own land where the pulses of our great national life are feebly felt, and where the people are living very much as their fathers did fifty years ago. The gospel message confronts totally fresh circumstances. At Lystra there was heathenism densely ignorant and loyal, there were superstitions much less easily dealt with and destroyed. Three things are here declared—I. A LIVING GOD OF REDEMPTION, AS AGAINST HERO-WORSHIP. I do not see much to choose between the ancient heathen deification of heaven, and its more modern form of the canonisation of saints. I do know, however, that the men so dealt with would recoil from such worship. There was only one that accepted homage and worship. Angels and apostles repudiated it. And yet there has always been a readiness to offer homage to the heroes in every age, and especially when the honour is useless to him to whom it is paid. The fathers persecute and slay the prophet, whose sepulchre their children build. Is it wrong, then, that men should honour human greatness? By no means. No true man can read of heroisms of calm, patient endurance, as well as of daring, without having his nobler pulses stirred. But hero-worship has its dangers. It may be paralysing instead of inspiring. Because, when you come to think about it, a man's heroism is a lonely and incommunicable splendour. And the greatest men have their imperfections. Then what glad tidings are these of the apostles of the Christ, leading the generous and appreciative instincts of men aright! Our hopes and prayers, our trusts and

appeals, are turned to Him from whom all heroes have their nobility, and in Him all we also may live and move and have a grander being. Our life is in the living God, and the gospel has not done its perfect work until the trust of the soul is drawn up away from all things lower and temporal, and fixed upon Him whom to know is life eternal. Then in our own kind and way we shall have heroes also. II. A LIVING PROVIDENCE AS AGAINST THE WORSHIP OF NATURAL FORCES. Who shall say that this is aimed but at the superstition of a barbaric age, and that there is no such heathenism now? Heathenism is ignorance. Anciently it was an ignorance by reason of the clearer truth having been not yet proclaimed. To-day it is an ignorance through rejection of the message of the Most High. The older heathenism is the nobler of these two. But better, happier than either, the glory of the gospel which points to the living God, who is the careful, loving Providence of all His children. To know this is to fear no evil; it is to live in the house of the Lord continually. III. A LIVING GOD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND TRUE COMMAND, AS AGAINST SELF-WILL. Who shall tell us what is right and good? Man's own reason and instinct, the agreement of society. Thus speaks heathenism, and its morality has been a disastrous failure. The nations who have walked, and still walk, in their own ways, are not the benefactors of the world. The gospel says national interests lie in the path of national duty. Selfishness is never right. Violence carries its own death sentence. A man is too wayward to guide his life in safety, too weak, too changeful to be left to fashion his own destiny. Thank God for the word He has spoken and the doings of His activity; good unto all, even to the unthankful and evil. The very heart of the glad tidings is the fact of a personal, living Lord. Not a force, not a general drift of things, but a Father, who is eager to redeem His children unto Himself. (*D. Jones Hamer.*) *The pastoral office*:—I. ITS TRUE SPIRIT. The minister of Christ is a man of "like passions" with his hearers, and his success depends on his establishing a sense of oneness with them. This is one of Paul's grand themes. It behoved Christ "to be made like unto His brethren." II. ITS PERILS. Notwithstanding the levelling attacks on it, an undoubted respect for it still exists. In this lies danger. Our people place us on a high pedestal on which we are expected never to stagger. Should we fail in any degree our influence is diminished. If it be enjoined that men should account ministers "stewards of the mysteries of God," it is no less plainly declared that "we are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves." III. ITS WORK. To call men to "turn from vanities to the living God." 1. No vanity can satisfy the human spirit. 2. God is ready to welcome all who turn to Him. (*M. B. Hogg, B.A.*) **The living God.**—*The living God*:—Is God real? This is the question of the ages. Four philosophers are discussing it together. The first says, "There is no God." This is the atheist. The second says, "I cannot tell, and therefore I do not think about it." This is the agnostic. The third says, "I cannot be sure that God is, nor what He is; but I think He is thus and so, and I act upon this supposition." The fourth says, "God is: I know Him." This is the apostle of religion. We have to ask, Which of these four has the facts on his side? In regard to the first, he stands alone, and is in the difficult position of having to prove a positive by negatives. He must sweep the universe from end to end, and show that it is empty, and prove that an effect may exist without a cause. The second and third stand together in theory, though they differ in practice. They both admit the idea of God, but they cannot discover the reality. The second says that he will have nothing to do with it. But the third declares it is so beautiful that he will worship it and make it the guide of his life. Now, in regard to their common view, one thing is clear. It is unreasonable. For if there were no God it would be impossible for us to find traces of Him. But if He is in the universe, there must be evidences of His being and power. We have, therefore, an antecedent probability in favour of the fourth view. I. THE WORLD IS FULL OF GOD. He is on every side of you. You touch not His substance, nor see His face, but He is here as really as light, gravity, electricity, though you cannot see them. You know them; they are manifested by their workings. So God is manifested in the world. There are three forms in which this manifestation comes to us. Power, wisdom, beauty. 1. Look at these mighty forces which permeate our globe. Do not all these tell us of a living fountain of force? The heathen saw in a lightning flash a thunderbolt hurled by Jupiter. We call it an effect of electricity. But what is electricity but an effluence of an Almighty Will? 2. But consider how wonderfully these forces, and the material substances which they are incessantly changing, are adapted to the production of certain definite and desirable results. No intelligent

person can fail to see in the universe that which in any human production we should call wisdom, though on a scale much more vast. How intricate and majestic the combination of forces which keeps the heavens balanced; how skilful and exact the construction of the eye! 3. And then, the beauty of it all! Whence is this derived? If the universe were but a vast machine, what power could it have to touch our spirits? Why should our hearts leap up when we behold a rainbow? It is but the refraction of certain rays of light in certain drops of water. An orchard in the spring-time; a field of golden grain in summer, &c., these are but chemical effects, the natural results of the changes of the seasons. Why should they be so lovely? Surely the grain, the fruit, the snow, could have been produced just as well without beauty. Who has informed them with this gracious splendour? God it is whose presence makes the world alive with beauty: He it is whose vision thrills us when we know it not. II. IN THE MORAL WORLD we touch Him yet more closely: He reveals Himself to us as a person. Here we stand in another world from that which is known to our senses. Absolutely different from the feelings of wonder or delight at the things which are seen is the sentiment of moral obligation, the distinction between right and wrong, the voluntary movement of the soul under the laws of good and evil. No external force, no law of nature, no command of man can create that which we call duty; and yet it is a reality which we cannot question. Nothing in the universe is more real than this, and in this I touch God. He it is that commands and binds me. He reveals to me this world within the world, and summons me to live aright. The universe is filled with His voice, saying, "Thou shalt," and "Thou shalt not." But, mark you, there is no constraint laid upon me. My will is free. I can, I must, choose for myself between good and evil. And here is the wonder of it; here is the manifest presence of the living God. For if the moral law were natural and impersonal, it would bind us resistlessly as gravity or electricity. III. WE FIND GOD IN THE WORLD AS AN HISTORICAL REALITY. Just as we know the reality of the Persian, or the Grecian, or the Roman empires by their records on stone or parchment, by the traces which they have left in the world, so we know that God is a reality by the records and results of His dealings with men. If you deny all traces of a supreme Providence, the history of the world becomes an inexplicable fable. How has the race been preserved in numberless perils? how have human industry and knowledge and character been unfolded and developed? how, amid the crash of falling empires and the dust of ruined civilisations, have learning and virtue been kept alive, and the happiness of humanity enlarged century by century; if it be not by the indwelling and inworking of an almighty and allwise Governor? God in history is a reality. And more than this, we have the actual record of His special dealings with men and nations. The Bible is a history of men and of God. Above all, He has shined forth clearly in the person and life of Jesus Christ. This Divine-human Master and Saviour of men is to us the unshaken evidence of the reality of God. When we see Him we see the Father, for He and the Father are one. IV. IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE, the life of faith and hope and love and prayer, we meet and touch the living God. No mere vision of distempered sleep was that experience of Jacob, by the ford of Jabbok. It was a reality. When the tide of penitence sweeps over the soul, and we are humbled in the dust crying for pardon, have we not felt the touch of His forgiving hand laid upon us in secret? Have we not cast ourselves in faith upon Him whom we see not, as one who leaps into the darkness, and found our Father's everlasting arms embracing, bearing us up? (*H. J. Van Dyke, D.D.*) **Which made heaven and earth.**—*God in Nature*:—as—I. THE ALMIGHTY CREATOR (ver. 15). II. THE HOLY GOVERNOR (ver. 16). III. THE GRACIOUS PRESERVER (ver. 17). (*K. Gerok.*) *God known by His works*:—It is said of the great Galileo—who had been accused of infidelity, because he asserted that the earth went round the sun, in apparent contradiction to the language of Scripture—that when questioned by the Roman Inquisition as to his belief in God, he pointed to a straw lying on the floor of his dungeon, and said to his accusers, that from the structure of even so insignificant an object as that, he could infer the existence of an intelligent Creator. *The book of revelation and of nature*:—There are two books whence I collect my divinity besides that written one of God, another of His servant, Nature—that universal and public manuscript that lies exposed to the eyes of all. Those who never saw Him in one have discovered Him in the other. Surely the heathens knew better how to read and join these mystical letters than we Christians, who cast a more careless eye on these common hieroglyphics, and disdain to suck divinity from the flowers of nature. (*Sir T. Browne.*) *Natural religion, its uses and defects*:—I. GOD MAY BE

KNOWN BY THE LIGHT OF NATURE (Rom. i. 19, 20). 1. His existence; for it is certain that nothing could make itself, but must have been made by some one. Who but God made the worlds? 2. What He is, viz., that He is a Spirit, perfect in wisdom and power. 3. His absolute dominion over all things (Gen. xiv. 19), and His right to dispose of all things as He pleases (Rom. ix. 20). 4. That though He is the absolute and natural Lord of all things that He has made, yet He is pleased to deal with His rational creatures in a way of moral government, and will reward them according to their works. Conscience may discover so much of the natural law and will of God as a righteous Governor if it be properly and wisely employed (Rom. ii. 14, 15). 5. That He is a universal Benefactor to mankind, even above and beyond their deserts, and notwithstanding all their provocations. The text declares this. II. WHAT ARE THE VARIOUS USES OF THIS KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, WHICH IS ATTAINABLE BY THE LIGHT OF NATURE? 1. To convince men of sin against the law of God, and to lay all mankind under a sense of guilt and self-condemnation. The Apostle Paul begins with this doctrine in the first chapter of Romans. 2. As it is designed to awaken men to the practice of their duty, so it has had some influence on mankind, at least by the fear of punishment, to keep, preserve, and restrain part of them from the extremest degrees of wickedness. Where there has been nothing of this knowledge, mankind have almost lost their superior rank among the creatures, and degenerated into a brutal nature. 3. It gives some encouragement to guilty creatures to repent of their sins, and to return to God by a general hope of acceptance, though they had no promise of pardoning grace. And this was the very principle upon which some of the better sort of the Gentiles set themselves to practise virtue, to worship God and endeavour to become like Him. 4. It serves to vindicate the conduct of God as a righteous Governor in His severe dealings with obstinate and wilful sinners both here and hereafter. This will leave them without excuse in the great day when God shall judge the secrets of all hearts. Their own consciences will accuse them and bear witness against them (Rom. i. 20, 21; ii. 15; iii. 5, 6). 5. It prepares the way for preaching and receiving the gospel of His grace. St. Paul (chap. xvii. 22, &c.), by discoursing first on natural religion comes at last to awaken men to repentance, and preaches Jesus with the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment (ver. 31). III. WHAT ARE THE DEFECTS OR IMPERFECTIONS OF IT? 1. It is but a small portion of the things of God which the bulk of mankind can generally be supposed to learn merely by their own reasonings. The bulk of mankind, even in the learned nations, did actually know but little of the true God, or of their duty towards Him, or the way of obtaining future happiness. 2. The light of nature, even in those things which it did teach the heathen world, is but dim and feeble, and leaves mankind under many doubts and uncertainties in matters of considerable importance (chap. xvii. 27). "The world by wisdom knew not God." 3. All the knowledge of God which they arrived at by the light of nature had actually but little influence to reform the hearts or the lives of mankind (ver. 16). See the iniquities numbered up in a large and detestable catalogue (Rom. i.). 4. This knowledge of God by the light of nature doth rather serve to show men their sin and misery than discover any effectual relief; and in this respect it comes infinitely short of what the revelation of the gospel of Christ hath done. Reflections: 1. Since the rational knowledge of God and natural religion has its proper uses, and especially to lay a foundation for our receiving the gospel of Christ let it not be despised. There may be some necessary occasions for our recourse to it in a day of temptation, when our faith of the gospel may be tried and shaken. 2. Since this knowledge of God, which is attainable by the light of nature, has so many defects, let us never venture to rest in it. 3. Since the nations which have only the light of nature are forced to feel out their way to God through such dusky glimmerings, let us bless the Lord that we are born in a land where the Book of Grace lies open before us, as well as the book of nature, to teach us the knowledge of God and His salvation. (*I. Watts, D.D.*) **Nevertheless He left not Himself without witness.**—*Witnesses for God:*—I. THE TEXT IN ITS IMMEDIATE BEARING—that God hath a "witness" of Himself. 1. In His visible creation. "Which made heaven and earth," &c. Look at nature, composed of an endless diversity of organised substances. Examine these, and you will see that each part is admirably adapted to its particular end. The design indicates a designer. The universe could no more make itself, than a watch could make itself. Intelligence is equally visible in the contrivance by which the minutest creature puts out its smallest *antennæ* to the warm sun, as in the very movements of the solar system. God "left not Himself without a witness" also of His power: that evidences itself in carrying on the

influence under which each thing severally performs its own functions. 2. In His providence. To wisdom and power He has superadded goodness. The great end in view is a benevolent end. The Creator is the Governor. He appointed certain seasons for the benefit of man; and this the apostles referred to. And this too amidst human unworthiness, superstitions, and idolatries. Justly had He swept away a rebellious people; but goodness withheld the sword, and it only pierced the cloud to let down fatness upon their heads. In the midst of wrath He "remembers mercy." Amidst the wonders of the visible creation are not many of you living "without God in the world"? Ask this yourselves; and ask, in all your unworthiness, in all your proneness to idolatry, if aught can restrain the Divine and righteous indignation but the Divine goodness. II. THE TEXT UNDER ITS MORE AMPLIFIED CONSIDERATION. God has other "witnesses." 1. The Bible—a standing exposition of His will, record of His laws, exhibition of His perfections; containing His judgments against sin; presenting His remonstrance against offending man. But the Bible—pregnant with the great scheme of human redemption; unfolding His new covenant; rich in promises to "all who call upon Him." The Bible is the grandest, the most magnificent monument of the love of God. 2. The Church. God has never been without a band of holy men upon the earth. They have been its salt to preserve it from a universal putrefaction. It is as old as Abel's day. It lived in the forms of patriarchal life. And from the time of Christ, amidst all the malice of the wicked, and the assaults and conspiracies of hell itself, its existence shall continue until the Church militant becomes the Church triumphant. God, in the foundations of His Church, in its appointed ordinances, in the burden of its devoted preachers, in the conversion, the blessed experience of its members, has a "witness" upon earth. 3. The Holy Spirit. He is a "witness" of God whom believers have within them, in an experimental knowledge of the truths and comforts from God, where all before was the utter darkness of ignorance and the barrenness of perished hopes. 4. The reason of man. This, in its healthy exercise, when it is unwarped by prejudice, makes certain discoveries of God in the moral relations which His character bears to us; and out of which great responsibilities grow. Reason, that in admitting His claims, draws an inference of the guilt of man in not fulfilling them; but whereby man, in His own eyes, becomes obnoxious to punishment, is a "witness" of God. 5. Conscience. If by its fears and its pains, painting a judgment to come, a man is restless and perturbed, there is in it surely a witnessing for God in the verity of His Word, "Be sure your sin shall find you out." 6. Believers are the witnesses of His faithfulness, of His power, of His love. (*T. J. Judkin.*) *God's witnesses:*—It has been perhaps too much the fashion to leave out this topic from our teaching. The Christian minister's one business is to preach Christ. But is he therefore bound to narrow his teaching to some one or two of Christ's doctrines? I do not find our Lord Himself, nor His apostles, refusing the topics of what is called the religion of nature. These things are the avenues of the gospel. I. GOD'S WITNESSES. 1. Paul says distinctly that nature is God's witness (Rom. i. 20). Men may argue themselves out of anything: and so they may argue themselves out of the belief that this fair world, with its bright lights and its fruitful seasons, its ordinances of day and night, of life given and life replenished, is a proof of a personal Creator. But we can heartily echo the wise saying, "Nature could no more have made me, than fashion could have made the coat I wear." 2. And Providence too is God's witness. We can say with perfect confidence to any young man whose course in life is still undecided for good or evil, there is no doubt that that power, whatever it be, which presides over the course of the world is a power which loves righteousness and hates iniquity. If you live morally and religiously you will live, on the whole, happily. Act as if there were no God, and you will live to curse the day when you first gave way to temptation. Somehow or other human life is so ordered that in the long run it is well with the righteous and ill with the wicked. 3. And who shall deny that God has a witness also in the human conscience? What is this strange thing within me which presumes to sit in judgment upon myself? this thing which certainly I did not place there, and which however I may disregard and disobey I cannot wholly dethrone, but something through which God still communicates with me still threatens, punishes? These elementary evidences are too much left out or slurred over in our modern teaching. And they lie under all that is more distinctively Christian. It is only a man with a conscience to whom Christ can call. It is only a man whom Nature has instructed and Providence has disciplined who can feel the mercy of a gospel or see any beauty in a Saviour that he should desire Him. My brethren, have we all learned these elementary lessons?

For these also, like the gospel, may be first disregarded and at last denied. And then, with them, goes all else; all living sense of responsibility, all godly fear, all quickening and sustaining hope. 4. Nor has God left Himself without a witness to you. You did not bring yourselves into being, nor can you preserve for one day, by any choice or any providence of your own, the very spark and seed of life. And as the gift, and the continuance, of being, so also the things which have befallen you; sickness and health, sorrow and joy, failure and success, danger and deliverance, neglect and love have been rather ordered for you than chosen by you. And not only so; but something within tells you how tenderly and how forbearingly you have been dealt with; that you have not been forgotten in trouble, nor let alone in sin, nor rewarded entirely according to your wickedness: the lot assigned you has been even more medicinal than penal, and yet more evidently considerate and personal than either. These things your better self confesses to you; and the experience of life has been to you God's witness. II. To WHAT? To His own being and character. To the fact that there is a God, and that He is this and not that; a God of truth, not of falsehood; a God of holiness, not of evil; a God of love, not of hatred. You remember how often these words close a paragraph of the Old Testament prophecies; "And ye shall know that I am the Lord." Even so it is with those evidences of which we have spoken. They are to make God known to man. And for what purpose? As a point of theory or of doctrine? As a display of Divine greatness to end with itself? Not so: but for this end which is worthy of God; "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee." "That by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature," &c. This knowledge can be communicated only through Jesus Christ; only by the Holy Spirit of God working in man's heart as the Spirit of the Eternal Father and of the Eternal Son. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *The beneficence of God, manifested in fruitful seasons, a witness for God*:—God never wrought a miracle to confute an atheist, because His ordinary works are sufficient. Yet many move among the works of God, without acknowledging their Divine Author. How useful to all such might be the serious study of our text. Consider—I. THE BENEFICENCE OF GOD. This is too copious a thing to speak of as it deserves. Its origin is in past eternity; it extends throughout eternity to come. Think of a Being, all-perfect, all-powerful, all-wise, employing His mighty energies in perpetually doing good. What an immense amount of happiness He must be continually diffusing! It is true, God has other attributes, some of sterner aspect. He is the moral Governor of mankind; bound to punish all iniquity. And visitations of the Divine wrath against sin are no proofs against the Divine beneficence. It is also true that God's own people, who now love Him, do also suffer; but our very sufferings are sent in beneficence. They come with a message of our Father's love; they are softened by His kind pity; they do us good while they stay; they leave a fragrant remembrance when they go. II. ITS MANIFESTATION IN "FRUITFUL SEASONS." 1. God "gave us rain from heaven." So Jeremiah: "Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain?" So, too, Zechariah: "Ask ye of the Lord rain . . . for the idols have spoken vanity." The rain coming in its season, is the gift of God. In giving rain God uses means; vapours, being exhaled from the sea and the surface of the earth, gather into clouds, and clouds being condensed by cold descend in showers; but who gave these laws to Nature? Is Nature God? Is she not rather a handmaid to Deity? Philosophers often stop at the second causes; and having shown how certain causes produce certain effects, seem reluctant to say who is the cause of these causes. Not so the apostle. "He gave us rain from heaven." Their danger was, to attribute to idols what was the gift of God. There is a danger now of making second causes idols. "Behold," says Elihu, "He maketh small the drops of water," &c. Think what the earth would become if God were to withhold the rain in its season. 2. God gives the rain, and the rain helps to make the fruitful seasons; but God is their true Author. He created the earth with its properties suited to vegetation; He made the plants; He has preserved their succession; He "giveth seed to the sower." The very strength and skill of the cultivator of the soil are from Him. And thus "He gives us fruitful seasons." Some, indeed, more so than others; but this is, that our dependence may be felt, our obligations owned, our prayers and our praises called forth. Take the seasons altogether through a considerable series of years; do we not find that fruitfulness is their general characteristic, unfruitfulness the exception?—while the Divine goodness is continually manifested both in giving and withholding, the very harshness in the latter case being meant as a salutary chastening. III. THE WITNESS FOR GOD WHICH HIS MANIFESTED BENEFICENCE BEARS IN ALL COUNTRIES. 1.

Although "in times past God suffered all nations to walk in their own ways, He left not Himself without witness." The "rain" was His "witness"; all its showers testified of His power, His providence, and His beneficence. "Fruitful seasons" were His "witnesses"; the spring with its opening buds, the summer with its chaplets of flowers, autumn with its golden sheaves, the very winter with its well-stored fruits, all testified of God in the ears of nations, too often unheeding the voice from heaven and bent on their own ungodliness. How clear is Scripture in showing the inexcusableness of heathenism and idolatry! 2. Now surely, if the beneficence of God in "giving rain and fruitful seasons" was a witness for God to heathens, it is so also to us. To how many careless, thoughtless and ungrateful people, even in Christian lands, are the "fruitful seasons" a witness for God, leaving them without excuse! (*J. Hambleton, M.A.*) *Man must have some religion*:—Lord Chesterfield, being in Brussels on one occasion, supped with Voltaire and a Madame C., his disciple. "I think," said the lady, "the British Parliament consists of some five or six hundred members, the best informed and sensible men in the kingdom, does it not?" "It is so supposed, madame," was the formal reply. "What then," continued she, "can be the reason they tolerate so great an absurdity as the Christian religion?" "I suppose, madame," said his lordship, "it is because they have not been able to substitute anything better in its place; when they can, I doubt not but that in their wisdom they will readily accept it." Chesterfield, in his sly, ironical reply, went on the assumptions—I. THAT SOME RELIGION MEN MUST HAVE. This he shared with the most sagacious men in all ages. It has been inferred—1. From the teachings of the past, as found in history, tradition, and fable. From the beginning to this hour, wherever the foot of man has trod, religion has been found. 2. From the necessity of religion to the well-being of society. All great legislators and statesmen have seen this and acted accordingly; for, as De Tocqueville remarks, "Despotism may govern without faith, but liberty cannot." 3. From the manifest requirements of the individual. Every man stands in manifest need of religion, and that, however it may be with the living, when men come to die, almost all wish this want were supplied, and regret that they had not before taken measures to supply it. 4. From a consideration of human nature and the elements which compose it. The religious instinct belongs to it as much as any other. This religiousness is no accident: it comes of man's weakness and dependence as a finite being; of his intelligence, which looks for and is not satisfied without a first cause, personal and infinitely wise; above all of his conscience. Till this is torn from man's breast, he must believe there is a ruler over him in the heavens. II. THAT IF ANY IS NOWADAYS ADOPTED IT MUST BE CHRISTIANITY. The choice is only between Paganism, Mohametanism, Deism, and Christianity. 1. The first may be dismissed at once. When the world, under apostolic teaching, renounced heathenism, it renounced it for ever. 2. The claims of Mohametanism may be disposed of with like despatch. All that is contained in the Koran, which commends itself religiously to our judgment, has been taken from the Bible: the rest is folly and impurity. Bereft of external advantages, there is nothing within to recommend it, either in its origin, history, or spirit. The adoption of such a system by persons brought up under Christian influence is not to be thought of. 3. But what about Deism or natural religion—a system which acknowledges God, but rejects revelation and Christianity. Well, we need a religion which will with authority and certainty instruct us about the nature and character of God, and our relations to Him. We need it to assure us of and guide us to immortality. We need it to help us to bear the burdens of life; to strengthen us in holy living, and to cheer us with bright and well-grounded hope, and make us more than conquerors over death. So much for the individual's wants. But for society we further need a religion that will take strong hold on the general mind, and by its own inherent energy, acting through appropriate means on the public conscience, will purify and elevate it, giving us honesty in business, moderation and forbearance in ordinary intercourse, and kindliness and affection in domestic life. Now, can Deism accomplish these purposes for the world? (1) It has never proved its sufficiency by the actual accomplishment of these ends for any community. It lacks power. It has no aggressive energy. It was never the permanent religion of a nation. (2) An actual inspection of the system itself shows that it must needs be so. It is, indeed, not so much a system of unbelief as of unbeliefs. It is destructive, not constructive. Deism comes not with authority: it speaks as the Scribes. It is not the voice of God: it even spurns the idea that God has ever spoken to the race: it is confessedly the voice of man. In the matter of religion man needs the direct

interposition of Divine authority. A religion, without such authority, is like a bank note, well engraved it may be, but lacking the proper signature. Further, Deism has no outward standard to which all may resort for information and direction. In all matters touching government (religion is governmental) we need a written constitution. We need it for protection and convenience. In civil and religious matters we want to know our duties and the rights of the government; and we further need to have them recorded where all may find access to them. Without such record we should be at the mercy of our own fickleness, of the crafty assaults of the plausible, of the weakness of the human memory, and of the strength of human passion. But Deism has no sacred book; no standard to walk by. Our conclusion then is, that the high purposes of religion for the world cannot be answered by Deism. 4. Thus has God shut us up to Christianity. God hath not left Himself without witness. By the very nature which He hath given us, the circumstances in which He has placed us, and the facilities which He has supplied to our hand (to say nothing of miracles, and prophecies, and various other historical, moral, and critical proofs), He has plainly and unmistakably shown where truth, interest, and duty lie. As by a voice from heaven He has said of Jesus: "This is My beloved Son; hear ye Him." "This is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." (*W. Sparrow, D.D.*) *Revelation to be expected:*—I. REVELATION NECESSARY FOR MAN. 1. To give us more light respecting God. The light of nature shows us that there is one God, who is intelligent, powerful, righteous, good. But what do you find flooding almost the entire world? Polytheism—the belief that there is not simply one God, but many. And not only so; there is not a single instance of a nation rising out of its belief in many gods, and by its own culture attaining to the knowledge of one God. 2. To give us more light in reference to our duty. Some heathen moralists taught much and admirably respecting human duty, but they also taught what was the very reverse. But we have to look not at what one or two have reached through their unaided powers, but at what have been the prevalent views and moral practices of the world. Read the close of the first chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans. A man will in character take after the being he worships. The heathen gods were immoral. What could you expect, therefore, but to find the people as vile at least as the imaginary beings they worshipped. Nay, immorality of the foulest kind was a part of the worship of the gods. Both Cicero and Cato throw their apologetic mantle over the grossest vices. 3. To give us more light on human destiny. Taking the light of nature alone, there is good ground for the conclusion that the soul is immortal, and that sin will not go unpunished. But philosophers, who reasoned well of a future state, lost faith in their own conclusions. And then how dim and shadowy the notions of the future world! The druids believed in something like the transmigration of souls. The Scandinavians had their Flame world and their Mist world, and their Valhalla for the brave, and their Hellheim for the coward. The Greeks and Romans had their Tartarus and their Elysium. 4. To give us new power. We not only need more power than nature gives, but more power than nature has. The heathen moralists knew a great deal more than they practised. Whatever their amount of light, they never acted up to it, and had no power to act up to it. What was also needed was a new passion. Suppose, as some have averred, that you can extract a perfect code of morals from heathen teachers, there is one thing you cannot do, and that is make men love it. Kindle in the heart such a flame of love as burned in the heart of Paul, and then you will have done something to establish your position. 5. To give man comfort. Human sorrow is a great subject; and what is the root of our sorrow? It is sin. The conscience is guilty, and hence remorse, anxiety, and fear. Nature spake of God's goodness, but when man cried for mercy there was no answer. Nature spake of righteousness, and told him that sin would be punished; but when he asked if there could be no forgiveness, nature was dumb. That man might have peace for his conscience, joy in his grief, and hope in his death, a revelation from God was needed assuring him that there is forgiveness with Him. II. REVELATION LIKELY FOR GOD. The grounds of this hope are—1. The constitution of the human race. Humanity has descended from a single pair, and is continuing to multiply. The population of the globe is over 1,200,000,000, add to this the millions that have died, and the question raised is: Is it likely that God would have made man to multiply, if He had had no intention of counteracting in some way the ruin of his sin? I hardly think it, and therefore I see here something which begets the hope of a revelation. 2. The struggle which we see everywhere between good and evil.

Sin certainly has the mastery, but it is not a mastery which is unchallenged. Now, if man had been abandoned of God, I can hardly think we should have had this struggle. Nay, more, look at the world, and say if it seems made for a race of beings who are as certainly given over to extinction. Is this not a world in which there is much goodness? "Thou hast sinned, but hope still; these are the two sayings that predominate in the vast murmur of nature." 3. The fatherly relationship of God to man. This idea is certainly one which obtains full recognition only in Christ, but wherever God has been acknowledged, He has been understood and worshipped as a Father. Now, we know what an earthly father's feelings are. Can we suppose that they are less strong and less tender in God? Now look at man's necessities on the one hand, and God's fatherly compassion on the other, and then say if it is likely that God would make no revelation of Himself, and give no relief. (*A. Oliver, B.A.*) **Rain from heaven.**—*Rain a Divine blessing*:—Rain indicates sovereign power and goodness—"it tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men." In seasons of eastern drought, when the earth is parched, when "the field is wasted, and the land mourneth, and the new wine is dried up," when the dread of hunger appals every one, and even the dumb brutes are looking up to heaven in stupid despair; then it is felt that man cannot help himself, that he must only wait and long and pray till the clouds begin to gather, for he is conscious of being wholly in the power of a higher Will. Day after day passes, and the sun looks down on burnt pasture, dry channels, and a cracked and dusty soil. At evening there are hopeful symptoms, but they are vanished before the morning. The heavens are anxiously scanned if the smallest speck may be discovered, and the imagination often creates it. It is hoped that the wind may veer, and every breath excites, and then belies such an expectation. Spirit and energy are gone—"dimness of anguish" is seen on every countenance. Men dream of floods, and waken to more disappointment. They can do nothing, and devise nothing, to better themselves. No wonder, then, that the giving of rain was associated with Divinity. It is pointedly asked in a Greek drama, when the existence of Jupiter is denied—"And who then giveth rain?" as if this were proof beyond all doubt. In Southern Africa, where the idea of God is nearly effaced, there is still a belief in a Supreme Power, whose awful prerogative is, not to create men or govern them, but simply to give rain—a gift which is felt to be so necessary, and withal is conferred or withheld in such precarious and variable times and quantities; the dreaded Deity is He who brings them what they so much want, and on the gift of which they can never count—He is the rain-maker. Nay, in that dry upland region of Lycaonia water was often scarce; the heaven as iron, and the earth as brass, and water fetched up from deep wells was so precious as to be sold for money. It was with peculiar point, therefore, that the apostle turned his audience to God—who is doing good—giving rain from heaven. (*J. Eadie, D.D.*) **Fruitful seasons.**—*Fruitful seasons* are—I. THE GIFT OF GOD. "He gave," "He fills." Among the numerous scenes of beauty with which the world is furnished, there are few more calculated to delight the eye and heart than a rich autumnal prospect. It is delightful to allow the mind to rest on a wide extent of country whose plains are richly covered with waving fields of corn, and the mountains clothed with verdant pasturage, or overshadowed by the stately forest. It is delightful to reflect what a prodigious amount of enjoyment is prepared for sensitive and rational beings by the fruits of the earth arriving and arrived at maturity. It is natural to put the question, Whence originates so rich a scene? 1. Man is a proud, vain creature, and he is very apt to take the credit of almost everything to himself. Even in what is the production of human ingenuity and industry, man has but little to boast; it is merely the result of powers, which God bestowed on him, on materials bestowed by God. But there is seen less to nourish pride when contemplating the riches of harvest. Man has been at work, but human ingenuity and labour have done but little in producing the results. Man can plant and water, but man cannot give the increase. He cannot cause it to rain on the earth, to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth. 2. But it may be said that it is to be traced to the eternal laws of nature, to the independent qualities and powers of matter. It is not very easy to attach meaning to these phrases; we question their existence altogether if they mean anything more or less than a name for the ordinary way in which the great Supreme Agent has been accustomed to manifest His wisdom and power in producing certain effects. And if we were to admit the existence of "the eternal laws of nature," or "the independent qualities and powers of matter," they could not satisfactorily account for the result; for surely they must operate always precisely in the same way. If the productions of

the earth are to be attributed to them, we should naturally expect that all seasons would be alike. Nothing is more self-evident than that what is in itself inert can act only as it is acted upon. And it is a principle of our nature which we cannot resist, that whenever we perceive an end steadily prosecuted, and means employed in order to gain that end, there has been the operation of a superintending being—there has been intelligence at work. The language of the Bible is the language of sound philosophy. "Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it," &c. II. A WITNESS OF GOD TO MEN. When God gives us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, He gives us a testimony with regard to—1. His existence. We reason from the effects to a cause. There is no way of accounting for the regular motion of the earth, but by admitting that there does exist such a Being, infinitely wise, powerful, and good, as the Being whom we describe by the name of God. 2. His power. All the created powers in the universe cannot produce the humblest weed that grows in our fields. If we allow our minds to reflect on what is necessary, in order to the production of a fertile harvest, we shall be struck with amazement at the display of the power of God. Think of what is exhaled in the shape of vapour from seas, and rivers, and lakes, in every part of the earth—taken into the upper regions of the atmosphere, and there condensed, and sent down on the earth in the shape of dew and of rain—insinuating itself into the soil, making the seeds that are imbedded there to expand and grow upward. Thus God brings forth the various fruits of the earth to maturity, and furnishes abundance of food for man and beast. 3. His wisdom. How wonderfully does God adapt different soils to different grains—different grains to the constitutions of different animals! How wonderfully does He regulate the various degrees of heat, and cold, and moisture, so as to gain the great end of producing abundance of salutary food for His prodigious family of sensible and irrational beings. "How wonderful are Thy works, O Lord! in wisdom hast Thou made them all." 4. His goodness. Think what a quantity of suffering is prevented by an abundant harvest. What mind can form any conception of the horrors produced by a single season failing? And there is also the communication of an incalculable measure of happiness. No mind can form any conception of the degree of enjoyment that is produced through the world in consequence of the bounties of harvest. 5. His sovereignty. Every season is not a fruitful season; and the same seasons are not equally fruitful in every district of the same country, or in different countries. The same God, who, when He causes it to rain on one land, withholds rain from another—punishes one part of the world with scarcity, whilst He blesses another with plenty. It is the voice of God proclaiming, "Be still, and know that I am God: have not I a right to do what I will with My own? None shall stay My arm; and none dare say to Me, What doest Thou?" 6. His patience. The pensioners upon the Divine bounty are rebels against it. Surely, though God be not slack concerning His threatenings, as some men count slackness, He is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish. Oh, how hardened are men's hearts not to feel the force of this appeal. (*J. Brown, D.D.*) *The witness of harvest*:—We are met to acknowledge the goodness of God in giving us the fruits of the earth in their season. It is a supreme function of the Church to idealise common things, to give a religious interpretation to all the great interests and occasions of our earthly life, and by means of prayer and praise, silent meditation and spoken discourse, to make men and women more truly and deeply conscious of the Eternal Presence and Care. The harvest is really an occasion which has a direct relation to all our lives. For us the sun shines and the rain falls, and the order of creation keeps its unbroken course, and the miracle of growth and fruition is yearly wrought. Agriculture is not only the oldest but the most fundamental of all human industries. Our whole social order rests upon it, and all our interests and activities are affected by it. We live by bread, though not by bread alone. Our daily bread is the material basis of all our higher functions and energies—trade and politics, science and art, law and poetry, religion and philanthropy. 1. A harvest thanksgiving service is helpful to us by making us include what are called the works of nature in our devout meditations. There are not a few religious people upon whom the manifestations of power and wisdom, of beauty and goodness in the natural order of the world are in a great part thrown away. In his diary of his travels on the Continent the saintly Fletcher laments the delight he took in the beauty of the Rhine as an evidence of his worldliness, and the type of religionists which he represented is far from being extinct. We need not judge them; only we have a right to turn to the book of Job, to the Psalms, and the parables of Jesus to prove that the highest order of the

religious mind is that which is most alive to the spiritual significance of material things. By the whole-souled religious man nothing natural is treated with indifference. Every instance of beneficent order and ministry deepens his sense of the Divine wisdom and goodness. The moving life of nature is a parable of the higher life. 2. A harvest thanksgiving service is a distinct and beautiful confession of God as the living God, in whom we and all creatures and things live and move and have our being. Anything that helps to quicken and deepen this confidence is of real use when there is a spirit abroad in the world which would wither and destroy it. Physical science is in the ascendant, and the language of the ancient Scriptures which represents God as the living God, the living Spirit of thought, order, power, beauty, and goodness that pervadeth all things, does not appeal to us as it once did. The danger to faith is not in results and theories, but in the excessive and exclusive concentration of men's minds on the material side of things; in such an absorbing attention to one class of facts that other facts of transcendent importance are slighted or ignored. Indeed, all the great results of our latter-day knowledge instead of making the world less divine make it more divine, and if their significance was by us truly realised, then, instead of being set forth in abstract propositions and mathematical signs they would be expressed in poetry and set to music. The gains of science, instead of being the losses of faith, only enlarge, make more wonderful and glorious, the temple in which God is seen and worshipped. But there is another form of modern thought which some seem to think strikes at the root of the faith which gives meaning to this service, and is simply fatal to the spirit of thanksgiving to God. It is a human Providence, we are told, which makes us what we are and gives us what we have, and if we are to give praise and glory to any one for the things which make the world beautiful, and human life fair and good and worth living, let it be to humanity, to the men in past and present times through whose thought and labour and sacrifice this hard, unfriendly earth has been subdued, and discoveries and inventions have been made, and all the things which are covered and expressed by the word "civilisation" have been won. It is little or nothing that any deity outside humanity does or has done for us; let us be grateful to mankind. Yes, grateful to mankind we ought to be; but must our gratitude end there, and the sacrifice of our thanksgiving be only for human altars? Nay! After we have done all that is meet and right in the way of expressing our gratitude to the human race and to individual members of the race, we still have left in our hearts an immense fund of gratitude which can only spend itself on one object, one Being, one God, the Father of all, who is above all, through all, and in all. The earth, God has given to the children of men, and like all God's best gifts we have to work for it in order to win it. And whence the power to work? In the last and final analysis we must ascribe all to God, confess the human providence to be after all the Divine Providence, and bow down before the Deity who not only transcends but is immanent in His creation and in His children, the ultimate and everlasting Source of all. 3. A harvest thanksgiving service is a recognition of the Divine presence in the regular courses and ordinary processes of nature. Among men from age to age the extraordinary phenomena have been regarded as most Divine. "If the sun were to rise but once," says Bishop Hall, "we should all be ready to turn Persians and worship it, but because we see it rising and setting every day no man regardeth it." Like the Jews of old, unless we see signs and wonders we will not believe. But to the devout and deep-seeing man the whole earth is full of the glory of the Lord, its sights and sounds a constant and continuous revelation of the living God; and for him to be impressed with the thought, "Surely God is here," things do not need to be invested with scarlet robes. The daily dawn, the depths of the midnight sky, the spring flowers breaking from the earth, the loveliness of June, the golden glories of the autumn, the outspread snow, are to the wise man none the less wonderful because they are familiar. 4. A harvest thanksgiving may also remind us that in our sowing and reaping, in our buying and selling, and in all our material interests and concerns we have to do with God. What atheism worse than that which excludes God from the world of daily life, which gives us practically a world without God except so far as the Church is concerned, which conceives the Lord of heaven and earth to be only interested in ecclesiastical assemblies and conferences, in missionary and evangelistic schemes, and societies for converting Jews, and such like things! We need to be reminded again and again that there is but one God, one law, one life, that the kingdom of God ruleth over all, over our corn-fields as well as over our mission fields, over our shops as

well as over our churches, over our domestic and business relations as well as over our holy orders and our ecclesiastical connections, over farmers, tradesmen, bankers, architects, lawyers, clerks, artisans as well as over bishops and curates, Scripture-readers and travelling evangelists. Until we believe this and act upon the belief, the life that now is will never be what God meant it to be, and what it ought to be—a Divine discipline and service, holy throughout unto the Lord. 5. A harvest thanksgiving service reminds us in a very vivid and impressive way of the ever-old and ever-new fact of the Divine goodness. There are three aspects of the Divine goodness which the harvest more especially puts before us: first of all its free character. Its bounty is God's free gift. Though we must work with God to get the Divine blessing out of many things, for we are not God's paupers but His children, yet from the help we get from the daisy at our feet to the unspeakable help that comes from the Christ dying on the Cross, it is all in a most real and profound sense the free gift of God. Then, secondly, harvest speaks to us of the universal character of the Divine goodness. The ungodly man who obeys faithfully the natural conditions which are but another name for the Divine order and will, succeeds as well as the godly man, even better, if the godly man is ignorant, indolent, and careless. God is good, and His tender mercies are over all His works. Then, again, harvest speaks to us of the constancy of the Divine goodness. While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease. O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness! Thanksgiving is born of a reasonable spiritual confidence in the Divine goodness. The mystery and sublimity of the universe may excite wonder and awe, but only the sense of the essential goodness of the universe can awaken and nourish gratitude. Gratitude in its highest sense and noblest quality is only possible to the man whose religious faith enables him to trust the world and life as meaning good to him and to all men. But how is gratitude to be shown? Only let gratitude be felt, and it cannot help showing itself. Words of thanksgiving are good when they are sincere, and expression develops and strengthens the inward feeling. But words are not the only form of self-expression, nor the highest. And how displeasing to God must be some kinds of thanksgiving—empty words, or the thanksgiving of successful wickedness, of men whose good things have been got by cheating and lying, by unjust and unbrotherly competition, and by grinding the faces of the poor! The praise God likes best is the praise of the life. Not in words only, but in acts of sympathy and lovingkindness, in love giving itself in service to mankind, in lives consecrated to truth and goodness, to duty and charity, let our souls ascend now and always in thankfulness to God. (*John Hunter.*) *The witness of the harvest:*—Nothing is more worthy of note in St. Paul's methods than the care which he always took to adapt himself to the varying conditions and characters of those amongst whom he laboured. This statement concerning his mode of work is amply borne out by the narrative of the Acts of the Apostles. His theme was always the same, but his method of presenting that theme was constantly changing with his change of place and circumstances. He had but one gospel to preach—the gospel of Christ crucified; but he preached that gospel with an ever-varying accent and with great manifoldness of expression. At Athens he found his text not in Jewish lore, but in the altars of their gods, and in that literature of which every Greek was lawfully proud. And here at Lystra amongst the Barbarians of Lycaonia he speaks from that revelation of God whose "line is gone out through all the earth, and its words to the end of the world." Let us not suppose, however, that the witness of God's works, to which the apostle appeals in my text, is of importance only to such people as those of Lystra. There is, perhaps, a danger of our thinking that the teachings of Natural Religion have been superseded by those of Revelation. This is a great mistake. Our Lord came not to destroy, but to fulfil that exhibition of religious truth which is contained in the works of nature. The Bible does, it is true, exhibit the imperfection of that revelation; but it nowhere discredits it. On the contrary, it constantly pays its tribute to it, and urges us to study it, as containing the alphabet of its own more glorious disclosures. On the part of the first Christian teachers there was no wholesale churlish denunciation of other religions. They rejoiced to recognise the truths which they contained, though those truths were encrusted, and often hidden out of sight, by the accumulated errors of ages. Nor does the Bible regard natural theology as merely a stepping-stone by which men are to pass into the holy of holies of its revelations, and which afterwards is to be disregarded as of no further use; but it speaks of it as being an essential part of the whole fabric of truth, which

must ever remain an integral and necessary portion of it. Natural theology is the base of the ladder which rests upon the earth, while the top of it is in heaven; and the ladder cannot stand without its base. Nowhere is this more distinctly set forth than in the teaching of our blessed Master Himself. He directs our attention to the lilies, the mustard-seed, the tares, and the harvest, as being Divinely ordained preachers of the truths of religion. Indeed, never was there any teacher who lived in such intimate communion with nature as Jesus of Nazareth. No writer of the New Testament was more perfectly versed in this department of the school of Christ than the apostle Paul. His sermons and his treatises teem with lessons drawn from the storehouse of nature. I. OBSERVE THAT THE OPERATIONS OF NATURE THROUGH WHICH GOD PROVIDES FOR THE CREATURES BEAR WITNESS TO HIS EXISTENCE, AND TO HIS CONTINUAL PRESENCE AND ACTIVITY IN THE MIDST OF HIS WORKS. 1. I know that it is fashionable to sneer at the design argument for the Being of God. But sneering is a very common device resorted to by men who have no argument with which to sustain their cause. In spite of all the sneers of our critics we are prepared to maintain that the argument is irrefragable, that the universe exhibits thought, and that thought implies a thinker; that the universe exhibits uniformity of thought, and that this uniformity of thought implies that there is but one Thinker whose wisdom has laid the plans of this marvellous world in which we dwell. No, the man is without excuse who can look at this masterpiece of thought and say, "There is no Thinker behind it all." 2. For a moment let us single out from the midst of the manifold operations of nature those to which the apostle particularly refers in my text, that is to say, those connected with the supply of food for the creatures. When we consider that the seasons of our climate, with all their manifold effects, are produced by an inclination of the axis of the earth at an angle of $23\frac{1}{2}°$ to the plane of its orbit, and when we consider what would follow if there were no such inclination, or were that inclination varied through ever so small an angle, we cannot but feel that there must have been a Designer who gave the earth the exact tilt necessary to the production of its harvests. When we consider how that, in the production of every blade of corn, and of every apple upon the tree, there is a nice mathematical balancing of the forces of gravitation and life, in order that the vital force may be able to overcome the force of gravitation, and shoot forth the corn-stalk or the tree to the proper height necessary for its fruit-bearing; we cannot but believe that there must have been a great Mathematician who made these delicate adjustments. When we look at the marvellous machinery by which all this vegetable life takes up and appropriates to itself the fructifying properties of the soil beneath it, of the air around it, of the clouds above it, and of the sun which is millions of miles away from it, we are bound to confess that this machinery must have had a Constructor to make it. The apostle mentions rain, and well he may, for the laboratory in which God prepares His rain is well worthy of our inspection. Consider the mighty force which the sun exerts as he lifts the water up into the clouds. See how by the air-currents God carries the fruit-bearing showers from one region to another. Look into the processes of rarefaction and condensation by which He prepares the golden drops to distil fatness upon the earth, and then answer the question which God put to Job, "Hath the rain a father? Or who hath begotten the drops of dew? Out of whose womb came the ice? And the hoary frost of heaven who hath gendered it?" (Job xxxviii. 28, 29). 3. "Ah, but," says the modern objector, "this is all done in obedience to law!" Exactly, that is our point. It *is* all done in obedience to law. And law means order. And order means thought. And thought means a thinker. The fact that the whole world is under the sway of law is a proof that it has been created by a Designer, and is not the evolution of chance. 4. "Well, but," says the objector again, "it may be that God must have been there to give the laws, but, when He had given them, He left the universe to their sway, and now it is vain to seek for God in a world which He has given over to the control of law." Again we ask, "What is the use of laws without an executive to administer them?" He Himself administers the laws which He has given. God not only *was* in nature, He *is* in it. 5. In our stupidity, when the stupendous is often repeated before our eyes, we forget its wondrousness, and the very regularity and profusion with which God's mercies are bestowed seem to deaden our sense of obligation. Custom is a juggler who befools us all, and makes us think that a thing is not wonderful when we see it often. I know that to some the discoveries of science seem to militate against worship. But this is only because these persons imagine that when things are discovered and named they are brought out of the region of mystery. Ignorance is not the mother of religion. II. OUR TEXT

BIDS US SEE IN THE FRUITFUL SEASONS A PROOF OF GOD'S GOODNESS TOWARDS MEN. In spite of all the sorrow and discord of human life, the apostle declares that, even apart from revelation, there is in the bounteous provision of God's providence abundant proof of His goodness towards men. Notwithstanding men's wickedness, He makes age after age provision for their wants (Matt. v. 45). Nothing shows the hardness of men's hearts much more than the way in which they partake of the bounties of God's providence, without any grateful recognition of the Giver. Paul declares in my text that an unenlightened heathen ought to hear the harvest witness to God's goodness. How much more then ought we, who have the light of revelation, to acknowledge His hand in the bounty of His gifts! How careful should we be not to squander these blessings in the service of our lusts! These gifts of God proclaim how lovingly He provides for our happiness. He might have made our food unpleasant and insipid. Instead of that He has associated much pleasure even with the lowest actions of our life, to be a symbol to us of His good will respecting us in all things. Ungodly man, let God's mercies awaken thee to a sense of thy guilt, and let gratitude to Him, because He has not visited thee with the ruin due to thy sins, constrain thee to offer the only harvest thanksgiving which God will accept. III. LASTLY, THE HARVEST WITNESS, THOUGH VALUABLE, IS AFTER ALL VERY IMPERFECT. (*G. A. Bennetts, B.A.*) *The voices of the harvest*:—I. HARVEST-TIME AS A WITNESS FOR GOD. The apostles reminded the people that they had no excuse for their ingratitude or idolatry; the order and fruitfulness of the seasons testified to the fact of—I. The Divine existence. Every court in the temple of nature is crowded with witnesses to the Divine existence. 2. The Divine attributes —(1) Natural, *e.g.*, self-existence, intelligence, almightiness. (2) Moral; *e.g.*, rectitude, benevolence, faithfulness. The fertility, regularity, variety, beauty, freeness of the seasons, these all illustrate the excellency of the character and perfection of the working of the God of the harvest, who opens His hand and supplies the wants of every living thing. II. HARVEST-TIME AS AN APOCALYPSE TO MAN. The processes and phenomena speak to the reason and spiritual intuitions of man. The brutes gaze unconsciously upon creation, but man can reflect, deduce, conclude. When the brawny reapers thrust in the sickle and gather the harvest home, we have revealed—1. The complex character of nature's laws. From the initial step in preparing the ground for the reception of the seed to the time when the garners are stored with the finest of the wheat, what majesty, manifoldness, mercy, and mystery are displayed! Life out of death; real good out of apparent evil—blight, mildew, &c. Kept under restraint, under constant control. 2. The connection between Divine sovereignty and human free agency. (1) Man's sphere in the economy of nature is clear and free, with liberty to plough, sow, reap; we may use our choice as to when, how, what, where. (2) God's sphere is absolute. He sends rain, gives fruitful seasons. We have no command or control over winds, or rain, or sun. 3. The correspondence between cause and effect. In quality and quantity. "Whatsoever a man soweth that also shall he reap." The more thorough and severe the cultivation of the soil, the richer the harvest. In moral discipline, the severer the trial, the nobler and richer the character. 4. The dependence of man upon God—"In Him we live and move," &c. "He gives rain," &c. "He fills our hearts with food and gladness." The thought with which we plan and purpose; the strength with which we labour and gather, all come from Him. 5. The duty of man to bless God. (*F. W. Brown.*) *Seasons of spiritual fruitfulness*:—I. THE REFRESHING COMMUNICATION—"Rain from heaven." 1. Its celestial origin. Neither rain nor that which it illustrates is a creature of man or nature. Spiritual influences come direct from God. 2. Its Divine manifestations. (1) Gentle. (2) Tempestuous. 3. Its connection with other gifts. The work of the Spirit must never be dissociated from that of Christ. In the spiritual world "the Sun of Righteousness" is as needful as the outpouring of the Spirit. II. THE FERTILITY EFFECTED. 1. The seasons—private and public. There are spring, summer, autumn, winter for the soul; seed-time and harvest. Each is as needful in grace as in nature. 2. Their fruitfulness. A fruitful season is beautiful and useful. The Christian is to grow in grace and utility. III. THE RESULT EXPERIENCED—"filling our hearts." 1. The sphere—"the heart." Religion is experimental. When refreshing seasons come they are felt. 2. The action—"filling," not leaving the heart half empty. 3. The contents—"food and gladness." (1) Sustenance. (2) Delight. IV. THE WITNESS OF ALL THIS TO GOD —to His wisdom, power, love, &c. (*R. C. Dillon, D.D.*) **Food and gladness.**—*Food and gladness*:—What God hath joined together let no man put asunder.

I. HE GIVES FOOD. By the clumsy management and the disastrous sin of man, there are in some places and times many who want food. But this is not God's fault. He giveth food though we may waste or withhold it. He giveth milk to the babe from the breast of the mother, and bread to man from the bosom of the earth. Bad laws, bad government, artificial society, evil habits, ignorance, waste, extravagance, drink, and laziness starve the weaker children in His household, but the living God giveth food. II. HE GIVES GLADNESS. Some think of this as a thing which God permits rather than gives; and some are driven from religion by a fancy that it is all gloomy and austere. This is not so. Learn, then, to thank God for what some of you have never associated with His gifts—your joys; passing gladness as well as spiritual ecstasy: for the sense of sight, hearing, taste, and touch. Learn to feel God as near you when the sun shines and the marriage bells ring as when the cloud depresses or the knell tolls. But remember that lasting gladness is dependent on union with Christ, the imperishable Bread of Life. (*Henry Jones, M.A.*) *Food and gladness*:—I propose to call your attention, first, to what God does for us through nature, and, secondly, to the limit of His beneficence, a limit which in our case, as in the case of the Lycaonians, points toward the kingdom of grace. First, then, God "fills our hearts with food and gladness," or, rather, more literally, He "fills our hearts with nourishment and cheerfulness." If through the agencies of nature we have food and gladness, we owe these to the kindness of God. But, further, in the case of man, who is far the highest of the animals, God supplies other wants besides the hunger and thirst of the body. He feeds our minds and hearts by furnishing us with various interests and resources. While He gives us work to do, He gives us also times for rest, and in our times of rest He surrounds us with objects of interest. Paul gives this truth a still deeper meaning when he says that God fills our hearts with gladness, or with cheerfulness—*i.e.*, He gives us the material not only for living, but for living cheerfully. Those fresh children of nature at Lystra were happy in their lives—with their oxen, and their garlands, and their belief that the gods might come down to them any day in the likeness of men. Far from blaming their happiness, the apostle told them that God was pleased with it, and had arranged the world so as to secure it. To us, as to them, nature is a witness that He intends us to be happy. There is a certain free and reckless pleasure in nature which is one of God's straight gifts to our humanity. And if Nature thus makes even the ignorant and thoughtless happy, it brings fuller and more lasting joys to the well-trained mind. Observe, however, what Paul says about those teachings of nature. Not that they convince all men of the goodness of the living God. There are many upon whom they have no such influence—many who take nature's benefits thanklessly and sceptically. He merely says that God has "not left Himself without a witness." The teaching of nature confirms our faith, and deepens our faith, and enlarges our faith; but it is not sufficient in itself; it is incomplete, variable, and broken, requiring other teachers. We shall take note of some points at which nature may fail, and does fail, to effect this good work of witness-bearing with which God has entrusted her. 1. Observe, then, that God does not fill the hearts of all men with food. Even in this, the plainest of her offices, nature fails. There is a dark cellar in her workshop, where she keeps many prisoners, and appears rather as a pitiless monster, "ravening with tooth and claw," than as a kindly fostering nurse. 2. Observe, secondly, that even when He fills the mouth with food He does not always fill the heart with gladness. We have seen that His general design in surrounding us with what is good and pleasant is to make us happy. But not always. Sometimes, through no fault of ours, but through His mysterious providence, there are causes of bitterness which turn all life's comforts into gall. 3. Thus we are led to the last consideration which will occupy us, viz., that even if God fills our hearts both with food and with gladness, we require something more. In order to reach the purpose of our existence it is not enough that we should be comfortable, well fed, cheerful, and appreciative of the general goodness of God. Food and gladness, for example, however plentifully and liberally they are supplied, do not prepare us for the time when our food may be taken away from us and our gladness turned into mourning. On the contrary, they only serve to accentuate the severity of such an issue by giving it the bitterness of contrast. Still less do these things equip us for the hour of death and for our reckoning with the laws of God. We have the hunger of our souls for peace—a restless craving which is also sure to grow, and which we shall never be able to satisfy so readily as we can now, even at this present time. We need a grasp of the Great Hand that orders our life, to steady us when our cup overflows with blessings,

and to hold our heads above the waves when all the billows are going over us. (*A. R. MacEwen, D.D.*)

Vers. 19-28. **And there came thither certain Jews . . . who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city.**—*The fickleness of the Lystrians*:—It would not be difficult to find a parallel to this among modern converts, and it is easy to account for it. The Jews would be ready with another interpretation of the miracle. They would say that it had been accomplished, not by Divine agency, but by some diabolical magic, as once they had said at Jerusalem (Matt. xii. 24). The Lystrians, whose own interpretation had been disavowed by the apostles, would readily adopt the new theory suggested by those who appeared to be well acquainted with the strangers. Their feelings changed with a revulsion as violent as that which afterwards overtook the barbarians of Malta, who first thought Paul a murderer and then a god. (*J. S. Howson, D.D.*) *Fickleness of the populace*:—One of the most curious stones in the world is found in Finland, where it occurs in many places. It is a natural barometer, and actually foretells probable changes in the weather. It is called "semakuir," and turns black shortly before an approaching rain, while in fine weather it is mottled with spots of white. For a long time this curious phenomenon was a mystery, but an analysis of the stone shows it to be a fossil mixed with clay and containing a portion of rock-salt and nitre. This fact being known, the explanation was easy. The salt, absorbing the moisture, turned black when the conditions were favourable for rain, while the dryness of the atmosphere brought out the salt from the interior of the stone in white spots on the surface. How many men are like these rocks, variable and changeful according to their surroundings. At one moment they will applaud a certain person, or course of action, but when their enthusiasm cools down they will seek to destroy the one they had previously exalted. It was so in the days of our Lord and the apostles, and is so still (chap. xiv. 11-19). *The stoning of Paul*:—1. Stones are the answer of those who have no arguments. 2. Those who have no arguments are wont to try to inflame the passions of the people. 3. When God has a great work for a man to do, his enemies cannot take his life. 4. When a true servant of God is made to suffer in one city, he will not cease to work, but will go on to the next. 5. When a true servant of God is made to suffer, he will intermit his work as little as possible. "On the morrow," if he can, he will take it up again. (*S. S. Times.*) *Stoning the gods* (text, and 2 Cor. xi. 25):—That is no ordinary heap of stones. See, there is blood on it, the blood of one of earth's best sons. Only a dozen years between the man who held the clothes of Stephen's murderers and the martyr Paul, for he was a martyr then in intention, and for anything we know he literally died for the truth. For he tells us, "Whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell." Persecutors may become helpers. The pirate may yet carry lawful cargo. Do you wish it were so? Then haul down your ensign and run up the white flag and red cross. Cease to do evil, learn to do well. "Sermons in stones." Yes, there are many homilies in such a blood-stained stone-heap as this. I. THE WAY THE WORLD USES ITS BENEFACTORS. Stone the man who healed the cripple! That is the way we always do. Does not the world often starve its geniuses? Who expects wealth for an inventor? The history of poets and painters tells us of hunger and nakedness. Some of the books that live were written in garrets and cells. Don't expect gratitude if you are doing good. You will be better off than God if you get thanks for kindness. Look at the Cross. II. BIGOTRY BRUTALISES IGNORANCE. "Certain Jews persuaded the people." You have the history of persecution epitomised in that nineteenth verse. The priests have pulled the strings before to-day, and are trying to get hold of them now. Let us beware of ignorance. Education has always been the foe of priestcraft. But let us not content ourselves with our children learning everything but the Word of God. Popery has no chance so long as the Bible is understood by the people. Do not fear new ideas. There will be quite enough to throw stones at the man with a new idea without your throwing one. If a man loves God he has been promised "a crown of life," and you will not like, should you see him crowned, to think of the time when you threw a stone at his head! Religion will not save you from bigotry; there are no bigots like religious ones. Let us learn to tolerate the man who loves God, seeing that we shall have to live with him for ever. III. PERSECUTION IS LIMITED IN ITS RESULTS. "Once was I stoned." Paul lived twenty years after this, but never was stoned again. The enemy had tried to do it before, but was not able. I was stoned, not killed; at least, though left for dead, I rose up and came into the city.

The foes of God may beat out our brains, but they cannot kill the truth. Paul did not give up the work to which he was called because he had to suffer. No, brave little man. He comes into Lystra again. Here was good for evil. Mark how the Christian hero makes his very sufferings useful, telling the Church, and every scar illustrated the truth that "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." By and by he visited Lystra again, and found fruit remaining. How true it is that the blood of the martyr is the seed of the Church. Such men as Timothy are cheap at such a price. Let us trust God, even when we are hurt in doing good; out of our wounds there may flow that which shall heal many. (*T. Champness.*) **The next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.**—*From Derbe to Antioch*:—I. THE APOSTLES' WORK ON THE WAY shows that duty in them was superior—(1) To fear. They pass through the scenes where they had endangered their lives. "They counted not their lives dear unto them." (2) To convenience. They could have reached Antioch much easier and sooner. Their work was—1. Indoctrinating. The apostles confirmed them in the faith—(1) By urging duty. They had embraced the faith, and there were strong influences tending to loosen their interest in it. There is no better way of strengthening our souls in the faith than by continuing our duty in relation to it. Obedience is the best interpreter of doctrine. "He that doeth the will of God," &c. (2) By inculcating principle. "We must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of God." The principle is that trial is the condition of true elevation. We must sow in tears to reap in joy. The vine must be pruned to make it fruitful. Heavenly dignities are reached, not as some voyagers reach their haven while sleeping, but as heroes reach their laurels by agony. "These are they that have come up out of great tribulation," &c. What a Divine work was theirs! What is the work of the mere sage, hero, politician, artist, compared with the work of making souls strong in all that is true in thought, holy in sympathy, and righteous in purpose. 2. Organising. "And when they had ordained them elders in every Church." Because the oldest men are supposed to have the greatest knowledge and experience, the most influential officers in the Church are spoken of as "elders." The Churches were young and inexperienced. The apostles, therefore, took from their number some of the most competent to take charge of the Churches in their own absence. 3. Dedicating. "And had prayed with fasting," &c. They did not commend them to the officers they had appointed, but to "the Shepherd and Bishop of souls." Probably they had no prospect of seeing them again. II. THEIR WORK WHEN THEY REACHED ANTIOCH (vers. 26-28). 1. This is the first missionary meeting, and therefore of special interest. (1) The scene was Antioch, and no fact in its history was more important than this. There were many good reasons for holding the meeting here. (*a*) It was a very populous place, and the meeting was likely to obtain large publicity. The two great sections of the ancient world, Jews and Gentiles, would have an opportunity of knowing something about the triumphs of this new religion. (*b*) Its wealth, too, would enable it to render support to the good cause. (*c*) It was, moreover, the place whence the mission had originated (chap. xiii. 1). (2) The deputation was Paul and Barnabas. These two men were very different. Barnabas does not seem to have had the force and fire of Paul; still, however constitutionally dissimilar, they were morally harmonious. They were missionaries. Missionary meetings should be addressed by missionaries rather than by men who have only long purses or tongues. (3) The audience was the Church. The mission was theirs, they had probably contributed to its support, and they were bound to sustain it. (4) The speeches were narrations. They "rehearsed all that God had done." They did not deal in tricks of oratory to wake loud applause. They merely "rehearsed"—related what they had done; and they had wonderful things to tell. 2. The following things are taught by this first missionary meeting:—That the missionary enterprise—(1) Is unquestionably right. It is based upon the authority of Christ, and supported by the conduct of the apostles. "Go into all the world," &c. (2) Demands our prayers. Paul and Barnabas had been "recommended to the grace of God" (see also chap. xiii. 1-3). The true missionary should have the prayers of the Church. (3) It is the cause of the Church. "They gathered the Church together"; not any particular officers. It was that which concerned every individual member. (4) Has a history worth relating. These missionaries "rehearsed all that God had done with them." We have a short account of their tour (chaps. xiii. and xiv.). There is no history so interesting or valuable as that of the triumphs of the gospel—the strongest arguments for the common origin of the race and the Divinity of Christianity. (5) Is under the special direction of God. This missionary deputa-

tion regarded Him as giving access to the Gentiles. "He had opened the door." There has been an immense amount of clap-trap about this. Men have spoken of war as opening the door for the gospel of peace. Violence must ever shut the door of the heart. The breaking down of the walls of China by military violence, instead of opening a door for the gospel, may only be the building up a barrier. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The close of the first missionary journey*:—1. The enemy can be as active as the friend; sometimes we think can outdo him in energy. The Jews had no easy work to get to Lystra. They also had to travel the hundred and thirty miles which separated the towns. But what is that when the heart is burning with hatred? 2. Paul was but once stoned, and he never forgot it! "Once was I stoned." No man can forget that experience. Those who stoned Stephen lay down their clothes at a young man's feet whose name was Saul. The wheel of Providence turns round! There is justice at the very heart of things. 3. They left Paul, "supposing he had been dead." Many a time has Christianity been stoned and "supposed to be dead," but the error is in the supposition. Whatever is true rises again. It may be thrown down; over it all hell may have a moment's laugh—but it finds its feet again! "Truth is great, and must prevail." 4. The next day Paul travelled twenty miles with Barnabas to Derbe; and the thought came to them that they would go, step for step, along the road they had come. People do not know you on one visit. Paul and Barnabas, therefore, went back, "confirming," &c., with this line added: "we must through much tribulation," &c. We cannot copy pathos. We must learn it by life. We may not write our sermons with ink, for then they would be but rhetorical emptiness. We must live them. Paul was suffering when he said those words. There was a subdued sob in the man's emphasis as he said this. Strangers might not detect it, but the speaker himself was conscious that a new thread—a golden one—was being run through the web of his eloquence as he exhorted the Christians to accept tribulation, not as a discredit, but as an endorsement. 5. Paul and his colleague came back to Antioch. Into no speech with which I am acquainted is so much meaning condensed as there is in ver. 27. Look at it. (1) "And when they had gathered the Church together." How easily we say these words! How much they may possibly involve! The Church did not live on the open street, or in the fine houses. The Church was a scattered people, perhaps often communicating secretly—despised amid the pomp and splendour of the Syrian Antioch. But why not tell the little missionary story on the open thoroughfare to the passers-by? Because it is useless to speak to men in an unknown tongue. Only the Church can understand the speech of the Church. (2) They connected the whole story with God. The statement does not read that Paul put his hand upon his head, and said, "Oh, what I have suffered for you!" Stoning and hunger and peril and persecution—these things God has done! It is because we do not recognise that fact that we suppose ourselves to be the victims of circumstances and the butt of enemies. It is part of the Divine education. The Lord reigneth. 6. They left one impression upon the Church—how God "had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles." There is no whine in that tone! They were very heroes. Instead of saying, "The way is very difficult," they said, "The door is open." The stoning was a very little thing when the apostles thought that the Gentile provinces were to be added to the empire of their Lord. 7. Nor was this all. An incident happened not recorded here. Twenty years afterwards Paul wrote a letter to his "own son in the faith," and in that letter he said, "Thou hast fully known my . . . afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra," &c.; and in the loving Timothy, who would carry on his own noble work, he found a compensation for the stoning at Lystra. We do not always know what we are doing, but the Master knows, and that is enough. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The end of the first missionary journey*:—I. SUFFERING FOR THE FAITH. Willingness to suffer for Christ is the highest test of devotion to Him. Persecution soon unmasks hypocrisy, while real piety has a face that appears the more beautiful and saintly. 1. The stoning of Paul. Note—(1) The persistency of the persecution. "There came Jews thither from Antioch," over a hundred miles away, "and Iconium," near fifty, to carry out the purpose they had failed to execute in their own cities. The hatred of the gospel was as remarkable in the one case as was its power over the hearts of men in the other. (2) The fickleness of popular favour. "Having persuaded the multitudes." The multitudes were in a condition easily to be persuaded. Their vanity had been wounded. They had supposed Paul and Barnabas to be gods, and having made a blunder so mortifying, their resentment was natural. Therefore, when these Jews intimated, as probably they did, that the

miracle was worked through Beelzebub, the reverence of the people was changed to horror. There is no truth in the apothegm, "The voice of the people is the voice of God." (3) The stoning of Paul. Stoning was the sign which marks the deed as the Jews'. Had Lystra been a Jewish city, they would have scrupulously taken the apostle outside its walls. But here they had no ceremonial punctiliousness. And after the stoning was over, they dragged the supposed lifeless body outside the gates, thus subjecting their victim not only to indignity, but to further injury. His recovery. Observe—(1) The fidelity of the disciples. Their affection for Paul, and their mourning for his death, are hinted at in their gathering around his body. (2) Paul's unexpected recovery. Perhaps a miracle here is intimated; but it looks, rather, as though the apostle merely had been stunned. His work was not yet over. God had still greater things for him to do—and to suffer. 3. His departure. Paul was indomitable, He did not lose a day's work because of his stoning. Such a witness for Christ is a host in himself. II. CONFIRMING IN THE FAITH. 1. Preaching the gospel. The missionaries were as eager for souls as ever. The cause that we suffer for becomes the more dear to our hearts. At Derbe the two appear to have met with no opposition. Paul omits it in the list of places where he suffered (2 Tim. iii. 11). 2. Confirming the disciples. (1) The return of the apostles. They went back to the very places out of which they had been driven. They could have gone a nearer way, but duty called them again to face danger, and they obeyed the call. (2) Their work. They devoted themselves to the upbuilding of the disciples they had won. In this they set a lesson for the Church of to-day. They confirmed the converts, first, by exhortation. Such exhortations on the part of those established in the faith do young converts good. Second, by warning. "That through many tribulations," &c. The apostles did not represent the Christian life as a bed of thornless roses. Their words were emphasized by the marks of Paul's recent experience. Men make the best soldiers who enlist expecting to face great dangers. 3. Organising the churches. In their up journey, a body of believers had been gathered in each place. On their way down, the apostles "appointed for them elders," giving them a form of organisation apparently much like that of the synagogue. The object seems to have been not so much church government, as the securing of leaders to whom the disciples could look for encouragement and instruction. Thus the two missionaries ensured permanency to their work. III. REPORTING THE PROGRESS OF THE FAITH. 1. Returning home. The return journey was a sort of triumphal tour, very different from the going. Then they were unknown—now, multitudes of disciples were eager to give them greeting. Persecutions awaited them then—blessings now. They came back, as come the husbandmen from the harvest-fields, with their arms full of sheaves. 2. Reporting to the Church. The first missionary report contained—(1) What God had done with them. They did not rehearse what they had done. (2) How God had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. The door the Jews had shut God had opened, and it has never been shut since. (*M. C. Hazard.*) *End of Paul's first missionary journey*:—I. PAUL COMING FORWARD AS THE GREATEST MISSIONARY TO THE GENTILES. 1. What position he should take, how he would discharge the duties of his office, were unsettled questions when he was separated to this work. When the parties set out, their names stand Barnabas and Saul. Now the pen of Luke seems naturally to write, Paul and Barnabas. 2. He went out with the sanction of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit to-day, as then, calls and makes genuine missionaries; not churches, not missionary societies. We cannot say how this call may come. We are not to look for visions and voices. The knowledge of one's own powers, the circumstances of life, the trend of thought, and the outward invitation from authorised sources, it may be, may constitute a clear call of God. 3. He wrought miracles to attest his place as an ambassador of Jesus Christ. Elymas and the lame man at Lystra. 4. More remarkable, and far more lasting in its power, was Paul's true eloquence. He so spake that great multitudes believed. Now, to produce these immediate effects, we ought to remember that he did not address those to whom the gospel was a tale that had been told. This is the position of the modern Christian audience. But the mind of Paul was originally broad, penetrating, and fertile. He had been well trained, and to his native strength and careful culture must be added his marvellous experience at conversion. Yet his chief power was that which we may share—the power of the Holy Spirit. 5. Throughout the journey Paul showed the highest forms of Christian courage. The journey was attended with manifold perils. He was stoned and left for dead at Lystra. In all this he bore up bravely and patiently. He endured hardness as a good soldier of

Jesus Christ. He fought the good fight of faith. In all respects, he came back to Antioch approved as a workman. II. THE REJECTION OF CHRIST BY THE JEWS. They were in all the places whither the apostles came. It was natural and necessary for the apostles to make the offer of salvation to their own countrymen first, nor was this in vain; but the fires of jealousy burst forth when they heard the Gentiles invited to come to their own feast. So Paul was compelled to take a new and definite position, saying, "Lo! we turn unto the Gentiles." Unto the Gentiles! Has the Church of Christ remembered the words of Paul, and been true to his spirit? Christ's ministry was chiefly to the lapsed and overlooked classes. Centuries of history show little effort on the part of the Christian body to reclaim the lost sheep wandering in the wilderness. III. THE OPEN DOOR AMONG THE GENTILES. At Cyprus, Sergius Paulus was eager to hear God's Word. At Antioch, the whole city came out to hear Paul. Even the superstition that led the Lycaonians to propose Divine honours to Paul and Barnabas was in itself a force that might be turned to useful channels. The heathen were not prejudiced against the gospel as the Jews were. IV. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CHURCHES. The new faith must have a new form. It would not do to let the zeal of first love expend itself in individualised work. There must be organisation and order. We cannot determine precisely the form of these young apostolic churches, nor is it necessary that we should. Christ left no external organisation, but gave over this work to the Holy Spirit who should come to guide into all truth. (*Sermons by the Monday Club.*) *The best gain of a servant of God returning home*:—1. Wounds received in the service of his Lord (vers. 19, 20). 2. Souls gained for the kingdom of Christ (vers. 21–23). 3. Psalms sung by the assistance of God (vers. 26, 27). *Apostles and Crusaders on the same track*:—Conrad and Louis, each with an army at first of seventy thousand men, marched through part of the districts traversed by Paul and Barnabas alone and unprotected. The former came to fight the battle of the Cross with human power, and their journey was encompassed with defeat and death; the latter, too, passed through much tribulation, but from victory to victory, for the Lord was their tower and shield. (*J. S. Howson, D.D.*) **And when they had preached the gospel.**—*The minister's work*:—I. PREACHING. Announcing the glad tidings; proclaiming that gospel which is the power of God unto salvation, and so securing conversions. II. TEACHING. Instructing the converts in the doctrines, displaying the privileges, and enforcing the duties of the new faith. III. CONFIRMATION—establishment in the faith. IV. EXHORTATION. Stimulus and encouragement to higher privilege and nobler endeavour.

Ver. 22. **We must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of God.**—*Continuance in the faith*:—I. The disciples had been but newly converted to the faith, and THEY REQUIRED TO BE ESTABLISHED THROUGH GRACE. They were very likely to have been discouraged by the sufferings of the apostles, their instructors in the faith. They may have begun to fear that they had not counted the cost of religion: they had looked on the bright side of their profession; they had glowed with the zeal of new converts to Christ. But they might now have begun, for the first time, to discover that religion has its dark side. It is altogether probable that they had found it easier to make resolutions than to keep them; and to be exalted in hope more practicable than to be weaned from the world. We see, then, at once the bent and the need of the soul; its bent, to fall back, after the fairest professions of religion; its need, to be daily strengthened and advanced in the saving gifts of Divine grace. The seed may be withered by the early blight—the slender flame may be extinguished by the rising blast. Watchfulness must be added to knowledge, and prayer to watchfulness; and the seat of religion must be not in the imagination nor the affections merely—not in the understanding even, as separate from the heart, but in the soul. II. The apostle, in the text, "exhorted them TO CONTINUE IN THE FAITH." The source of all final perseverance in religion is doubtless the grace of God. The means by which that grace operates on the heart is by a "continuance in the faith." The apostles Barnabas and Paul, we must suppose, on this occasion opened to their new converts the whole foundation of Christian belief—the whole body of Christian motives, and a corresponding practice. To the Jews amongst them they appealed from their own Scriptures, and showed the prophecies that had gone before respecting Jesus and His great salvation. To the Gentiles they preached, no doubt in kindred strains, Jesus and the resurrection, Christ and Him crucified. Here was, no doubt, a faith, which both admitted and required, and would reward, inquiry. The more they reflected upon the great

truths of the gospel, the more they observed the state of the world around them, the more they would hail the glad tidings of the gospel. It was a revelation of truth, a communication of strength, from God to men. It embraced that which was most suitable to their wants, and most agreeable to their hopes. It promised, on the most sure grounds, pardon of sin, peace with God, renovation of the heart. This is, then, the faith in which still we exhort you to continue. It is that which we invite you to gain, and then to hold fast even to the end. It is no single effort of the understanding embracing these Divine truths, no words of confession. It must be a deliberate consideration of the grounds on which your faith is built, and all your hopes depend. It must be a comparison of the feelings of the heart with the standard of Divine truth. It must be an application of the great truths of Scripture to all the circumstances and relations of life. It must be a daily viewing of things through the glass of God's Word, and a reference of all events to the future and eternal world. III. We are warned that the walk of faith will not be altogether a thornless path—the triumph of faith not a bloodless victory; "and that we must THROUGH MUCH TRIBULATION ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD." The words are introduced in the text with an abruptness in the language, which shows the strong impression on the mind of the apostle delivering them, of their nature and truth. Each apostle was ever anxious assuredly to impress on the minds of his converts, no less than on his own, the costs, as well as the gains, of religion. It may be doubtless necessary that outward afflictions should first bring home the wandering sinner to God. His past life may have been conversant with companions who must be forsaken, and habits to be renounced. He will, at all events, find himself placed in a world that will little understand the principles on which he is acting, and that may deride the faith which he professes, or the purity which he exhibits. Nor can he feel otherwise than painfully affected at the sight of wickedness around him. (*C. J. Hoare, M.A.*) *The necessity of tribulation*:—In some of the most delicate manufactures of the country, the web in a rude and unsightly state enters a vessel filled with a certain liquid, passes slowly through, and emerges continuously at the opposite side. As it enters the cloth seems all of one colour, and that dim; as it emerges it glitters in a variety of brilliant hues arranged in cunning figures. The liquid is composed of biting acids; and the reason why the fabric is strained through it is that all the deforming and defiling things which have adhered to it in preceding processes may be discharged, and the figures already secretly imprinted may shine out in their beauty. If it were allowed to remain one minute too long in the bath the fabric would be destroyed; but the manufacturer has so tempered the ingredients and timed the passage that while the impurities are thoroughly discharged the fabric comes out uninjured. In wisdom and love the Lord has mingled the ingredients of our tribulation, and determined its duration, so that none of his should be lost, and so that every grace of the Spirit should be brought out in all its beauty. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *The necessity of tribulation*:—It would seem to be a great hardship to a lump of iron ore, if it were conscious, that it should have to be melted, separated from its accretions, beaten together into a bar of pure metal, then heated again and cooled suddenly, exposed in this way in quick succession to the most rapid and intense changes of temperature, and hammered furiously while these terrible processes are going on. "Why can not I be left in peace," it might say, "in my condition as ore? I am contented with that form of life." Yet it is only by such processes that it can be promoted in quality from the sluggish state of raw metal, compounded with alloy, to steel. (*T. Starr King.*) *The condition of tribulation*:—The expression is used in the sense of travelling through: as if they lay about our road. And this is an encouraging similitude. It sets us forth as superior to the tribulations: and sets them forth as our appointed way, not to have the mastery over us, but to be faced and left behind, just as the traveller faces and leaves behind the dangers or rough places of his road. "Tribulation," a term implying "crushing" or "fretting"; that outward galling which narrow and intricate ways, or long-borne burdens, produce on the traveller. It is a word joined by St. Paul to another signifying "narrowness of space to move in," and which we render "anguish," as representing the Latin *angustiæ*, "narrowness of space." It is then through many of these gallings, these narrow inlets, or pressing burdens, that our way must be made to the land of rest. Let us trace the fact—I. IN ITS RISE. First of all, strait is the gate itself that leadeth unto life. Through one mental process in the main do men enter into the life of the Spirit. And though that life issues in the best expansion of the whole man, yet this introductory process is eminently a contracting one. When a man for the first time opens his eyes on

God's true state, and his own; when he first sees what God demands of him, and what he has to render to God, the sight is one which shrinks up whatever he may before have thought of anything that is his own; it is a tribulation, a passing through a strait, too narrow for any of those encumbrances which lay about and almost constituted his unrenewed and worldly being. This lies at the very head of his course, and cannot be avoided. Many endeavour to avoid it; and no doubt it is easy enough: but in doing so, they miss the way to the kingdom of God. They stand with the strait gate before them, looking up the narrow path. Between it and the broad way are several tracks, not so difficult, and better frequented; decoys which the enemy has constructed—the ways which seem right unto a man, but the end thereof is the way of death. 1. There is the comely track of formalism—spanning the valleys of humiliation with its perfect arches, piercing the toilsome steeps with its readier and smoother approaches. There, is no tribulation; daily, conscience is set to sleep with choicest music; daily, the satisfied eyes gaze on the fair pictures of self-denial and piety. 2. Then there is the wide and smooth path of worldly profession, where all that is rough and unpleasing in religion is avoided and cast aside. Tribulation enough there is indeed in such a course, but not of the right sort for our purpose; for ever and anon the rough unmannerly protest of God's inward witness breaks through, and in laughter the heart is sorrowful. And tribulation enough to come: for the hope of such an one shall perish. II. IN ITS NATURE, it is twofold, essential and incidental; that which every Christian *must* feel, and that into which he is liable, from varying circumstances, to be thrown. 1. He is guilty; unworthy; grieves God's Holy Spirit; does the evil thing he has resolved against, and the good which he has determined to do falls unwrought from his hands. And from this springs grief and trouble continually. Nor does such necessary trouble come from self-contemplation only. "Rivers of water," said the psalmist, "run down mine eyes, because men keep not Thy law." And then "every one that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution." The world will not endure tranquilly one who lives above the world. "If they have hated Me, they will hate you." 2. This last-mentioned tribulation seems, from its varying aspect, to form our transition to those which are incidental: not necessary to every child of God, but sent to some in full measure, to some in less degree, and to others perhaps hardly at all; providential chastenings of our heavenly Father, the sicknesses, dejections, and bereavements of the people of God. These troubles are in fact our highest privileges. To be allowed to enter into the fellowship of Christ's sufferings—do we not ever feel this to be our truest exaltation in life? III. ITS PROGRESS. "Tribulation worketh patience." Oh blessed advance! from suffering, to "Father, if it be Thy will"; from patience to "approval"—the passing through and coming out of the fire tested and fit for the Master's use. Would you have a counsellor in the things of God? Take a Christian who has known sorrow. Would you have a comforter and a Christian friend? Consort with one who has known sorrow. Wouldst thou thyself become mature in Christ, a ripened and ready Christian, glorifying Him largely, and bearing witness to Him with power? Oh refuse not, pass not by, the cup of tribulation; learn obedience from the things which thou hast suffered; be thou, as He was, made perfect through sufferings. But this is not all. And now in the end, let us look onward and upward. Let us stand with the beloved apostle, and behold that great multitude. "These are they which came out of great tribulation!" (*Dean Alford.*) *Tribulation: its necessity and issue:*—I. TRIBULATION. You may think something more consolatory might have been looked for from Barnabas than "much tribulation," but we recognise the voice of "the son of consolation," when those sorrows are represented as preparing us for heaven. But we must take care not to misapply his words. 1. Though the kingdom is to be entered through "much tribulation," there may be "much tribulation" which does not lead to the kingdom. Admitting that all suffering is the consequence of sin, yet what man endures now is at most but a temporal punishment. There is no expiatory power in our sufferings. You are not to think that because "many are the troubles of the righteous," that every one who has many troubles must therefore be righteous. 2. There is, however, a different, though equally erroneous inference, which may be drawn from our text. When a man, whose course of life on the whole is one of evenness, reads of entering the kingdom through much tribulation, there is great likelihood of his suspecting that he is destitute of the chief evidence of being a child of God. If the greatness of trouble distress and harass one Christian, the very want of trouble may be a trial to another. But—(1) Life is not finished yet; there may remain time

enough for many calamities. It does not take long to darken the brightest sky, when God has once commanded the clouds from above. (2) May it not be that the want of trial is thy trial: unbroken sunshine may be a trial as well as continued strife. (3) The "much tribulation" is not made up exclusively of what the world counts distress. It consists generally in conflicts with our own evil hearts; in the grief occasioned by our sin; in the sorrow of finding the Divine image so faintly traced—the power of corruption still so strong—the will so biassed—the affections so depraved. And have you nothing of this? (4) And then the tribulation of the text arose mainly from persecution. But has the trial of the Cross ceased? Is there no longer any "persecution for righteousness' sake"? The world must dislike genuine piety as that by which it is condemned; and it ought to make us doubt whether our piety be genuine if it do not cause a clash between the world and ourselves. Have you been faithful in reproving sin? Have you drawn a line with due breadth and distinctness between the world and yourself? No wonder that the world does not persecute you, when you do not openly separate from the world! II. ITS NECESSITY AND ISSUE. The text describes affliction as the ordinary instrument through which God fits His people for their glorious inheritance. God thereby disciplines His people; detaches them from earthly things; refines their affections. It is in the furnace of trial that He burns out of us the impurities of indwelling corruption. For whatever tends to increase present holiness, tends equally to increase future happiness. Not, indeed, that the tribulation is indispensable. God, if He pleased, could make us ready for the kingdom through some other process; but the "much tribulation" is His ordinary course. I understand from this what St. Paul means when he says, "We glory in tribulations." He found tribulation grievous in itself, but he gloried in it as a preparation for heaven. Of what avail would it be, that the palace should be prepared for the inhabitant, unless the inhabitant be prepared for the palace. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Tribulation and its uses*:—I. THE DECLARATION that the people of God must through tribulation enter the kingdom of God. 1. That they are an afflicted people there can be no doubt. And not only so, but those whom God blesses the most He afflicts the most. Take, *e.g.*, Abraham, Jacob, Job, Moses, Paul, &c. But not only these, all the saints must expect it. The Word tells us not, "we may" but "we must." Sometimes we forget that it is God's appointment, that it cannot be otherwise. 2. Many reasons might be given for this. (1) That we may know and feel what that body of sin and death is that is within us; and it is no small blessing to have a thief that is in the heart detected. (2) That we may know the value of Christ, as the brother born for adversity. We are most of us like children on board a vessel when a storm comes, we think of nothing but the storm. The life of faith looks to Him who is the pilot. (3) The great secret of all this living in much tribulation is, that we may live out of ourselves and to God. The Word of God is full of promises; and we never find their worth but as we are placed in circumstances that make them needful. We need not ask a hungry man to eat if the bread is placed before him. II. THE EXHORTATION. "Exhorting them to continue in the faith." The great remedy for this much affliction is, not to be looking at the affliction; it is to continue in the faith. Whether we regard faith as the doctrine of Christ, or as continuing in faith, living not to ourselves, but to God—in either point of view it comes to the same truth; it is the life of faith. Happy is the man who, the more the waters come upon him, the higher he rises. We can honour Christ in nothing more than in the life of faith. III. THE PROSPECT. We sometimes read of a Chinese taking a traveller through a wilderness, and then bringing him at once into a beautiful garden. He passes over craggy rocks, through brambles and nettles, and everything offensive; and then in one moment his guide brings him into the most lovely exhibition of the powers of nature and art. Just so is it with God: He takes us through a world of brambles into a garden of Eden, and if we have more foretaste of it we should think of it more. If a man eats grapes, he cannot avoid being reminded that there is a place where grapes come from. The way to be living above the troubles of life is to be much in the anticipation of glory: for as surely as the earnest is given, so surely shall the eternal reality be enjoyed. The great principle is to be looking forward to future glory. But we want more than this; we want a present Christ and if we are living by faith we shall possess this. God wants our hearts for Himself. (*J. H. Evans, M.A.*) *The path of tribulation*:—I. THE ROAD TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD. The text does not mean that all who are the subjects of suffering shall be the inheritors of glory. So far is the one from securing the other, that unless suffering is improved, the trials of this life will only

add to the guilt and misery of eternity. What is meant is that tribulation is found a means of sanctifying the family of God, and that it is a means so extensively employed and blessed for that purpose that it may with propriety be represented as the road to the kingdom of God. II. THE TRAVELLERS—The disciples. There are many who walk in the paths of suffering who are not Christ's disciples; but the path now in view is the path of holy suffering: Jesus Christ Himself travelled this road. The best friends of God, in every age of time, have travelled it. The prophets (James v. 10). The apostles (1 Cor. iv. 9–13). Let, then, the traveller on this road know, not only that God's best friends have preceded him, and that many will follow Him; but let him also know that he forms a part of a large and goodly fellowship (1 Peter v. 9). III. THE NECESSITY FOR THEIR TRAVELLING BY THIS ROAD. As men we are fallen sinful creatures, and therefore we must meet with punishment, and as Christians we are imperfect creatures, and therefore we must meet with discipline. IV. ITS TERMINATION. It conducts to God's heavenly kingdom. The world receives a very different treatment from the master it serves, from that which Christians receive at the hands of Jesus Christ. The prince of this world promises his servants a happiness in this life, which he can never afford; but is either altogether silent about the end of their course, or deceives them with the expectation of a felicity which they will never attain. Christ predicts tribulation; but then He more than counterbalances the tribulation by the present joys of religion; while He promises glory at the end of their course. In the kingdom of God there will be no more tribulation. Sin, which is the grand scourge of man, will obtain no admittance there; consequently sorrow, which is the inseparable companion of sin, shall be equally excluded (Rev. xxi. 4; Psa. xvi. 11). In the kingdom of God the tribulations of this life will increase the happiness of the former sufferer (Heb. xii. 10, 11; Rev. vii. 14–17). (*Essex Congregational Remembrancer.*) *The way of tribulation:*—I. ITS TRAVELLERS: all true Christians; "we"; therefore do not wonder at it. II. ITS NECESSITY. "We must"; therefore do not shun it. III. ITS NATURE: rugged and long; "through much tribulation," therefore prepare for it. IV. ITS END: blessedness; "the kingdom of God"; therefore do not neglect it. (*K. Gerok.*) *The way to the kingdom:*—This verse exhibits the ordinary Christian curriculum. Paul and Barnabas pass through a whole district expressly to teach this. The instruction is the same in every city. 1. "The kingdom of God," in its widest sense, denotes the Church, under all its forms and dispensations. In New Testament usage, the reference of the phrase is to Messiah's kingdom. Either in its initial and visible state here, or in its perfected condition in a future life. The latter is its meaning here. We who are in the kingdom in its incipiency here, "must through much tribulation enter into" the perfection of the same kingdom hereafter. 2. In this way heaven and earth do not lie far asunder. The one grows out of the other. Heaven is the summer of the year of which we have in this world the wintry beginning. And from the first there is a looking springwards, and even a touch of summer in the soul that is panting towards it. Even physically there is no vacuum between this lower and the higher world, while, morally, there stretches between them "a new and living way," by which all the faithful are going up to heaven, yet carrying something of heaven with them as they go. The toilsome journey through this world of peril and sin is not merely the passing of so much time until the dawning of the day; it is an express progress by the right way to the city of habitation. 3. Entertain the thought that going through earthly tribulations is "entering in." It is not that we must pass through all the straits and pressures of this life, and then the entrance will be given according to the dictate of an arbitrary will. If we "continue in the faith," the entrance is accomplished: death then is but a servitor to open the gate: the grave is but a sideroom where we leave a vestment which will not be needed for a while, and which meantime will be changed into a glorious robe fit for immortal wear. 4. Think for a little of this unalterable, yet very gracious necessity of this lifelong "must." For this is not a truth that comes to us naturally. Look, for instance, at a palace or a gentleman's estate. They are talked of far and near for their beauty. Suppose one sets out for the purpose of seeing them, what will he expect to see when he comes near? Rough roads, neglected fields, thorns and briars up to the very gate and doors? No. That being the focus and centre of all, it "must" have meet setting. Well, God is taking His children to a kingdom! to a "house" with "many mansions," and our natural thought would be that as soon as they turn face heavenwards, there will be, not only a great inward, but also a great outward change. There will, now, be some-

thing of the bloom of the garden on everything; and as they go on, the way will become more pleasant, obstructions in it fewer, and more easily overcome. But against that theory of life lies this text. Of course there are many exceptions. Multitudes of infants go to the perfect kingdom of God almost as soon as they are born. Also, there are great "varieties" of experience among those who live. The principle is not one of mechanical exactness. Nor are we to conclude that tribulation is measured out according to character—much of it to the sinful, and less to the pure. In some instances the reverse of this is the truth—the finest gold sometimes lies molten in the hottest fires. "We must"—I. FOR PROBATION. A man must be proved before he can be approved. A thing—or still more, a man—may look fair, and be useless. In mercantile and public life, men are advanced from lower to higher place only after successful probation. God tries and trains men, before, and for, advancement. The advancement is to be very great: the trial must be very true. And in order to be true it must be severe and searching. II. FOR PURIFICATION. God's fires are hot, but they are purifying. He Himself is "a consuming fire" only to what is evil: He is a purifying and preserving fire to all that is good. But is not all tribulation punitive? No. It is not possible to trace all suffering up to sin in the suffering person. Broken laws bring down their penalties; and is so far as tribulation consists of penalty, of course it is punitive. But many a sufferer, in his little human measure, "bears the sins" of others. If in the sufferer there be faith, all that is punitive is yet so assuaged and filled with grace that it is purifying far more than punitive. Thus proving, and purifying, run on together to the very end, when the death-fire will burn out the last dregs of corruption, and perfect the life-process of conformity to the image of Christ. III. IN ORDER TO THE ATTAINMENT OF A REAL AND DEEP FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST. Christian fellowship is life in Christ. All that life is, or contains of good, of growth by grace to glory, is "in Him." We have joy in Him; "That My joy might remain in you." We have peace in Him; "My peace I give unto you." And strength, the "strength" that "is made perfect in weakness." And should, then, the trouble of life be excluded? No. It is the unchanging law that we "bear about with us in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." This is "the fellowship of His sufferings" from which in due time fellowship in glory will arise. IV. FOR THE SAKE OF OTHERS. God often uses the suffering of one for the sanctifying of another. Here is a house through which a spirit of worldliness would soon flow; but up in the top room is a little sufferer from whose bed every day flows out another spirit which keeps the house in dewy softness. Or, one in maturer life, and, in so far as man can judge, ripe for the better state, is kept lingering here, a living lesson of patience and gentleness, a living proof to many of the all-sufficiency of the grace of Christ. As "no man liveth," as "no man dieth," so no man suffereth to himself. (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*) *Consolations on the way to the kingdom*:—1. Have I lost my goods, and foregone a fair estate? Had all the earth been mine, what is it to heaven? Had I been the lord of all the world, what were this to a kingdom of glory? 2. Have I parted with a dear consort—the sweet companion of my youth; the tender nurse of my age; the partner of my sorrows for many years? She is but stepped a little before me to that happy rest, which I am panting towards, and wherein I shall speedily overtake her. In the meantime and ever, my soul is espoused to that glorious and immortal husband, from whom it shall never be parted. 3. Am I bereaved of some of my dear children, the sweet pledges of our matrimonial love, whose parts and hopes promised me comfort in my declined age? Why am I not rather thankful it hath pleased my God out of my loins to furnish heaven with some happy guests? Why do I not, instead of mourning for their loss, sing praises to God for preferring them to that eternal blessedness? 4. Am I afflicted with bodily pain and sickness, which banishes all sleep from my eyes, and exercises me with lingering torture? Ere long this momentary distemper shall end in an everlasting rest. 5. Am I threatened by the sword of an enemy? Suppose that man to be one of the guardians of paradise, and that sword as flaming as it is sharp, that one stroke should let me into that place of inconceivable pleasure, and admit me to feed on the tree of life for ever. Cheer up, then, oh my soul: and upon thy fixed apprehension of the glory to be revealed, even in the midnight of thy sorrows, and in the deepest darkness of death itself, sing then to thy God songs of confidence, of joy, of praise and thanksgiving. (*Bp. Hall.*) *Difficulties in the way*:—The old proverb tells us that the way to the stars lay through difficulties. To reach high ground we must expect hard climbing. It is so in the life of the world. Look at the great soldier: the country honours him, crowds shout his praises. But to gain his position, he

has endured hardness. Look at a famous painter at his work. How easily he seems to cover his canvas with almost living forms. But you forget the years of patient toil, and study, and self-denial. I. IF WE ARE TO GAIN THE HIGH PLACES OF HEAVEN WE MUST EXPECT OBSTACLES IN OUR WAY. 1. But the true Christian will not be driven back by difficulties. Diogenes wished to become the pupil of a famous cynic philosopher, and was refused. Still Diogenes persisted, and the philosopher raised his staff to smite him. "Strike," said Diogenes, "you will not find a staff hard enough to conquer my perseverance." And so he had his wish. Let no blows be hard enough to drive us back from the kingdom of heaven. 2. For us all there is the Hill Difficulty to be climbed, and the Valley of Humiliation to be entered. We are proud of our schemes, and God sweeps them all away like a cobweb. We trust to our own righteousness, and God allows us to fall into a terrible temptation, like David. We thought, like St. Peter, that we could stand, and, behold, we have fallen. We trusted in our own strength, like Samson, and the Philistines, our sins, have bound us hand and foot in the prison. 3. Sometimes the difficulty lies right across our path like a rock, or like a band of armed men. Once in battle an Austrian general was surrounded on all sides by the enemy. He sent a message to his commander asking whither he should retreat. And the answer came back in one word —"Forward!" That is the watchword of every true Christian man. II. THE GREATEST OBSTACLES IN OUR PATH TO HEAVEN ARE—1. The world which hinders us on our heavenly journey in the form of bad company. Many a pilgrim has lost his way by forming godless or careless acquaintances. 2. The flesh. Who has not the desire to go forward in the path of duty, and yet suffered himself to listen to the whisper, "A little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep"? Who has not found the bad thought, hated and unwelcome, yet forcing itself upon him at the holiest seasons? Well, if we are to continue our journey to heaven we must be masters of our flesh. It is better for us to enter into life maimed or blind, than to have two eyes, all that we desire or wish for, at the cost of our own soul. 3. The devil. Sometimes he comes as a roaring lion, openly attacking us; sometimes he comes as an angel of light, whispering soft, tempting promises in our ears. III. THE WAY TO MEET THESE DIFFICULTIES. 1. Do not think too much of them beforehand; meet them bravely when they come, but do not meet them half way. When a man builds a house he does not stay to think what a long task it is; he just goes on day by day adding brick to brick, till the whole is finished. Let us day by day try to do our duty, to build up a little bit of a holy life, and the difficulties and obstacles will be overcome. 2. Then we must trust ourselves to our Guide. If you were to try to climb some of the Swiss mountains you would come to places where it would be impossible for you to proceed alone. Then your guide would bid you to trust entirely to him, to allow yourself to be bound to him, and to have no fear. In all the difficulties and dangers of our pilgrimage we must trust ourselves entirely to the Lord Jesus Christ. (*H. J. Wilmot Buxton, M.A.*) *The process of purification*:—I. THE UNIVERSALITY OF TRIBULATION. No one who has thoroughly observed the conditions of life can avoid coming to this conclusion, that suffering forms a large portion of human history. Youth encounters troubles; then, as life advances, there are deeper sorrows. And as we get older still, life assumes the character of a struggle, and ofttimes in the very midst of it, "man goeth to his long home." Not that this constitutes the whole of life; but we do live in a world whose Creator appears to have consulted something else besides the happiness of His creatures. II. THE REASON FOR THIS. 1. If we were to discover, say some plant, so widely distributed that we could not go into any one region of the globe without beholding it, our reason would at once compel us to the conclusion, that its universal existence proves some universal purpose, and that its secret must sooner or later be discoverable. Sorrow is universal, and there must therefore be a reason for its being universal. Paul says in our text, "we must"; "it is the order of things, that through much tribulation we enter the kingdom of God." Wherever he went he found trouble; and he found everywhere necessity for the same line of argument; he had to "confirm," that is, to strengthen the souls of the disciples; to exhort them to continue steadfast in the belief of Christianity as a message of glad tidings, notwithstanding all their present trials. 2. But does the kingdom of God here mean heaven? Not exclusively. It means the government of God. The kingdom of God means the government of God; and "tribulation" is derived from the Latin *tribulum*, the threshing instrument or roller by which the Romans separated the corn from the husks. 3. Tribulation looked at in this light is capable of the most extended application. We may apply it to youth, at its very entrance upon the

real discipline of life; to some thoughtful mind, harassed with doubts; to the active, hearty, energetic man of business, who may in this day of unnatural competition be tempted to practical falsehoods, to neglect the soul for the body; to the man of fixed income, whose family cares are a perpetual embarrassment. III. WHAT IS MEANT BY THE KINGDOM OF GOD, AND HOW DOES TRIBULATION FACILITATE OUR ENTRANCE INTO IT? The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but—1. "Righteousness," and righteousness is only attainable by tribulation. It is not easy to be good. 2. "Peace": and this is another happy result of tribulation. By nature we do not love peace. You have seen the horse broken in for man's use. Now peace, the very opposite of all this discontent, only comes through the discipline of tribulation. 3. "Joy in the Holy Ghost." But this in the present life only comes through the tribulation of penitence; and the happy throng above have come out of great tribulation. (*W. G. Barrett.*) *Through tribulation to glory*:—We have here—I. THE DESIGNATION OF HEAVEN—the kingdom of God. A kingdom has its king, its laws, its social relationships. It conveys the idea of locality and grandeur. It is both a place and a state. II. THE PARTICULAR CHARACTERISTIC OF HEAVEN. It is the kingdom of God. It will therefore be inconceivably great, inconceivably holy, inconceivably blessed and happy. III. THE DIFFICULTY OF ADMISSION. To get there we must pass through much tribulation. No man gained heaven without difficulty. He must be tried and purified as in a furnace. He must endure the assaults of Satan. He must overcome his natural evil nature. He must struggle with unbelief, persecution, pain. But he shall enter in and obtain joy and gladness. Sorrow and sighing shall flee away. (*Homilist.*) *We grow best under weights*:—We learn that it is out of struggles that we must get the nobleness and beauty of character after which we are striving. One of the old Scotch martyrs had on his crest the motto, *Sub pondere cresco* ("I grow under a weight"). On the crest was a palm-tree, with weights depending from its fronds. In spite of the weights the tree was straight as an arrow, lifting its crown of graceful foliage high up in the serene air. It is well known that the palm grows best loaded down with weights. Thus this martyr testified that he, like the beautiful tree of the Orient, grew best in his spiritual life under weights. This is the universal law of spiritual growth. There must be resistance, struggle, conflict, or there can be no development of strength. We are inclined to pity those whose lives are scenes of toil and hardship, but God's angels do not pity them if only they are victorious; for in their overcoming they are climbing daily upward towards the holy heights of sainthood. The beatitudes in the Apocalypse are all for overcomers. Heaven's rewards and crowns lie beyond battle-plains. Spiritual life always need opposition. It flourishes most luxuriantly in adverse circumstances. We grow best under weights. We find our richest blessings in the burdens we dread to take up. (*J. R. Miller, D.D.*) *Tribulation: its necessity*:—Many Christians are dull, and stupid, and useless, because they have not had disaster enough to wake them up. The brightest scarf that heaven makes is thrown over the shoulders of the storm. You cannot make a thorough Christian life out of sunshine alone. There are some very dark hues in the ribbon of the rainbow; you must have in life the blue as well as the orange. Mingling all the colours of the former makes a white light; and it takes all the shades, and sadnesses, and vicissitudes of life to make the white lustre of a pure Christian life.

Vers. 26-28 **And thence sailed to Antioch. . . . And when they were come, and had gathered the Church together, they rehearsed all that God had done.**—*Apostles and Crusaders at Antioch: a historical contrast*:—If when we contrast the voyage of Paul and Barnabas across the bay of Attalia with the voyage of those who sailed over the same waters eleven centuries later, our minds are powerfully drawn towards the pure days of early Christianity, when the power of faith made human weakness irresistibly strong, the same thoughts are not less forcibly presented when we contrast the reception of the Crusaders at Antioch with the reception of the apostles in the same city. We are told that Raymond, "Prince of Antioch," waited with much expectation for the arrival of the French king; and that when he heard of his landing at Seleucia he gathered together all the nobles and chief men of the people and went out to meet him, and brought him into Antioch with much pomp and magnificence, showing him all reverence and homage, in the midst of a great assemblage of the clergy and people. All that Luke tells us of the reception of the apostles after their victorious campaign is what he says in the text. Thus the kingdom of God came at the first "without

observation"—with the humble acknowledgment that all power is given from above, and with a thankful recognition of our Father's love to all mankind. (*J. S. Howson, D.D.*) *Missionary enterprises*:—I. THERE IS GREAT NEED IN THE WORLD FOR MISSIONARIES. 1. There was great need for them in the days of the early Church. 2. There is much more need in the present day. II. IT IS THE DUTY OF THE CHURCH TO TAKE UP the subject of foreign missions, because—1. The Church of all earthly things is the most, and indeed only, capable. 2. The Church itself, having received the glad tidings, ought from gratitude to make them known to others. III. THIS DUTY, IF RIGHTLY PERFORMED, WILL SURELY MEET WITH SUCCESS. Not necessarily at first, but eventually. IV. IT IS THE SAVIOUR'S COMMAND THAT the gospel should be preached in all lands. (*T. Newsome.*) *Missionary reports*:—1. It is well that missionaries should occasionally return. Their return will strengthen them, and again arouse the Churches to a new interest in the missionary cause. 2. The true missionary will report, not what he has done, but what God has done with him. 3. The true missionary will report how God has opened the door of faith to those to whom he was sent. (*S. S. Times.*) *The report of the mission*:—This was the first missionary report ever presented. Of late years these rehearsals have been common. And it is well that it should be so, provided that the accounts are truthfully given and the results anxiously weighed. Let us observe—I. THE OBJECT OF THE APOSTLES' MISSION. 1. You all know how ill any work must be done which has not a definite aim. What would a carpenter's, a builder's, a lawyer's, or a physician's work be without some end set before it? Too often in religious matters this is left out of sight. A clergyman, as it is said, "performs duty"—that is, he has gone through the public service, &c. But was that his end, or only the means to his end? A serious question. Far too often we do make these duties ends: if we can perform our duty (as it is sometimes said) creditably, we are ready to say, "I have done my duty; I have gained my end." But who does not see that no amount of labour thus accomplished necessarily implies the slightest sense of the real work of the ministry? Where is the end in all this? No builder would satisfy his employer by merely being seen so many hours each day at his work, if nothing came of it, or nothing but crooked walls, leaking roofs, &c. It is even so in things spiritual. He is not a good workman who has nothing to show for it but his toil. True, in these matters, unlike the other, men cannot by any skill or any devotion secure his object: God gives, and withholds; and he who thinks that his own labour or even his own prayer can guarantee success has not yet learned his first lesson in the school of Jesus Christ. St. Paul's object is forcibly expressed in his own words, "That ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God." Turning, conversion, was and still is the end of the ministry. 2. If this is indeed the meaning of our office, and its responsibility, can any exhortation be more needful than that which bids the congregation remember its object and so aid its work? If its end is to turn you to God, yours surely will be the chief loss and the chief misery if it fails. II. ITS METHODS. We are struck by its unity, and we are struck also by its variety. 1. St. Paul appears to speak quite differently to the Jews at Antioch and to the idolaters at Lystra. With the one he argues from the Scriptures; with the other only from the book of nature. And how can it be otherwise if a man is in earnest? Does the physician proceed, without inquiry, to apply one mode of treatment everywhere, and expect the recovery of health, which is his object, to reward such unreasoning efforts? Even so it is with the physician of the soul. His first business is to ascertain where men stand, what men know and believe. Till he knows something upon these points, he can only employ the bow at a venture. To speak to a man of salvation when he has never been conscious of danger, to offer a man forgiveness who has never trembled at sin, is to cover up the mischief instead of extirpating it, to comfort a man in his sins instead of rescuing him from them. Till the people of Lystra knew that there was one God, it was idle to say to them, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." On the other hand, those who already possessed the evidence also of a Divine revelation, those whose fault it was to count themselves safe because they had honoured God with a ceremonial worship, must be instructed out of that revelation itself as to the sinfulness of sin, as to the need and the promise and the coming of a Saviour, in the language of a prophet in whom they believed. 2. More than half the failures of our ministry arise from inappropriate teaching and from inappropriate hearing. There is a man here, as there once was when Jesus Himself was the Preacher, possessed by the spirit of an unclean devil. He comes hither, drawn

perhaps by custom, perhaps by a wish to gloss over his lost state, perhaps by an instinctive longing to lull the disquietude of his soul. This man meets Jesus here. But too often it is only a hearing of the sound—something about guilt, about atonement, about the mercy of God—and the man goes away as he came: what he has understood he has misapplied; the unclean spirit is still there, soothed, calmed, lulled, like the surfeited snake till its next fit of hunger. That man ought to have been told of God in conscience before he was told of God in redemption. Till he has trembled at judgment to come, till he has cried out against himself as a sinner, he can scarcely profit, he may even be fatally injured, by the offer of a pardon which he wants not, or of a Saviour whom he will only crucify afresh. 3. What cannot be done by the preacher must be done for himself by the individual hearer. Let a man ask himself, "Is that word for me? Does that suit my case? God give me the spirit of wisdom in hearing, lest 'that which should be for my health be to me the occasion of falling.'" III. IT HAD ALSO A CAREFUL REGARD TO THE CARRYING ON OF THAT WHICH WAS WELL BEGUN. 1. In the form of regular supervision. "They ordained elders in every congregation." He who is turned to God still needs training. It is a comfort to us to believe that our assemblies for worship and instruction had their origin in the institutions of the primitive Church. It is not the one reception of the one great truth which will secure us from the risk of falling away. The minister has to learn; and if he do not learn, his ministry will soon become a vain repetition, a barren and a wearisome form, both to himself and to those who hear him. Even so is it with the congregation. They too have need to learn in the school of God; and the services of this place are designed to help them in learning. 2. In the form of well-instructed expectation (ver. 22). Neither our Saviour nor His apostles ever misled men as to the nature of the Christian life below—that it must be a conflict, and therefore a life of tribulation. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Apostolic rehearsal*:—I. WHAT DID THE APOSTLES REHEARSE IN THE EARS OF THE CHURCH? "All that God had done with them." Not all that they had done of themselves, by dint of their own efforts, by the power of their own persuasion. Not how many good sermons they had preached, what overflowing congregations were attracted to hear them, or what unbounded applause had been bestowed upon their ministry. Nor did they make their sufferings the theme of conversation: yet they were "destitute, afflicted, tormented" (Heb. xi. 37). "They related all that God had done with them." Not what the Almighty had performed by His own immediate agency, independent of all human instrumentality; but what He had done by their hands, as the servants of His will. 1. God had by them communicated instruction in Divine things to the people whom they addressed. 2. They not only taught many: they were also made the happy instruments of leading a great multitude to believe in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 3. God made them the instruments of confirming the souls of the disciples. 4. God had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. II. To WHOM THE APOSTLES REHEARSED THE THINGS WHICH GOD HAD DONE BY THEIR INSTRUMENTALITY. "They gathered the Church together," &c. Let us inquire, what were the discriminating marks by which the primitive Churches were distinguished? 1. By their disunion with the world. The primitive Christians had their "conversation in the world" (2 Cor. i. 12), and mixed promiscuously with human society, "working with their own hands" (1 Cor. iv. 12). They were not "slothful in business"; but "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord" (Rom. xii. 11). Notwithstanding, they held no unnecessary intercourse with ungodly men, never selecting them as companions; for "the friendship of the world is enmity with God" (James iv. 4). Although they were in the world, they were not of it. 2. The members of the primitive Churches were distinguished by the sanctity of their characters, and the consistency of their conduct. Each of them could adopt the language of St. Paul (Gal. ii. 20). The principles by which they were actuated were faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and love to His holy name. III. WHAT WERE THE MOTIVES THAT INDUCED THE APOSTLES TO REHEARSE WHAT GOD HAD DONE WITH THEM? 1. We may conceive that it was done to express the warm and grateful effusions of their hearts. 2. The apostles rehearsed what God had done by their means, to gladden the hearts of others. 3. They rehearsed what God had done by them, as a public acknowledgment of the obligations under which they were laid to Him. (*R. Treffry.*) **And how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.**—*God opening doors*:—He who has the keys of David can open all doors. No preacher must assume these keys to himself, but must pray that God, who only can use them effectually, will do so. And if anything is to be effected for the salvation of souls, God must open four doors—the door

of the preacher's mouth, the doors of the hearer's ear and heart, the door of heaven. (*K. Gerok.*) *The door of faith*:—I. This metaphor sets forth that THE SIMPLE ACT OF TRUST IN GOD, AS REVEALED IN CHRIST, IS THE WAY BY WHICH WE PASS INTO THE HOUSE OF GOD. Christ says, "I am the Door," and faith is the means of access. This faith is the outer door, the vestibule which leads to the real opening by which we enter into all the mystery and the sweetness of the Divine home. It is a very little, low door. There are a great many much more pretentious ways to God held out to men. There are the doors of contemplation, of asceticism, of ceremonial, of a self-righteous, proud, purity of life; but a man cannot get more than a step inwards if he tries them. But there is a narrow portal yonder, and if a man will go down upon his knees, and if he will leave his sins outside, it will be like one of those narrow passages with a little tiny aperture in it, where a hunted race used to take up their abode, and which widened out into a broad apartment where a man could stand in safety and warmth and home. We go through this narrow door of trust, but we come out into the large room of our Father's house. II. The other side of the metaphor suggests THE MEANS BY WHICH GOD CAN ENTER INTO US. The door into our hearts is faith. There is no possibility, in heaven or in earth, for God to come with His blessings into any man's heart except through the door of that man's faith. You take a flask, seal it hermetically, tie a bit of canvas over the mouth of it, pitch that with tar, and plunge it into the Atlantic; and the inside of it will be as dry as if it was in the midst of African deserts. And as long as a man's heart is hermetically sealed, which it is by the absence of faith, it is all one to him, as if there were no mercy. The ocean of mercy and love is all outside of him. Notice, in passing, how small a thing a door is—just a piece of timber worth a few shillings. Yes! but if a king comes in, there is a dignity about it. Faith in itself is nothing; it is precious because it is a means by which we lay hold upon precious things. III. THIS DOOR IS TO BE KEPT OPEN BY OURSELVES. We read of Lydia's heart being opened by the Lord; and we read of Christ knocking at the door, waiting for our opening of it to Him. These are two halves of a great truth. Lydia's heart would never have been opened had she not willed. You are responsible for exercising and for continuing to exercise this act of faith. This is one of those doors that shut to in a moment if not clasped back. Day by day we must get rid of the world's rubbish that tries to choke up the doorway, by prayer, by effort to expel the evil. The Lord stands before each of us and summons us, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors: and the King of glory shall come in." Let us answer, "Come in, Thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest Thou without!" (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The open gate of salvation*:—The trouble with many people is that they want to have a hundred curious questions about God and heaven answered before they come to Christ and trust in Christ. They do not act so in other matters. If a man is out in the woods at night and has lost his way, he does not sit down on a log and wait for the sun to rise, or for some one to kindle a bonfire that shall illuminate the whole forest. No, no. If the glimmer of a candle reaches his eye, no matter how faint and far away, he rejoices—he begins at once to move in that direction. The light shows that he can be saved if he will follow it. And it is so with even the feeblest shining of the light of life which reaches a man. Let him be faithful to what it reveals, and he is sure of salvation. Says Dr. Parkhurst: "Light is a sure guide, because, unlike sound, it goes in straight lines. If you were to strike the tired, diminished end of a sunbeam a million million miles from the sun, you are on the certain track of the sun the instant you begin treading upwards the glittering highway that that sunbeam spreads out for you. And wherever and howsoever far out upon the circumference of Christ's character you take your position and begin threading inward any one of its radiating lines, you move by a line as straight as a sunbeam towards the heart and centre of the entire matter. One radius is as good as another for finding the centre. Each of the twelve gates thresholded a main avenue of the heavenly Jerusalem." The gate of heaven is not away up yonder; it is wherever we look to Christ as the Opener of heaven to the penitent and believing soul. He said, "I am the door; by Me if any man enter in he shall be saved." The gospel, whenever we study it as earnest seekers after truth, presents to us one of the pearly gates of paradise. *God's open doors*:—There are few men who would pass through a gold mine, having full permission to carry away with them choicest specimens of its choicest treasures, who would not make good use of such an opportunity. All along the highway of life God is setting before each traveller opportunities to be and to do, which are far more valuable

than the richest treasures of gold or gems which earth offers. These opportunities are so many open doors which lead to the treasure houses of God, prepared for all who seek, and offered to all who ask. (*H. W. Beecher.*)

CHAPTER XV.

VERS. 1–29. **And certain men which came down from Judæa taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised . . . ye cannot be saved.**—*Disturbers of the Church* :—I. CERTAIN MEN CAME DOWN FROM JUDÆA. 1. Probably they were not appreciated at home. 2. They brought all their intolerance with them. 3. And the Church at Antioch had to suffer. 4. One bigot inside a Church can cause more dissension than two sceptics outside. II. WHEN CERTAIN MEN COME DOWN FROM JUDÆA. 1. They may sometimes be profitably invited to go back again. 2. It is the wisest course to seek advice from the great Head of the Church. (*S. S. Times.*) *Controversies and contentions* :—We have had dissensions before with unbelieving Jews or unconverted Gentiles; but we have now to come to controversies within the Church. There are three of these here:—I. A CONTROVERSY THAT RESOLVED ITSELF ULTIMATELY INTO ONE OF DOCTRINE, THOUGH IT BEGAN WITH RITUALISM. 1. In all great movements it is always found that for some time the new and the old overlap each other, and that more or less of collision takes place between them. Men with certain fixed habits of thought and feeling may be compelled to accept some great truth; but they may not be able to accept it with all its conditions, or with all its logical consequences. This was the case in the Church with respect to the relations between Jew and Gentile. Certain Pharisaic members of the Church in Jerusalem accepted the Messiah as the Saviour of the world on the condition of the other nations becoming Jews! They could not understand how that which had once been established by Divine authority could pass away. Certain of these men came down to Antioch and began to disseminate their opinions. Paul and Barnabas met the men by argument, but the Church became so disturbed, that it was judged expedient to get some settlement of the question from the apostles. 2. Paul and Barnabas accordingly went to Jerusalem, and the former refers to this visit in Gal. ii. 1–9. Nor is there any discrepancy between the two accounts. Paul might be deputed by the Church, and at the same time be moved by revelation. The deputation might have been in consequence of the Divine guidance which Paul had received, or it might have been in consequence of the deputation being appointed that the apostle was directed to avail himself of it for a kindred object. This probable double object of the journey is worth attention. During the journey from which Paul had just returned, the powers of an apostle had been displayed. When he returns to Antioch he does not put down the controversy by authority. He felt, perhaps, that, as the elder apostolic men had not heard what "God had done by him," his position, as the commissioned apostle of the Gentiles, had by them yet to be recognised. This, then, was a personal matter, which might yet be important to his action and influence. It was in relation to this, as I apprehend, that he had the "revelation" he refers to. As deputed by the Church, he went for the settlement of the controversy; as Divinely directed, he went "privately to them of reputation," that his authority might be recognised. 3. But there is another matter. Paul says "he took Titus with him," while Luke does not mention Titus. But mere silence is no argument; while Titus may have been one of the "certain other" (ver. 2). But, even if not, the apostle may have chosen "to take Titus with him" in connection with his own special object. He determined to have what was in dispute, not only as a matter of argument, but of fact. Hence he appeared with a converted Gentile, determined, as the apostle of such, to stand by the side of one confessedly uncircumcised, thus proclaiming his equality as a brother in the Lord. 4. The deputation was received by "the whole Church and the apostles and elders." Paul and Barnabas gave a general account of their ministry, and immediately some of the Pharisees raised the question (ver. 5). It was then determined that a day should be appointed when the elders and the apostles should consider the matter. Now, my idea is, that between this preliminary meeting and the day when they came together for the discussion, Paul and Barnabas had that private meeting with the apostles which he mentions in Gal. ii. It is very likely that the Pharisees at

the first meeting, knowing that there was a Gentile with Paul, demanded that he should submit to their rite of initiation. The apostle was quite prepared for this, but gave way to it, "no, not for an hour." He at once consulted with those "who were of reputation," and communicated to them the gospel that he preached among the Gentiles. They received the communication, recognised Paul's apostolic character, and "gave to him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship." 5. Seeing how impossible it is to do public business in a great assembly unless you have the thing marked out beforehand, I think this private interview was used for coming to such an agreement as decided the leaders as to the course to adopt. When they "came together," just as in our House of Commons a number of comparatively undistinguished men are allowed to spend their strength while the leaders reserve themselves to wind up the argument—a number of unnamed individuals opened the controversy. After the matter had been thoroughly "ventilated," it became the duty of the leaders to interfere. (1) Peter got up and referred to a matter of fact in which he was the principal actor—the conversion of Cornelius, which he regarded as proving the equality of Jew and Gentile in Christ. "Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul." Just notice how little things may possess great significancy. On the journey "Barnabas and Saul" was changed to "Paul and Barnabas"; but here, where Barnabas was so well known, how natural it is that he should be made prominent! It is a stroke so fine that a fiction-writer would hardly have thought of it. (2) "Barnabas and Paul" then rose up, and they, too, referred to facts. (3) Then James, the president, addressed the assembly. As the others had referred to what God had done, he referred to what God had said. He showed that the old prophecies were the basis of the new facts; that they had reference ultimately to the Gentiles being received into the Church. He suggested, therefore, that they should not trouble the Gentile converts by the impositions of the law, but should recommend them, as a matter of expediency, to abstain from certain things which were necessary for the preservation of social intercourse between them and their brethren. This suggestion was accepted. But something else was also recommended; and here you will observe what capital business men these apostles were. The suggestion of James was reduced to writing, and they elected some of their own body to go to Antioch, to confirm, by word of mouth, what was said in the letter. What an admirable arrangement this was! The men went down to Antioch and "delivered the epistle." "The Gentiles were glad, and rejoiced for the consolation." II. A REBUKE PROVOKED BY AN OUTWARD ACT, BUT WHICH SPRANG FROM LOYALTY TO TRUTH (Gal. ii. 11, &c.). The conduct attributed to Peter was just like him. He was a man of impulse, an earnest, sincere man, but wanting in moral courage, and sensitive to others' opinion. Besides, it is quite in keeping with human nature, that social feelings, custom, and prejudice should be practically stronger than a decision of the understanding. You may proclaim by law that the negro shall be recognised as a man and a brother; and yet you will find that white men shrink from the negro, though perfectly assenting to the righteousness of the law which would place him at their side. Some even of your eloquent orators, who talk largely about human equality, may be found to bow to a social prejudice. It is human nature, and it is constantly to be seen in respect to ecclesiastical parties. Peter's pusillanimity was contagious. Others "dissembled with him," and even Barnabas was for a season seduced. Paul, who looked at things in their principles and issues, saw in such conduct far more than Peter suspected. Hence his "withstanding him to the face," &c. The error of the Judaisers and the error of Peter are the faults of human nature. Few are there, indeed, in any Church who do not need to be reminded that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink," &c. III. A DISPUTE ARISING OUT OF PERSONAL FEELING (vers. 36–41). Barnabas, when he came back from Jerusalem, had most likely brought down his nephew Mark with him, or he might have accompanied Peter; and Barnabas wished, when the second journey was proposed, that he should go with them. Paul would not hear of it. There were no doubt faults on both sides. Barnabas might have been too lenient; Paul too severe. It is no use attempting to smooth over matters. The men were wrong, and evidently gave way to bad temper and strong words. The "paroxysm was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder the one from the other," and the pious work of their joint apostolic visitation of the churches was given up! From the infirmity of the men, and the honesty of the historian, much may be learnt. In conclusion, take the three things in reverse order. 1. This schism between Paul and Barnabas was but temporary. We find that afterwards Mark was associated with Paul, and

served with him in the gospel. Barnabas and Paul, too, were brought into friendly relations again. It was impossible for such good men, alike servants of the Most High God and fellow-workers with Him, "to keep their anger for ever." 2. It was the same with respect to Paul and Peter. It was just like Peter—with his warm, loving, and honest soul, his tenderness of conscience, and genuine humility—to refer, in one of his Epistles, to those of his "beloved brother Paul," though he probably knew that one of them contained the record of his weakness. 3. In regard to the "council," we learn the evil of aggravating sectional differences, and insisting on them as terms of communion and salvation. Ritual peculiarities, matters of Church government, external and secondary things which are not of the essence of that "faith" which unites to Christ, and "purifies the heart," are not to be raised into walls of separation. "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God." (*T. Binney, D.D.*) *Church controversy*:—From this interesting chapter learn that—I. CONTROVERSIES ARE UNAVOIDABLE, AND ARE A SIGN OF LIFE AND ACTIVITY. They are preferable to the peace of the graveyard. It is through controversy that truth is developed and error defeated. All the great doctrines, the Trinity, the Incarnation, justification, &c., have come out as pure gold from the furnace of theological dispute. Only, let controversy be conducted in a Christian spirit, and with a single eye to the cause of truth. II. THE BEST WAY TO SETTLE A CONTROVERSY IS BY FULL DISCUSSION AND PERSONAL CONFERENCE. Even inspired apostles did not decide the question by mere authority, but travelled all the way to Jerusalem to secure a general understanding, after giving a full hearing to the opposition. It is good for Christians to come together, to think and talk together. In the multitude of counsellors there is safety. One man may be wiser than a whole multitude, but if he can convince the multitude, his judgment is all the more powerful. III. SYNODICAL CONFERENCES ARE CLEARLY SANCTIONED BY APOSTOLIC EXAMPLE AND PRECEDENT. But the time and number are left to expediency. They may be annual, triennial, or occasional; local, diocesan, provincial, national, or œcumenical; advisory or legislative; all depends upon the necessities of the Church, which vary in different periods and countries. IV. THE COMPOSITION OF A SYNOD SHOULD BE DEMOCRATIC. The apostles might have decided the controversy by their own personal weight and authority; but they preferred to confer with the brotherhood, and to allow a free and open discussion. The council of Jerusalem consisted of "the whole Church" (chap. xv. 6–22). It is therefore a departure from apostolic practice if synods have become purely clerical and hierarchical. This is contrary to the principle of the general priesthood of the laity, which gives every believer the right to take an active part in the government and all the general interests of the Church. (*P. Schaff, D.D.*) *Controversy, frequently the result of misunderstanding*:—Some time ago I went down to the Lookout Mountain, and an old resident said to me, "Our soldiers fought bravely up there above the clouds; but sometimes the mists were so heavy that they could not distinguish friends from foes, and struck at each other." (*J. M. Buckley, D.D.*) *Controversialists*:—It's a great pity we can't agree better. They are small, insignificant beings who quarrel oftenest. There's a magnificent breed of cattle in the Vale of Clwyd—the most beautiful vale in Wales. They have scarcely any horns, but an abundance of meat; yet if you ascend the hills on every side, there, on the heights, you find a breed which grows scarcely anything but horns, and from morning to night all you hear is the constant din of clashing weapons. So there are many Christians who live on the heights—but on very cold and barren ones. Everything they eat grows into horns, the strength of which they are constantly testing. (*J. Thomas.*) *Controversy among Christians*:—I saw once a little incident in Scottish history. It was at the time when conflicts were being waged between two factions in Scotland. One of them was represented by the garrison in the old castle at Edinburgh, and the townspeople were on the other side. They fell into a very serious fight about surrendering the town. It was the easiest thing in the world for the castle to subdue whatever force was brought against it. Those of you who have been there know how commanding a position it occupied. In a very little while they opened a terrific cannonade on the town. They were soon subdued. It was an easy victory. But they found that the explosions of their cannon had shaken the rock beneath them and opened the fissures so widely that the waters in the wells that the garrison lived upon had run away into nothing. I don't believe we can afford to be victorious over each other, and that Christian denomination that holds its own by the destruction of any other one will find that its fissures beneath will carry away the water of piety and grace on which it lives,

(*C. S. Robinson.*) *A catholic platform:*—Dr. Duncan was in Leghorn, Italy, when two godly shipmasters came to the port—the one from Leith, the other from England—the one a Presbyterian, the other a Wesleyan. The Wesleyan came and asked him to preach in his ship. "Oh," said he, "I could not do that; for you see I am a Calvinist and you are an Arminian, and I might say something to injure your feelings." "Sir," was the reply, "what we wish you to do is to come and preach against the devil." That is certainly a catholic platform. Calvinist and Arminian should always be agreed to preach against the devil, and in the name of a common Master. *Controversies, after effects of:*—"Old religious factions are volcanoes burned out," says Burke; "on the lava and ashes and squalid scoriæ of old eruptions grow the peaceful olive, the cheering vine, and the sustaining corn." Those who have seen the sides of Vesuvius can well appreciate the force of this image. There indeed may be seen tracts of desolation; bare, black, and lurid, beyond any other which earth can show. These are where the sulphur still lingers and repels every effort of vegetation. But there are also tracts, close adjoining to them, and even in the midst of them, where the green vineyard, the grey olive, the golden orange, and the springing herb mark that, out of the attrition and decomposition of the ancient streams of lava, the vital forces of nature can assert themselves with double vigour, and create a new life under the very ribs of death. So it is with extinct theological controversies. So far, indeed, as they retain the bitterness, the fire and brimstone, of personal rancour and malignity, they are, and will be to the end of time, the most barren and profitless of all the works of man. But if this can be eliminated or corrected, it is undeniable not only that truths of various kinds take root and spring up in the soil thus formed, but that there is a fruitful and useful result produced by the contemplation of the transitory character of the volcanic eruptions which once seemed to shake the world. (*Dean Stanley.*) *The gospel not a matter for controversy, but for use:*—A huge fragment of rock from an adjacent cliff fell upon a horizontal part of the hill below, which was occupied by the gardens and vineyards of two peasants. It covered part of the property of each; nor could it be easily decided to whom the unexpected visitor belonged; but the honest rustics, instead of troubling the gentlemen of the long robe with their dispute, wisely resolved to end it by each party excavating the half of the rock on his own grounds, and converting the whole into two useful cottages, with comfortable rooms and cellars for their little stock of wine, and there they now reside with their families. After such a sort will wise men deal with the great doctrines of the gospel; they will not make them the themes of angry controversy, but of profitable use. To fight over a doctrine is sorry waste of time, but to live in the quiet enjoyment of it is the truest wisdom. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christian liberty:*—I. DISPUTED. The Church at Antioch was made up of both Jews and Gentiles (chap. xi. 19-23), living in complete harmony. The Church was prosperous. When this is the case the devil tries to get in and break up its concord. Here—1. There were those who affirmed that, "Except ye be circumcised," &c. Note—(1) The doctrine which meant that the law, with all its requirements and penalties, was still in force. (2) The advocates of the doctrine. "False brethren" (Gal. ii. 4). They assumed an authority which they did not possess, and which was repudiated by the Church (ver. 24). 2. Paul and Barnabas were their opposers (Gal. ii. 5). It will be interesting to turn to Paul's indignant utterances against circumcision as a saving ordinance (Gal. v. 2, vi. 12, &c.). And yet this same Paul afterwards circumcised Timothy (chap. xvi. 3). But not as necessary to salvation, only that he might preach salvation to the Jews more acceptably. Here he fought the doctrine without compromise, because it was declared to be essential to salvation. 3. The result (ver. 2). Paul went up by revelation as well (Gal. ii. 2). Note—(1) Those sent. Paul and Barnabas, who had the confidence of the Church, and who had been the opponents of the doctrine. Among the "certain other of them" was Titus (Gal. ii. 3), and probably some who believed in circumcision. (2) The wisdom of sending. It sent the dispute where it would receive an authoritative answer. There is no need of a Church being torn asunder by any controversy when it acts in the manner and with the spirit of the Church at Antioch. (3) The journey. To Paul and Barnabas it was almost a triumphal march (ver. 3). II. DENIED. 1. The reception. Paul and Barnabas were accorded, seemingly, a formal and cordial welcome. To men of repute, such as James, Cephas, and John, Paul privately explained the gospel he had been proclaiming among the Gentiles (Gal. ii. 2); and in this public gathering he and Barnabas "rehearsed all things that God had done with them." 2. The attack (ver. 5). In the council, therefore, the question was sharply and

clearly drawn as to whether faith in Christ was alone sufficient for salvation. III. PROVED. Observe—1. The composition of the council (ver. 22). There was no mere pontifical decision. Peter only argued the case, and voted like the rest. Nor did the apostles alone give judgment, but "the whole Church." 2. The arguments before the council. (1) Peter's. (*a*) God chose that by his mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. It was not Peter that moved in the matter, but God. Peter's scruples had to be overcome. (*b*) The reception of the Holy Spirit was conclusive evidence, for God knows the heart, and He never would send the Holy Spirit to take possession of those that were alien. (*c*) Their uncircumcision did not stand in the way of the cleansing of their hearts. His exhortation was short and to the point (ver. 10). The difficulty of bearing the yoke of Moses is set forth in Rom. vii. 7–14. Christ, in contrast, says, "My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." Peter ends by declaring, "But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in like manner as they." Not "they in like manner with us," but "we as they"—without our circumcision! (2) Paul and Barnabas's. They simply declared the miracles and wonders that God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. (3) James's. He makes it manifest that the acceptance of the Gentiles is no new thought, but had been pre-indicated in the Word of God (Amos ix. 11, 12). This appeal to prophecy, together with the evidence that God was moving in the matter, settled the controversy. The threatened schism in the Church was avoided, and liberty in the faith became a perpetual birthright. So was it that "the glorious liberty of the children of God" was vindicated. (*M. C. Hazard.*) *Times in Church history*:—There is a time—I. TO BUILD AND A TIME TO BREAK DOWN (Eccles. iii. 3). 1. To build the fence of the law of the Old Covenant. 2. To break down that fence in the New Testament. II. OF CONTENTION AND OF PEACE (Eccles. iii. 8). 1. Brotherly contention in order to find the right. 2. Brotherly peace after it is found. III. TO SPEAK AND TO BE SILENT (Eccles. iii. 7). 1. To speak boldly when it concerns convictions. 2. To be silent when it concerns obedience to God's will and brotherly unity. (*K. Gerok.*) *The first ecclesiastical council—the nature of the dispute*:—Science informs us that the fiercest hurricanes revolve around a perfect centre of calm. This chapter tells us of disturbance in the centre of the Church. A little examination of this dissension will show that it is, more or less, a type of all Church disputes. It was a conflict between—I. THE RITUALISTIC AND THE SPIRITUAL (ver. 1). 1. The names of these breakers of Church peace are not given, nor do we require them. They were not persons of any authority. Their religion had more to do with the senses than with the soul, with the form than with the spirit. I can conceive of them urging—(1) That the law of Moses was the law of God, and therefore immutable. (2) That the religion of Messiah was to develop, and not abrogate, the Levitical economy. 2. The new religion was, on the other hand, pre-eminently spiritual; it taught that "circumcision or uncircumcision availeth nothing," &c. II. THE TRADITIONAL AND THE PROGRESSIVE. 1. For many ages the Gentile who sought religious light could only obtain it through the Jew. These Judaising teachers had felt that what had been must continue. They were institutional conservatives—they could not give up the past. 2. On the other hand, Christianity was pre-eminently progressive; it made the old a mere starting-point. It left Palestine for the world, the Jew for the race, the temple of Jerusalem for the temple of the universe, teaching men everywhere that "God is a Spirit," &c. III. THE FETTERING AND THE FREE. To bind the Gentile converts to this Jewish rite would be to enslave their souls; hence Peter exclaimed, "Why tempt ye God to put a yoke on the necks of the disciples?" To tie the soul to a ceremony is to enslave it, and this those bigots now sought to do. They would fetter the limbs of a new faith with the trammels of old ceremonies. Christianity is freedom; it invests the soul with "the glorious liberty of the children of God." (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The first ecclesiastical council—the settlement of the dispute*:—I. A DEPUTATION FROM THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH, AND A FULL DISCUSSION OF THE SUBJECT AT A GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH (vers. 4, &c.). (1) It was a general synod, not a mere meeting of the apostles and elders. It is not necessary to believe that every Church member was present, but that all were represented. (2) It was a popular assembly. Notice—1. The speech of Peter. It is noteworthy that there is no assumption of superiority on Peter's part. He speaks only as one of their number, strongly, but with deference to the common judgment. He shows that Jewish ritualism was—(1) Unnecessary. He quotes his own experience in proof of this, and states that his ministry to the Gentiles was—(*a*) By the appointment of God. "God made choice among us." (*b*) Divinely sanctioned. "Giving

them the Holy Ghost." (*c*) Productive of the same spiritual results. "Put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." This work the gospel effects as well without Jewish ritualism as with it, and achieves it in connection with faith and the agency of the Holy Ghost. (2) Inexpedient (ver. 10). (*a*) Ritualism is an intolerable yoke. (*b*) Men, by their bigoted conduct, may tempt God to put this yoke upon people. Were England to renounce her Protestantism, she would tempt God to put the yoke of Popery upon this country. (3) Contrary to his faith (ver. 11). This is the last speech we have of Peter. Adieu, great apostle! 2. The speech of James. The speech of Peter produced such a deep impression, that, amidst breathless "silence," Barnabas and Paul arose. Their speeches are not recorded; only so much is said about them as to show that they were historic. But the speech of James is given. He was chairman, summed up the matter, and gave his judgment. He accepts the position of Peter, and supports it by a prophetic quotation, which points to a great restoration—(1) Among the Jewish people. The building up of that which was in ruins. (2) That would lead the Gentiles to seek after the Lord. (3) Effected by that God who sees the end from the beginning. 3. The decision contained four prohibitions. Against—(1) Food which had been offered to idols. (2) "Fornication"—mentioned in connection with idolatry, because horrible licentiousness mingled with the devotions of those heathens. (3) "Things strangled"—things held in abomination among the Jews, and in high esteem among the heathens. (4) "Blood" (Gen. ix. 4; Lev. x. 14; Deut. xii. 23; 1 Sam. xiv. 34). II. A DEPUTATION BACK TO ANTIOCH WITH THE RESULTS OF THE DELIBERATION (vers. 22, &c.). The apostolic letter may be regarded—1. As a homage to the right of private judgment. It is not an enactment enforced by penalties, nor a mere moral appeal addressed to a corporate body; it is directed to the judgment of every member of the Church in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. The questions at issue were vital to every man, and to every man appeal is made. The whole Bible recognises this right. 2. As a condemnation of ecclesiastical decrees. Its benign and tender spirit, touching references, popular and advisory features, are in striking contrast to the deliverances of later councils. Little men, who claim to be the successors of these apostles, have issued decrees whose arrogance and intolerance insult the Christian name. 3. As a charter of the Church's liberties. With this letter issuing from the great council of the mother Church at Jerusalem, the result of apostolic deliberation and heavenly guidance, we claim a liberty from the reign of ritualism. III. THE ASSEMBLING OF THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH TO RECEIVE THE COMMUNICATION FROM THE MOTHER CHURCH (ver. 30). The whole Church is assembled. Paul and Barnabas, Barsabas and Silas, deliver the letter, which yields great "consolation." The strangers exhort the brethren and confirm them, and after a little while return home. Conclusion: Such was the method of settling this first discussion in the Christian Church. How simple, wise, and successful! Would that more recent councils had imitated it. (*Ibid.*) *The assembly at Jerusalem*:—1. Previous apostolic speeches were for the most part statements or vindications of the gospel. The only one which prepares us for the present discussion is that of Peter in explanation of his conduct towards Cornelius, which for a time silenced the murmurers. But the question was not dead; it only slept awhile, and awoke with energy when the gospel was openly carried to the Gentiles in Syria and Asia Minor. 2. The "apostles and elders" were seated in order, as constituting a Christian Sanhedrin. On the earlier occasion we read of "the apostles and the brethren." In the interval, presbyters had been appointed. There is no mention of an institution of this order, as there is of that of deacons; and for this reason—that the latter was a new order; but the Jews had always had elders, and, as a matter of course, continued that order in the new Christian fellowship. Along with their acknowledged leaders were assembled many of the private Christians. 3. As battles have often begun with the skirmishing of light troops, that could decide nothing, but could search and clear the ground for the onset of the battalions that were to decide the fortune of the day, so in this assembly there was much informal discussion before the leaders spoke. At last it was evident that the "much questioning" was not moving the subject any nearer to solution, and so—I. "PETER ROSE UP." It had always been his way to take the initiative; and the illustrious part he had played on and since the day of Pentecost entitled him to much honour and deference. He saw no need for lengthened discussion. He was guided to his conclusion by the knowledge of facts. The matter was in his view virtually settled by the case of Cornelius. It was not the bent of this apostle's mind to plough his way through a deep or care-

ful argument; but he knew how to grasp relevant facts, and make them tell. Why should the objectors "tempt God" by assuming that He would not save Gentiles elsewhere as He had saved them in the house of Cornelius? And for what end did they seek thus to restrict the mercy of God, and limit the range of the Christian Church? Was it to impose on the Gentiles a yoke which even Jews had been unable to bear? One thing was quite certain, that salvation for all men was "through the grace of the Lord Jesus"; and no ceremonial or traditional restriction on that grace could be allowed. We can imagine the satisfaction with which St. Paul, who understood the question better than any one, listened to this clear evangelical statement. He remembered it, and was obliged to remind St. Peter of it on a future occasion at Antioch, when that apostle acted in a manner inconsistent with his speech. St. Peter always spoke with effect, and the whole assembly felt the force of his unanswerable words and "kept silence." So far truth and charity had gained the day. II. The silence was broken by THE MISSIONARIES, perhaps by pre-arrangement with the leading apostles, perhaps on the happy inspiration of the moment. Barnabas seems to have spoken first—a judicious arrangement, because he had a stronger hold on the confidence of the Church at Jerusalem. Neither were likely to surrender any just claim of Judaism without good cause. Barnabas was a Levite, and Paul a carefully educated Pharisee, who even in youth had been a Sanhedrist. They did not so much argue as narrate what God had wrought, the logical deduction from which was that if God has not refused those Gentile converts on account of their uncircumcision, why should the Church refuse them? And if God gave to them His Holy Spirit, why should men hesitate to give them baptism? III. ST. JAMES THEN MOVED THE JUDGMENT OF THE COURT. This fell naturally to him on account of his position as president. His character gave great weight to his opinion, and he was not implicated in any personal intercourse with Gentiles, as Peter was. This is the only speech of St. James which has been preserved. It consists of four sentences:—1. He recognised the importance and relevancy of the case referred to by his colleague, whom he characteristically styled in the Hebrew form "Symeon." 2. He went to the Old Testament to find prophetic sanction. A mind like his craved some ground of Scripture, as well as of observation and reason. He found it in Amos (ix. 11, 12; LXX.). The prophet had foretold that the fallen tabernacle of David would be rebuilt, and that a blessing would fall on the Gentiles. The erection of the Church of Christ, the Son of David, was a restoration of the tabernacle of David; and there came into prominent view those words which intimated that the Lord's name would be "called" on by the Gentiles. Was not this being fulfilled in the conversion to Christ of a people whom God was now calling out of the heathen world for His name? And, if so, it certainly was not necessary for them to conform to the separate rites of the Jews. 3. In pursuance of this view, he proposed a decision of the case. The Gentile converts should not be harassed by the Jewish law. Enough that they should conform to certain rules of abstention which could not be called irksome, and which might in some degree conciliate those who were apt to regard all Gentiles alike as unclean. 4. In his last sentence he touched with soothing hand the susceptibilities of the more keen Jewish partisans, and his counsel became the unanimous resolution of the whole conclave. The Gentile liberty was secured, and, at the same time, the peace of the whole Church was promoted. Conclusion: The whole discussion suggests—1. The advantage of holding Christian assemblies for the adjustment of difficulties. The narrative is fatal to the Popish system of Church government; for there was open discussion, and the decision went out with concurrence of the whole Church. It is also incompatible with a bare system of independency, which leaves every local church to steer its own course. It is easy to point the finger at councils which have been bigoted and superstitious; but these were not constituted like this. Give us a council of the elders of the Church, as the trusted leaders, deliberating in presence of their brethren, and you furnish the best possible instrument for adjusting difficulties, allaying jealousies, maintaining truth and peace. 2. The debt of gratitude due to those men who settled what are now to us dead controversies. The questions that tormented early Christianity are nothing now but matters of remote history. Thanks to the men who refuted these heresies, and above all to the Spirit of Truth who enabled them to maintain sound doctrine! The question of circumcision which troubled the infancy of the Church so much is now quite dead. But we should remember that our liberty in Christ was won only by a hard struggle, and should honour the men, who broke down the claims of an arrogant Judaism. But even this decision did not settle the question. St.

Paul had still to fight it out in almost every Church. Thanks to him most of all, and then to other Jewish brethren who championed our freedom from a Jewish yoke! (*D. Fraser, D.D.*) *The assembly at Jerusalem: a model*:—I. ITS OCCASION: a life question of the Church (vers. 5, 11). 1. Not of faith, for concerning that there was no dispute, and that no assembly can finally decide. 2. But of life, of the practical application of the incontestable truths of faith to ecclesiastical ordinance and Christian practice. II. ITS SPIRIT—truly evangelical. A spirit of—1. Truth, depending on the Word of God and Christian experience. 2. Love, seeking not its own, but the good of the whole. III. ITS RESULT—a blessing for the Church. 1. Progress by the decisive victory over antiquated external ordinances; but—2. On the ground of steadfast Christian faith and love. (*K. Gerok.*) *The assembly at Jerusalem: its importance*:—I. THE QUESTION that was discussed: a question concerning salvation. II. THE SPIRIT in which it was discussed: a spirit of love and truth. III. THE RULE according to which it was decided: God's testimony in word and deed. IV. THE CONFESSION which lay at the foundation of the resolution determined on (ver. 11). (*Ibid.*) *Law and gospel*:—God hath written a law and a gospel: the law to humble us, and the gospel to raise us up; the law to convince us of our misery, and the gospel to convince us of His mercy; the law to discover sin, and the gospel to discover faith and Christ (*J. Mason, M.A.*) *Essentials and non-essentials*:—A gentleman who was in company with the Rev. John Newton lamented the violent disputes that often take place among Christians respecting the non-essentials of Christianity, and particularly Church government. "Many," he said, "seem to give their chief attention to such topics, and take more pleasure in talking on these disputable points than on spiritual religion, the love of Christ, and the privileges of His people." "Sir," said the venerable old man, "did you ever see a whale ship? I am told that when the fish is struck with the harpoon, and feels the smart of the wound, it sometimes makes for the boat, and would probably dash it to pieces. To prevent this, they throw a cask overboard, and when it is staved to pieces they throw over another. Now, sir," added Mr. Newton, "Church government is the tub which Satan has thrown over to the people of whom you speak."

Vers. 3–6. **They therefore, being brought on their way.**—*Working on the road*:—1. For a little time the noise of controversy ceases. Paul and Barnabas might have taken a much shorter way to Jerusalem; but Paul, like the Master, always wished to do some work on the way. When Christ was apparently hastening to a particular locality, He would often on the road stop to do some intermediate miracle. So Paul said, "We will make this a missionary journey. So they passed through Phœnicia and Samaria—the district where Philip had done his wonderful works. We should all leave footprints behind us; people that come afterwards should know that we were there first. 2. Follow the apostles. They find a line of Churches all the way, generally speaking, from Antioch to Jerusalem. There were houses of call on the road. The pioneer had, by sacred influence, said, "Other and stronger men will be coming this road some day—be prepared for them." We, too, walk on roads that have been well trodden for us. We take the roads of a country as a matter of course. Who ever thinks of roads, or could suppose that a poet could wax eloquent upon road-making? Yet even so common a thing as a road is essential to civilisation. Surely as they passed along Paul and Barnabas would often think of Philip, and would often hear of him in the homes where they lodged. It is pleasant to see, in little wayside houses, the pictures of Wesley and Whitefield, and pastors of humbler name, who have lived in the locality. These pictures are texts. Despise not your forerunners. 3. What peeps we get into the domestic life of the time! The two men coming into a house turned it into an historical temple. There are some visits that transfigure the localities in which they are paid. And the little common feast, and the sort of talk which passes between men and unites men's hearts! Forget not the little idylls that help to make up the massive poetry of great histories. There were little occasions, as well as great ones, in the development of the Christian story. Hand-grips, and special prayers, and visits to the sick chamber, where the tenderest of all supplications were breathed, and still the men passed on, having to maintain a valiant and historical testimony in the face of the first council of the Christian Church. 4. As they went along what did they talk about? "Declaring the conversion of the Gentiles." There ought to be great joy when soldiers come from the field of war with the latest news. We soon rough down, by dumb applause,

the stumbling missionary who tries to tell us that the blood-red banner is floating higher than ever in the wind! The early Christians were full of their subject; we easily slip out of ours. They had but one theme, only it included all other themes. They took pleasure in their work; they liked Sunday better than Monday—nay, they made Sunday seven days long. 5. In ver. 4 note that the Church is spoken of in its unity. We have made it into a thousand. I do not object to denominations any more than I object to regiments; but as I expect all the regiments to bow to one throne, so I would expect all denominations to have common ground upon which they can have a common altar. Being received by the Church, the two speakers stood up to tell their tale. Have we no tale to tell? If a thief broke into your house, you would tell everybody about it. If your house was on fire, all the neighbourhood would know it. A man who has a tale to tell tells it; and he is right in doing so. We are not unwilling to speak, but we have no story to relate. 6. Look at ver. 5. The contention was Pharisaic. Not many of them believed, and those who did were greater opponents as believers than as unbelievers. There are hinderers in the Church as well as outside. This position was not only Pharisaic, it was founded upon a narrow reading of the letter. If Christianity is a square with well-defined walls, there are men who could stand in the middle of it and defend it bravely; but if Christianity is a horizon which recedes as we advance, and which has room enough within it for other universes tenfold larger than our own, they become bewildered, the letter is of little use to them, and so they make four corners for themselves, and subside within the prison of a creed. It is difficult for some men to see the bud in the seed. Christianity has its blossom as well as its root, its fruit as well as its blossom. The type only lives by its little self until the fulfilment comes, and then it passes away. They who upheld the law of Moses were Pharisees. How marvellous the providence that a Pharisee of the Pharisees was sent to answer them! They would have made short work of other men, but there arose a very prince of the blood, and in his presence they met an unexpected and successful check. A man who knows a smattering of a language may astound the villagers who never heard of it; but let a man arise who knows the language perfectly, and then the blatant pretender will fall away in shame. God grows His own men, and will always find His own champions. Let us rest in the God of truth, and the truth shall never be in want of a man of adequate capacity and needful eloquence to show its grandeur and enforce its claims. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 7–11. **And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up.**—*Peter's speech*:—Mark—I. THE TIME WHEN PETER SPOKE. "When there had been much disputing." That was the critical moment. Speeches acquire force from the time at which they are delivered. Wise men keep back as long as possible. Thus their wisdom goes for twice the value which it would be appraised at did they speak earlier in the discussion. Many a man who is not of first-rate ability allows all the ready tongues to talk first, to relieve their feelings, to show their weak ability, and to secure what noise, mistakenly called applause, they can. Then when the assembly has fatigued itself, and would be only too thankful for a deliverance from the wordy confusion, he rises, puts together the different opinions, finds the middle line, and invites the controversialists to join along that line of compromise. They hail him as a Daniel, though Daniel he is none! He came in at the right time. This is the way in all great assemblies. Peter, then, is growing in grace and knowledge. There was a time when he would have been heard first. Now that he has waited until there has "been much disputing," he will make his noblest speech. II. PETER KEPT TO FACTS. Over some ground we walk very daintily, because we are not quite sure of it; but Peter walks upon solid rock. "Men and brethren, ye know this is not a question of a speculative kind; I will ask you to walk with me over a road macadamised with facts." As Christian men, we might have gone farther upon our journey if we had not tried to cut it short by crossing bogs and swamps. The longest way about is often the shortest way home. How does Peter come to speak this new language? He has been in conference with Paul. Privately Paul has had interviews with them "which were of reputation." There are private processes of education going on in every life and in every house. We feel that Peter has touched the man to whom we owe doctrinal Christianity! He was an apt scholar. Keep company with the wise if you would grow in wisdom. III. IN PETER'S SPEECH YOU HAVE A WHOLE SYSTEM OF DIVINITY. I

know of nothing outside this deliverance. Here you have—1. The Trinity—"God," "the Holy Ghost," and "the Lord Jesus Christ." The Trinity must assert itself; it does not ask to be proved. 2. Divine sovereignty. "God made choice." "God gave them the Holy Ghost." "God put no difference between us and them." 3. The whole scheme of Judaism. A yoke which could not be borne, but needful at the time. We must have chafing before we can have rest. God must show us what the law really is in all its details and tyrannous demand, before we cry out for mercy, pity, and grace. 4. Salvation by grace (ver. 11). IV. PETER SURPASSES HIMSELF IN THE BREADTH OF HIS CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY. 1. He must have in all his thinking as its vital point Divine action. In fact, he says, "Men and brethren, this is a question that involves the Divine sovereignty; that being so, I start with this fact, that I went to the Gentiles against my convictions, my prejudice, my inclinations; but the law of gravitation drew me; it was God that inspired and directed me." The reason why we have so many superficial theories of life is that men exclude Divine action. It is not evolution that perplexes me, but creation; and I find no fuller answer than "God created the heavens and the earth." And so in the evolution of circumstances, the development of spiritual and moral history, I cannot consent to begin at some point indicated by a creature as limited as myself. Here, again, I say, "My difficulty is not with evolution, but with creation; and to that difficulty I find no answer so commanding, so gracious, as, 'Men and brethren, ye know that a good while ago—God.'" All the chapters of the Bible are hewed out of the quarry of its first verse! 2. Then Peter gives us a doctrine which has become commonplace to us; as uttered from his mouth it was a miracle. "And put no difference or distinction between us and them." We ourselves being the Gentiles received into the great Abrahamic circle, do not feel the value of the inclusion as we ought to do; but the men who were inside that enclosure, and thought they completed its circumference, when they saw a rent made in the circle of the covenant, and hordes of uncircumcised Gentiles coming in, were appalled and disgusted. What could you say to such men? Could you propose a theory of social evolution to them? They would have burned you with their angry glances! Peter went right into the broken circle, and said, "Ye know that a good while ago—God!" There are times when we must gather up our whole enthusiasm and reasoning and hope into the Divine name, and hurl it, like an infinite thunderbolt, against all the petty action and conceit of a narrow-minded age. Think of a Jew acknowledging that God put no distinction between himself and a barbarian! You do not wonder that Peter should afterwards write: "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." 3. And then how broad again his philosophy becomes when he says, "Why tempt ye God?" This urging of the law beyond its intended province is a temptation of God. This is not obedience; not homage; it is temptation. Even Divine ordinances are not to be thrust beyond Divine boundaries. Paul himself never made a grander speech. How singularly and wondrously God trains one man until he is almost another! (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 8, 9. **God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness.** — *God's sovereignty:*—It is the sovereign's stamp which settles the question as to the right of a coin to be counted current among loyal subjects of that sovereign. When God puts His stamp of approval on a man, or on a woman, or on a movement, that fact ought to weigh beyond any individual opinion as to the original propriety of such an approval. It may seem to us that the elder and more imposing Eliab is far better suited to the kingship than the youthful rustic David; but when God decides in favour of the latter, it is time for us to reverse our opinion on this point. So, also, as to preachers and methods of preaching, as to denominational peculiarities and modes of working, as to special agents and agencies in Christian endeavour; not what we thought God would approve, but what we find God has approved, ought to weigh most with us in deciding the question of our accepting or belittling that instrumentality or undertaking. Gamaliel's warning is as timely for our day as it was for his, in many a matter of treating Christian work and Christian workers. In opposing those who claim to stand for God, while they differ with us, we may "be found to be fighting against God." (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) **Purifying their hearts by faith.**—*Purity of heart:*—I. ITS NATURE. 1. By the "heart" we must understand the inner, as opposed to the outer, man—the spirit and not the flesh. Circumcision—indeed

any external ceremony, even Christian baptism can only affect the outer man. The text, therefore, in opposition to mere ceremonial purity speaks of purity of heart. 2. It is implied that the heart of man is by nature impure (Rom. i. 28–32). Perish then the delusion that the human heart is good! 3. It is to the purification of the heart that the text calls attention. Things are commonly said to be pure when they are simple and unmixed; and purity of heart implies sincerity and simplicity, as opposed to the base mixtures of hypocrisy and deceit. The work of Christian purity is commenced in regeneration. There is "a new creation: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." There are new views, principles, feelings. But these things are at first immature (1 John ii. 13). The law of progress is stamped on the whole economy of Christianity. Perfect purity is the goal at which it aims. This implies—(1) A complete deliverance from sin—its pollution and power. This is obviously implied in the word "pure." And here arises the difficulty, whether a perfectly pure state of heart is possible in the present life. Many contend only for the subjugation of sin, and not for its destruction, affirming that whilst the spirit remains in the flesh sin must remain in the spirit. But this is to ascribe some moral power to the flesh which it does not possess; sin is spiritual (Mark vii. 21, 22). Now Divine grace either can or cannot counteract this fearful state of things. If it cannot, then the work of human redemption, professedly effected by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, was inadequate. But if the grace of God can counteract the influence of sin, the question is settled. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." "Christ loved the Church . . . that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." But, say some, the work cannot be completed till death. Now, if this mean *by* death, it destroys itself, for death is an enemy whose office is simply to separate the soul from the body; if it mean *at* death, it may soon be exposed—for if Divine grace can purify the heart a moment before death, why not an hour? why not a month? why not a year? why not twenty, or even fifty years? why not now? (2) And because all sin is destroyed, love fills the heart. Hence obedience results from purity; "this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments." Every spring of feeling, and all the arcana of thought are sanctified by its magic touch. The wandering eye, the listening ear, the loquacious tongue, the busy hands, the willing feet are all actuated by the ruling principle of love to God. II. ITS AUTHOR. "The Holy Ghost," as Peter elsewhere says. "Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit." The Holy Spirit first convinces of the necessity of purity; for it is by His inward illumination that we discover the corrupt state of the heart. If we welcome this discovery we shall sorrow for and hate this indwelling sin. The same Spirit will create a strong desire for deliverance, which if cherished will express itself in earnest, wrestling prayer. This will be followed by the encouraging excitement of humble hope, and the filial confidence that the desire shall be granted. Whoever thus co-operates with the Holy Spirit, the Divine Author of purity of heart, will eventually be brought to the exercise of that faith which casts out sin and purifies the heart. The reason that so few Christians obtain this great salvation will now be manifest. They do not obey the truth, whereas the law of the Spirit is that we are sanctified through the truth. "Ye have purified your souls, in obeying the truth through the Spirit." III. ITS MEANS. "By faith." All salvation is obtained by faith. 1. Its warrant is the promises (see Ezek. xxxvi. 25–29; Deut. xxx. 6; 2 Cor. vi. 16). These are the believer's fulcrum. They do actually supply to him what Archimedes once boasted as his only deficiency to rival Omnipotence. "Give me a place on which to stand and I will move the world." But the promises of God supply the believer with a fulcrum by which he may move both earth and heaven. 2. The object of faith is the "precious blood" of Christ (Acts xxvi. 17, 18). IV. ITS SCOPE. It is offered to all. Whatever differences or distinctions men may make, God makes none. There is no difference with respect to—1. Our need of this great change. Throughout the world human nature is the same. "There is none righteous, no, not one." 2. The mode of purification. In every case it is by faith. (*H. J. Booth.*)

Faith purifying the heart from—I. PRIDE. 1. This is setting up the honour of self above the honour of God. It is self-worship, and refuses to recognise any righteousness but self-righteousness. 2. What is the very prime object of faith? What do I receive into my heart if I realise Christ's work for me? Is it not this,

that the mighty God, He who is greater than the greatest, higher than the highest, laid aside all His glory, and came down into the very depth of humiliation for me? If I live Christ, how can I worship self? When faith has once entered, what room is there for pride? Where is the boasted glory of man before the Eternal Word, who became flesh, and by the very hiding of His glory manifested it—through His humiliation entered into His exaltation? Where is human merit, when once the fulness of the rich stream of God's unmerited grace is shed over the soul? No; the life of faith is the death of pride. 3. But does faith substitute nothing for self thus dethroned? Far from this. With the sense of a man's own worthlessness comes the sense of his Redeemer's worth—comes love to God, the true answer and return of God's love to him. This last, faith apprehends; that other, faith renders. The humility of those who are born of the Spirit is exactly in proportion to their appropriation of the work of Christ. As He increases in a man's esteem, self decreases. And thus humility is the true work of faith. II. COVETOUSNESS—the inordinate valuing of created objects—the esteeming self not by self alone, but by the things wherewith self is surrounded and enriched. 1. We have in man all degrees of this sin, from the ambition which grasps empires to the miserly greed which hoards the farthing. And the secret of the sin is the same throughout all—the creature, not the Creator; my own possessions, not God's gifts; my position, my promotion, my increased income—not my stewardship before God; it is in every case a direct consequence of the substitution of self for Him. 2. And in every case faith in Christ is as directly opposed to it. If my inner regards are really fixed on Him who gave all He had, yea, Himself, for me, where is there room in me for covetous desires? Will not he whose life is hid with Christ in God be laying up treasures in heaven rather than on earth—be enriching his home rather than his tent in the wilderness? III. SELF-INDULGENCE—the love of pleasure—the inordinate valuing of our own delights in created objects. How does faith deal with this all but universal tendency? Who is its object? Is it not He who has solemnly told us that none can be His disciple without daily self-denial? Can a man be justified by faith in Him and disregard these His words? Understand me: the Christian who lives by faith in Christ can and does enjoy life in the best and highest sense; but he cannot be a seeker of pleasure—cannot surrender his noble privilege of self-denial for the bondage in which he sees the children of the world fettered. (*Dean Alford.*) *Faith purifying the heart:*—Peter was enabled through his experience to answer those who said that unless a man was circumcised he could not be saved. There is nothing like practical work for Christ to teach us Christ's truth. For the most part heretics are a set of theorisers. They do nothing, and then criticise those who are doing hard and successful service. Give a man practical work for Jesus and keep him at it, and he will, like Peter, learn as he goes on, and, like a river, filter as he flows. Peter could not continue to believe in restricting the gospel to the Jews after the conversion of Cornelius. His actual service refined his theory. If those who ruled botanical science never saw a flower, would you wonder if they ran into gross heterodoxies of belief? Let us consider the point upon which Peter's argument depends. I. THE AGENT OF HEART PURIFICATION—faith. There was nothing but faith in the case of Cornelius, faith born of hearing, and resting alone on Jesus. 1. Faith purified directly, not by month after month of contemplation; for, to the astonishment of the circumcised believers, the Holy Ghost fell upon them there and then. 2. Water baptism did not aid therein. The Lord will not permit us to mix up even His own ordinances with the work of His Spirit in purifying the heart by faith alone, and God forbid we ever should fall into such an error. 3. Do not, then, be looking for pure hearts within yourselves before you come to Christ by faith. Do not look for the fruits before you have the roots, but look by faith to the great Purifier, however impure you feel your heart to be. II. THE SECRET OF ITS POWER. Believing other things does not purify the soul; why does believing the gospel? I answer, because—1. God works by it (ver. 8). You know the old story of the sword of Scanderbeg, with which he used to cleave men in twain from the crown of the head downwards. As one looked at it he declared that he saw nothing about it to make it so fatal a weapon; but the other replied, "You should have seen the arm which was wont to wield it." Now faith looked at of itself appears to be contemptible; but who shall resist the everlasting Arm that wields it? This greater than Hercules careth little for the weakness of the instrument; but, behold, He cleanseth the Augean stable of our nature with no other agency than childlike faith. 2. God is at work in the heart by His Holy Spirit. Now, the Holy Spirit comes as a heavenly fire to consume sin, as a

flowing stream to cleanse away evil, and as a rushing mighty wind to chase away all that is foul and polluted in the stagnant air of the soul. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of holiness, and as He always dwells with faith, being its Author, its Strengthener and Guardian, where faith comes the heart will speedily be purified. III. THE SEAT OF ITS ACTION—the heart. Faith changes the current of our love, and alters the motive which sways us: this is what is meant by purifying the heart. It makes us love that which is good and right, and moves us with motives free from self and sin: this is a great work indeed. Hence the change which faith produces is—1. Radical and deep. It is a small matter to wash the outside of the cup and of the platter. 2. Thorough and complete. "Rend your hearts and not your garments." Faith lays the axe at the root, and heals the stream at the fountain head. 3. Operative throughout the whole life. A diseased heart means a sickly man all over. Neither can you have the heart right without its telling upon the entire nature. 4. Permanent. Restrain appetites which still remain, and the dog returns to his vomit; purify externals and leave the nature untouched, and the sow that was washed goes back to her wallowing in the mire. 5. Acceptable with God, who searcheth the heart. Man judgeth according to the outward appearance, but God looketh at the heart. IV. THE MODE OF ITS OPERATION. 1. Faith believes in sin as sin, and sees the horror of it as an offence against a holy and gracious God. 2. Faith delights to set Christ before the heart and to make it gaze upon His side pierced by sin, and therefore hates the sin which slew its best Friend. 3. Faith delighteth much in the Person of Christ, and therefore she sets before the soul His incomparable loveliness, as the well-beloved of saints. Thus is enkindled a vehement flame of love to Him, and this becomes a powerful purifier, for you cannot love Christ and love sin. 4. Faith has a wonderful art of realising her gracious privileges. What manner of persons then ought you to be? 5. Faith has yet further a wondrous power of bringing near the things to come. What could more effectually purify the heart than the vision of heaven which faith presents to us? 6. Power is gained by faith through pleading the promises of God. "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace." 7. Faith daringly lays hold upon the power of God Himself. How she smites the Philistines then! 8. Faith brings us real power to conquer sin by applying the blood of Christ. The blood of Jesus is the life of faith and the death of sin. All the saints overcome through the blood of the Lamb. 9. Faith gives us power against sin by mixing herself with all gospel ordinances—with hearing, communions, prayer, Bible study. Faith will enable you to draw nourishment out of ordinances, and make you vigorous against sin. 10. Faith rouses the new man to intense resistance of sin. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 11. **We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved.**—*The Christian's creed:*—A confession—I. OF PENITENCE, which rests on a clear consciousness of sin. II. OF HUMILITY, which attests the demerits of good works. III. OF FAITH, which has recognised the riches of God's love in Christ. IV. OF JOY, which is founded on the peace of a pardoned heart. (*Leonhardi and Spiegelhauer.*) *Salvation by grace:*—Consider—I. THE PECULIAR BLESSING OF THE GOSPEL. Salvation. This implies a bondage, in which the whole human race is involved. Not content with its sway in this world, sin pursues the sinner even beyond the grave. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." In the midst of this universal corruption, the voice of the Eternal, re-echoed by the sinner's conscience, rolls—"The soul that sinneth it shall die." "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." Is not this a yoke from which deliverance is essential? Yes! and from this the gospel proclaims deliverance: "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us"; and His disciples are emancipated, not only from the guilt, but also from the power of sin. II. THE CHANNEL THROUGH WHICH THIS BLESSING IS CONVEYED. "Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." Salvation is not the reward of merit, but the gift of grace; not the purchase of man's desert, but the unearned bounty of God's free favour. As it is freely offered, so must it be freely accepted. No unbelieving doubts and hesitation on account of the magnitude of the gift and our own unworthiness to receive it; no Pharisaical standing-out upon conditions which, if required, could never be fulfilled; but a humbling sense of our own unworthiness, coupled with a grateful sense of God's undeserved mercy. Free grace shines conspicuous throughout the whole plan of man's salvation. It was grace that planned the remedy ere yet the disease was

felt; it is grace that renders that remedy effectual. The Church was hewn out by grace, and by grace all its members are, as lively stones, built into a spiritual temple; and when the whole edifice shall be perfected, the Head-stone thereof shall be brought forth with shoutings, crying "Grace! grace!" unto it. Unhumbled men will doubtless be offended at this, and rejecting salvation as a gift, will endeavour to earn it as a reward by seeking to establish some distinction between themselves and more vulgar sinners; but this is all labour in vain. It has pleased God to pronounce, on the one hand, that "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight"; and on the other, that man is "saved by grace through faith." Salvation through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is the only salvation recognised in the Bible; the only salvation that will either exalt the holiness, vindicate the justice, and magnify the mercy of God, or speak peace to the sinner's conscience and assure him of acceptance with God. Such, then, is the peculiar blessing of the gospel. A salvation altogether of grace, decreed by the grace of God the Father, wrought out by the grace of God the Son, and applied and rendered effectual by the grace of God the Holy Ghost. III. THE EXTENT TO WHICH THIS BLESSED SALVATION REACHES. "We shall be saved, even as they." There is no longer any distinction between Jew and Gentile; but "the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him." Our commission, as ministers of the gospel, is as extensive as the globe on which we live. And this is true also of the various degrees of affliction and of crime. (*W. Le Poer Trench, B.D.*) *Grace—the one way of salvation:*—Consider the text as—I. AN APOSTOLICAL CONFESSION OF FAITH. "We believe." We will call it the "Apostle's Creed," and it has quite as clear a right to that title as that which goes by the name. 1. The apostle did not believe in—(1) Ritualism. All his testimony is concerning the grace of Christ. He says nothing whatever about ordinances, ceremonies; and those are the true successors of the apostles who teach you that you are to be saved through the free mercy of God. (2) Self-righteousness. Peter did not say, "We believe that through doing our best we shall be saved like other people," nor even "that if we act according to our light, God will accept that little light for what it was." If we are ever saved at all we must be saved gratis, not by wages; by God's love, not by our own merits. Those who preach mere morality, or set up any way except this, preach another gospel, and they shall be accursed, even though they preach it with an angel's eloquence. (3) Salvation by the natural force of free will. He takes the crown from off the head of man in all respects, and gives all glory to the grace of God. 2. Take this creed to pieces. It implies the doctrine of—(1) Human ruin. Peter saw this most clearly, or he would not have been so explicit upon man's salvation. (2) The atonement. What does the apostle mean but the grace which came from the Cross of the Saviour? What the sun is to the heavens, that the doctrine of a vicarious satisfaction is to theology. Take away the cleansing blood, and what is left to the guilty? II. THE CONVERTED MORAL MAN'S STATEMENT. A company of Jews have assembled to discuss a certain matter, and some of them say, "Well, perhaps these Gentile dogs may be saved; yes, Christ told us to go and preach the gospel to every creature; therefore, no doubt, He must have included them—we do not like them, though, and must keep them as much under our rules and regulations as we can; we must compel them to be circumcised." Now, you expect to hear Peter say, "Why, these 'Gentile dogs,' as you call them, can be saved, even as you." No; he turns the tables, and says, "We believe that *you* may be saved, even as they." It was just as if you should say, "We believe that a drunkard, &c., may be saved," and I respond, "You may be saved even as these." What a rebuke that would be! This is precisely what Peter meant. 1. Now, some of us were favoured with Christian parents, and consequently never did know a great deal of the sin into which others have fallen. This is cause for great thankfulness; but if you ever are saved, you will have to be saved in the same way as those who have been permitted to plunge into the most outrageous sin. In this respect we are all alike; we are born in sin, and alike are we dead by nature in trespasses and sins, heirs of wrath, even as others. 2. Moreover, the method of pardon is the same in all cases. I never heard of but one "fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins." That fountain is for the dying thief as much as for you, and for you as much as for him. III. THE CONFESSION OF THE GREAT OUTWARD SINNER WHEN CONVERTED. Now, I will speak for you. We shall be saved, even as the best are saved. 1. Yonder sits a very poor believer. Now, do you expect that when you get to heaven you will be placed in a corner as a pauper pensioner? "Oh, no!" you say, "we shall leave our poverty when we get to glory." Some of our

friends are rich, but we believe that we shall be saved, even as they. 2. Others of you are poor in useful talent. You cannot preach, or conduct a prayer meeting, &c. Well, do you expect that the Lord Jesus will give you a second-hand robe to wear at His wedding feast, and serve you from cold and inferior dishes? "Oh, no! Some of our brethren have great talents, and we are glad that they have; but we believe that we shall be saved, even as they." 3. Most likely there is some doubting brother here—Mr. Much-afraid, or Mr. Little-faith; but, how is your heart? Do you believe that you will be put off with a second-rate salvation—will be admitted by the back door into heaven? "Oh, no!" say you; "I am the weakest lamb in Jesus' fold; but I believe that I shall be saved, even as they who are the strongest in grace." 4. I will suppose that there has been a work of grace in a prison. There are half a dozen villains there, but the grace of God has made new men of them; and, if they understood the text, as they looked across the room and saw half a dozen apostles, they might say, "We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as those apostles are." 5. I will select the three Marys whom Jesus loved and who loved Jesus. These holy women, we believe, will be saved. But I will suppose that I go to one of our Refuges, and there are three girls there who were once of evil fame: the grace of God has met with them. These three might say, humbly, but positively, "We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we three reclaimed harlots shall be saved, even as they." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Common salvation:—I. AN ANTICIPATION OF AN INVALUABLE BLESSING. "Salvation" implying deliverance from spiritual danger, the enjoyment of spiritual good, the attainment of heaven. Man's state rendered redemptive interference necessary. Law was followed by rebellion: rebellion involves penal consequences. 1. The Scriptural statements of man's guilt and danger. 2. Observation and experience verify the Word. 3. The individual involvement in guilt and danger. 4. The necessary elements of salvation. Freedom from debasement, defilement, fear of death and judgment and what lies beyond. The bestowment of life, immortality, heaven. II. THE METHOD BY WHICH THIS BLESSING IS TO BE SECURED. 1. The Incarnation was for the purpose of securing human salvation. Determined in the councils of the Father; types prefigured it; prophecy proclaimed its approach until the fulness of the time came. The necessary proofs of His appointment were the voice from heaven, miracles, witness of Scripture to His character and mission. 2. The manner in which He met the requisite conditions of human salvation. He was a great teacher, but He was more at the last supper, in the garden, on Calvary. There salvation effected. The fire fell and consumed the sacrifice which must otherwise have consumed the world. 3. Christ's sufferings were propitiatory, and formed part of a plan essential to the manifestation of the Divine mercy. Apart from Christ's atonement there is no salvation. 4. The Saviour rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and presents there the memorials of His sacrifice. 5. The principle upon which this salvation is bestowed. Through grace, unmerited mercy. Penance and merit are excluded. III. THE TYPES WHICH WILL BE FOLLOWED IN THE BESTOWMENT OF SALVATION, AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH IT SHALL BE CARRIED. "Saved even as they." The mistake of Jewish converts that they had some advantage. Their attempt to impose circumcision. 1. This salvation is available wherever the sovereignty of God applies it. (1) This is true of the various nations. Of all to whom it has been sent we can say we shall be saved even as they. (2) This is true of all the varieties and degrees of crime. (3) This salvation binds its recipients in perfect union, "Neither Jew nor Greek." (*James Parsons.*)

Ver. 12. **Then all the multitude kept silence and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul.**—*Apostolic testimony*:—1. When Paul speaks we want to know what Paul says. But some men must be their own reporters. So we turn from the Acts to the opening verses of Galatians. Where Luke contents himself with a summary, Paul passes into detail. Some reports are too condensed, and therefore unjust. The minister "called and prayed." We do not say that he walked miles, and that when he prayed his heart wept. 2. Paul says he went up to Jerusalem "by revelation." If he had gone up to Jerusalem awed by its position and fame, he would have picked out dainty inoffensive words that would win the ear of many. In reality, Paul went from heaven to Jerusalem, and withered its contemptibleness under the majesty of the visions from which he had just turned his eyes. We have dropped the word "revelation" except on the Sabbath, when we venture to say it sometimes. We have meaner words—such as impression, feeling, &c. These are

inoffensive terms; an atheist might use such mock jewellery. The apostle said, "I went up by revelation. I knew that the truth was with me, and I was anxious only that Christ's Cross should be lifted up and seen everywhere as the one way of salvation." 3. Was Paul then afraid of Jerusalem, and "pillars," and "men of reputation"? Paul was anxious to let the leaders of the Church know exactly what he had been preaching, so he had a private interview with those who were of reputation. Could we have heard him then! Speaking to a sympathetic audience, to men who had seen the Lord! Paul had no fear about his gospel. He said, "I have been preaching salvation by Christ; now, brethren, what say you?" 4. Paul was not ashamed of his Gentile converts. He took Titus with him, and said, "This is a Gentile convert. He has begun in the Spirit; is he to be made perfect in the flesh?" Always vindicate your arguments by your converts. 5. Paul illustrates by anticipation the right of private judgment. To those "who were of reputation," "who seemed to be pillars," he "gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour." And speaking of those "who seemed to be somewhat," he said, "They added nothing to me." Where, then, was submission to papal authority? Here is one man who stands up in the Church, and says, "This is the gospel which I have received, which I will preach, for which I will live, for which, and in which, I will die." "I am crucified with Christ," &c. That was the true assertion of private judgment: not the expression of an individual will, but the expression of a personal loyalty to a living Christ. 6. Paul showed the true nature of real and enduring unity. In effect, he said: We may be one without seeming to be united. There are men to whom circumcision is a hereditary rite. There are others to whom it would be an intolerable yoke. Now, let us go, the one to the circumcision, and the other to the uncircumcision; for I know that as this gospel spreads it will be seen at the last that neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision. 7. But the council could not break up so. "One thing," said the council, "shall unite us—that we remember the poor." The poor have ye always with you. So they all —the circumcision and the uncircumcision—in philanthropy showed their union in the Lord, who lived to redeem the human race! Speculative theology divides men; practical philanthropy unites them. Let us unite where we can. Never inquire into the creed of a needy man. The man is hungry; the creed must be bread. When he has eaten his bread you may ask him questions. Begin where you can; wherever the heart-door is ajar, go in; wherever opportunity is offered, speak the living word or do the helpful deed. Always seek for the centre of union, and always avoid the cause of division or distrust. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Vers. 13–29. **And after they had held their peace, James answered.**—*The decision of the council:*—This was a crisis in the history of the Church. The greatest disasters might have befallen it at this critical time. The man who saved the Church was Paul. There was in him a fine spirit of conciliation as to methods and usages; but when it came to the liberty of Christ, and the independence of the Church, he stiffened into inflexibility, and he "gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour." The little picture before us enables us to look into the detail of early Church life. Note here—I. THE PLACE OF HUMAN THOUGHT AND INDEPENDENCE IN THE CONSIDERATION OF CHRISTIAN PROBLEMS. No man was hooted down on either side. In modern Christian controversy we have all seen lamentable spectacles. It makes one ashamed of the Christian cause when orthodox men employ a heterodox tone for the purpose of putting down an opponent. Take care how you maintain a good cause. I have seen an infidel display a nobler spirit than has been shown by his nominally Christian antagonist. Here the discussion was full, impartial and thorough; due deference was paid to the apostles and elders; all things were done decently and in order. II. THE BEGINNING OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY. A wrong step here, and Christian liberty would have been lost. Paul was raised up at the very moment of time. He who made havoc of the Church now kept it together. Under the illumination of Paul the horizon of James widened. Sometimes the Church needs inspiration more than information. When the grate is full of fuel, what is wanting is a light. James began to see that Christian liberty was founded on prophecy. How did James become so great a man all of a sudden? Because he had touched the Pauline spirit. Great men make great men. We do not need a new Bible; we need new readers. It was actually found that in the Old Testament this very question had been settled. In every synagogue Moses was read, and nobody understood him. III. THE RIGHT WAY OF TREATING NEW CONVERTS. They were to begin by not doing things. The trouble with our new converts is that they

are converted on Monday, and on Tuesday promoted to places of eminence. The apostles said, "Brethren, you will do well to begin by not doing certain things." That is where we ought to begin. IV. THE HAPPIER ASPECTS OF CONTROVERSY. But for this controversy, who knows when Paul and James might have been brought together? And after the controversy was over, the bishop writes: "Our beloved Barnabas and Paul." James looked at the question partly from the characters of the men, and he called them "men that have hazarded their lives for our Lord Jesus Christ." So judge in every controversy, This proof of devotion must go for something in the exciting controversy. It is not enough to be clever; we must be true. What have we done for the Lord Jesus? (*Ibid.*) **Wherefore my judgment is, that ye trouble not them which from among the Gentiles turn to God.**—*A triumph of spirituality and liberty*:—A few lessons come to us from a study of that first Ecclesiastical Council. I. We see in this conference the true way of settling difficulties, both between churches and between individuals—IT IS BY CONFERRING TOGETHER. That does not mean by writing letters, or making assertions at arm's length, but by getting near to one another so that the persons distrusted may be seen and understood. If that letter had been sent from the Church at Antioch to the Church at Jerusalem, and Paul and Barnabas had not been seen—a living spirit can never be put into cold words—the judgment of the council might have been different; and St. Paul would have continued on his way, and there would have been a breach between those who ought to have been united. I have come to feel that letters almost always make more difficulties than they mend. Let those who misunderstand one another come together, take each other by the hand; while one says to the other, "Now, perhaps, I do not understand you; you explain your meaning; let me explain mine." Few enmities could withstand that process. Only an egotist of the first water ever believes that he has all the truth. The life in nature has one manifestation in a flower; another in a tree; another in an animal, another in a man; none conflict; they are only varying manifestations of the one energy which pulsates from the sun. We have one name for the sum of life and all the manifestations of energy, and that is, the universe. The universe of matter and life is too vast for any individual to comprehend—how much more incomprehensible is the spiritual universe! Differences of opinion on doctrine and ritual will arise. There is but one right way to adjust such differences between individuals or in churches, and that is for those who feel themselves growing apart to take the first opportunity to look into each other's eyes and clasp each other's hands as brothers, and then bring all the things which separate into light. II. The Council at Jerusalem makes very clear THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN LIBERTY AND AUTHORITY IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. Christians recognise only one authority, and that is God. Just so fast and so far as the will of God concerning them can be learned, they are under obligation to obey. We are at liberty to believe everything that is true, and to do whatever is right and expedient; all encroachments on this liberty are to be resisted; and in the last analysis we ourselves must decide what is true, wise and right. How easy it would be if some one else could decide for us! Men are made strong by the exercise of their faculties. Those representatives of the venerable Church in Jerusalem came to Antioch with their "Thus saith the law," and there the law was written in cold black letters as it was supposed to have been written by Moses himself, and they said: "Can you get away from that?" If the letter was to decide, the case was already closed. But St. Paul believed that there had been another revelation; that while law had been best for one time, it was not for all times; that he had a commission from Christ to preach His gospel wherever there were souls to be saved; and so, turning away from the letter, he boldly and confidently followed the spirit. But while we emphasise liberty and individual responsibility, we cannot fail also to see that, if we really desire to know what is true and right, we must be very careful about going contrary to what is generally believed to be truth and right by those who we have reason to believe are Christians. If, for instance, in this Church of nearly seven hundred and fifty members, seven hundred believe that one course of conduct is wrong, and one believes that it is right, that one ought to be very sure that he has not been influenced by prejudice, conceit, or some evil motive before he concludes that he is right and all the others are wrong. This Council at Jerusalem illustrates the proper relation of liberty and authority. When the Jewish party asked to have Titus circumcised, and so indicate that the law was still binding, Paul indignantly refused. When the meddlers came from Jerusalem and stirred up a misunderstanding, he said: "Well, let us confer together"; in other words, "I am willing

to find all the truth that there is anywhere; the only authority is in truth and right—that is in the revealed will of God—and all men are free from all other obligation except the obligation to obey the true and the right." To learn that, he was willing to go to Jerusalem. So should we be, or to go anywhere else. III. THIS CONTEST IN THE EARLY CHURCH MAKES PLAIN THE CONTRAST BETWEEN SPIRITUALITY AND FORMALITY IN RELIGION. Men are everlastingly inclined to put emphasis on things of no importance. The Pharisees who tithed mint, anise, and cummin are not yet all dead. Formality says: "If you observe certain rites, you are doing all that is required of you." Spirituality says: "Have the mind of Christ; wherever you can do good, do it; pray without ceasing; no one place alone is holy, but all places are equally holy because God is everywhere; live the life of love, and open your hearts in the day and in the night so that the Spirit of Truth may lead you at all times." Why do we have so many denominations? What is it that separates Christians but this everlasting tendency to put emphasis upon form rather than life? Life can always be trusted; it will make its own form. All we need to be anxious about is to make sure that our poor weak human hearts are open to the Divine life. No ceremony is of any value except so far as it contributes to growth in the spiritual life. The apostle violated all the traditions by which he was surrounded, but in doing so he tore a rift in the world's darkness, and made it possible for the sunlight of the grace of God to flood a struggling race. But the question presses, If we are to trust the Spirit rather than forms, how are we to know whether a man has the Spirit? Well, first, what difference does it make whether we know or not? Who made us judges? "To his own master he standeth or falleth." But we may know whether men have the Spirit. "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one toward another." (*A. H. Bradford, D.D.*)

Vers. 23-29. **And they wrote letters.**—*The Apostolic letter*:—1. A model of brotherly love and Divine wisdom. 2. A pattern for the modern Church. 3. A great standing deliverance from all ceremonial and ritualistic observances. Improvement—(1) Be not narrow-minded. (2) Trust in Christ and not ordinances. (*J. Dewse.*) *The yoke broken*:—I. THE RELATION OF CHRISTIANITY TO JUDAISM. The decision was an admission that the Jewish ordinances were not permanent or essential. That old system had only "a shadow of good things to come." It educated for the gospel, and having accomplished this its work really ended. The gospel succeeded. Christ was declared to be the end of the law to every one that believeth; and the apostle to the Gentiles said, "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly," but "We are the circumcision which worship God," &c. To insist on the continued obligation of the Mosaic customs would be like drilling a reader in the alphabet. As well might the butterfly keep up its caterpillar existence—fly and crawl at the same time. For the Gentiles to practise the customs of the Old Law would be both irksome and also liable to lead to the error that salvation was dependent on these observances. Against this danger Paul most carefully guarded. The epistles to the Romans and to the Galatians are the strong ramparts which were erected to oppose it. II. THE TOLERANT SPIRIT OF CHRISTIANITY. It seems strange to have such an example in the infant Church, since toleration is usually the fruit of long experience. Even more surprising is it, when we consider the antecedents of the men who displayed it. They were Jews, of a most bigoted race. One of the hardest lessons for men to learn is to unlearn, and act contrary to early convictions. Though they themselves, through force of habit, continued to observe the national customs, they would not bind the Gentiles to do the same. It is strange that this decision should have been ever forgotten. The intolerance which has resulted from losing sight of it has been the disgrace of Christianity. The greatest names have been in fault here. As an old divine says, "Whilst we wrangle here in the dark, we are dying and passing to that world which will decide all controversies: the safest passage thither is by peaceable righteousness." III. CHRISTIANITY, WHILE TOLERANT IN SPIRIT, HAS ITS SELF-DENIALS (ver. 29). If, after their conversion from heathenism to Christianity, they still continued to eat meat offered to idols, and to frequent the idolatrous feasts where it was served, they were more likely to relapse into their old heathen life. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." The same thing in effect has to be perpetually guarded against. The Christian of to-day must, for his own spiritual good, beware of certain worldly habits and indulgences, lest he go back to the world. (*A. H. Currier.*) **Saying, ye must be circumcised and keep the law.**—*Legal Christians*:—Thousands and

tens of thousands of Christians yet live in the dreary shadow of legalism. God is only Lawgiver and Judge to them; and their experience is limited, first, to self-condemnation and suffering, then to violent endeavours of the spirit, or of the body, or of both to throw off this suffering, with results, sometimes of exhaustion, and sometimes of unnatural peace, and then to reaction into moral indifference, arising from a totally unsatisfied heart and soul. There are thousands of persons who think that they are Christians because they are endeavouring to live aright, but they are Christians because they are endeavouring to live aright no more than a person is at home because he is trying to go there, though he does not know the way. A child that has lost its father's house, and that is striving to find it, is not at home, but is a wanderer; and the person that is simply endeavouring to live aright, and nothing more, and that when he measures his life by the law of God, as interpreted to him through his own conscience, is conscious of daily breaking that law in every direction, is no more a Christian than a wanderer is a child at home. For a Christian is one that has found his way home, and to the fatherhood of God, and not one that is merely seeking to do his duty. A Christian is a child under the parental roof, saying, "Abba, Father." (*H. W. Beecher.*) **Our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.**—*Two heroes:*—I. THE PRINCIPLES BY WHICH THEY WERE ACTUATED. 1. The highest admiration for their Lord and Master. 2. An entire consecration to His service. We must honour Christ—(1) From gratitude. (2) From duty. II. THE WORK THEY UNDERTOOK. "To proclaim the name," &c. This was—1. An arduous duty. 2. A disagreeable toil. 3. A continuous self-sacrifice. III. THE REWARD THEY ATTAINED. 1. A reward of their magnanimity. 2. The approbation of God. 3. An immortal crown. IV. THE INSTRUCTION THEY IMPART. 1. That there is something more precious than life or pleasure—Christ. 2. That however humble our sphere we may hope to accomplish something for our Lord and Master. 3. That whatever efforts we may make for our Master's glory shall be acknowledged and rewarded by God. (*Preacher's Analyst.*) *The motto of Christian service:*—During the American war with England, a young midshipman named Joel Abbot was serving under the United States flag. Winning the good opinion of the commander, he was put in the way of promotion by being commended to Macdonough, then controlling the forces on Lake Champlain. Reports were received that the English were accumulating a large supply of spars at Sorel. Could not the spars be destroyed? Who would undertake the task? Joel Abbot was sent for. Grimly the commander asked him if he were willing to die for his country. "Certainly, sir: that is what I came into the service for," was the prompt reply. Entrusted with the dangerous commission, Joel Abbot fulfilled it in the spirit of his words. The perils and privations of his exploit were so great, that although he came back alive, he was completely prostrate for a considerable time, and his recovery was slow. Later, a sword of honour was voted him for his gallantry. How is it with soldiers of the Great King—workers for Christ? The test-word of this service is "Self-surrender for Christ." *A life hazarded for Christ:*—A touching story is told as characteristic of the missionary spirit by a friendly writer in the *Contemporary*. Rev. John Robinson was suddenly summoned one day to the Leper asylum to baptise a dying convert. My friend went in fear and trembling, baptised the dying man, consoled him, and then was seized with a throe of mental agony. It is the custom of many missionaries on receiving a neophyte, especially if sick, to give him the kiss of peace. Mr. Robinson thought this his bounden duty, but he was himself a half-breed, and he was absolutely persuaded of the Indian theory that leprosy, though non-contagious in the case of a white man, is frightfully contagious in the case of one with native blood in his veins. He hesitated, walked to the door, and returned to kiss the leper on the lips and then to lie for days in his own house, prostrated with an uncontrollable and not an unreasonable nervous terror. A superstitious fool, the doctor thought him. True soldier of Christ, say I, who, when his duty called him, faced something far worse than shot. *Christian self-devotion:*—For some time after Mr. Hunt settled in Somasoma, one of the Fejee Islands, his life was in daily danger from the hostile and cannibal savages. But he went on with his Christian work, and when the captain of an American war-ship heard of their threats to kill and eat the missionary, and sent to offer him an asylum on board his vessel, Mr. Hunt declined with thanks, saying that he regarded the horrible depravity of the natives as only an additional reason for risking his life to convert them. *Life hazarded in Christ's cause:*—I. THE SPIRIT WHICH IS DESCRIBED IN THE TEXT. Several particulars are included

here. 1. Their ardent love for Christ Jesus. It was not always thus with these men. Paul's object was to root out the name of the Saviour. What occasioned then this marvellous change? In his case they were very extraordinary means. In other cases, the means are ordinary. The Spirit of God convinces them of sin, shows them that they have no help in themselves; but must accept Christ and His cross. And then they love Christ. They love Him (1) For dignity of His person. (2) For the perfection of His atonement. They "love Him because He first loved them." (3) Because He has taken their nature and their cause to heaven. When they see this, it is impossible but their hearts should glow with love to such a Saviour. The life He so dearly bought becomes His, and they "hazard it" willingly in His service. 2. Their high estimation of the gospel. Man is a depraved creature. This depravity exhibits itself in different forms; in one country in idolatry, in another in blasphemy, &c. Philosophers have bent over the scene and wept, and politicians have devised innumerable schemes to recover fallen creatures. But they have failed. Now God sent the gospel to redeem and sanctify man. Now the men, that "hazarded their lives for the name of the Lord Jesus," believed that there was "no other name whereby men might be saved"; and therefore they published it. They had the conviction of an enlightened understanding, and an experimental enjoyment of the truth. 3. Their tender compassion for lost souls. Christ's value met their enlightened judgment. "What shall it profit a man," &c. They saw millions of immortal spirits, hurrying on to irremediable woe. Now when the men had this remedy, and saw souls in this condition, and had their hearts lighted with the heavenly fire, you do not wonder that they went forth and "hazarded their lives" to communicate it to lost souls. 4. The aggressive spirit in which they attempted to set up Christ's kingdom. They did not wait till a petition came from these miserable souls, requesting them to send the gospel; or till a door was opened by some special act of the government of the country, or a change of opinion took place among the people; but wherever they could open their lips for Jesus Christ, there they went, though edicts were issued against them, and they were imprisoned and reviled and threatened with death. 5. Their exalted character in the opinion of the Church. They selected them to go on an important embassy, as men who copied most of their Master's spirit. It appeared to them, that the chief excellency was in "hazarding their lives for Him." Doubtless many in their day considered them very visionary men, and thought they had better not plunge rashly into things; but "the apostles and elders," those who had love to Christ, thought their zeal their glory, and held it up to the imitation and approbation of the Church. II. LESSONS. 1. We see in the text a picture of fallen and of regenerated humanity; and among which class are you? Here is one class of men, opposing those who come to them with the gospel; here is another, ready to die for the name of the Lord Jesus. "He that is not with Me is against Me." 2. A suitable apology for all those who exhibit the same conduct. By many it has been upbraided as zeal without knowledge. But here is the answer; it is done "for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." A soldier "hazards his life," it may be, for fortune, for fame, for honour. But here are men who "hazard their lives," without honour, fame or fortune, "for the name of Jesus Christ." 3. One of the modes by which God augments the number of His servants and the efficiency of their service. "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." It is not the cold, calculating, cautious men, who carry measures either in Church or in state; but the men who "hazard their lives" for the cause which they undertake. 4. The honour which God puts upon us by permitting us to send out such men to evangelise the world. 5. A spirit worthy of imitation. Who is willing to "hazard his life for the name of our Lord Jesus?" (*J. Sherman.*) *The true missionary*:—Once, in lifting from its shelf a certain folio, there fluttered out from between its leaves a paper dated 1763. It had evidently been mislaid as soon as it was written, and one hundred years after, just where the writer left it, I found it. It ran thus, "We beg to certify that the bearer, Mr. John Wyers, is well known to us, and we do hereby commend him to all Christian Churches where, in Providence, he may come as a godly minister who hath much devoted himself to the service of our Lord Jesus Christ." This was signed "David Fermie, Thomas Blackett." My text is a line out of an old letter of introduction written by the elders of the Church at Jerusalem. Now, this old certificate is not to be torn up for waste paper as a thing that is now dead and done with. It is a live thing, it is wanted now, to show what kind of missionaries are wanted, and how the armies of Christ in the field of foreign service are to win the day. Just take the words as they stand. I. MEN. An ancient law-

giver said, that what Sparta wanted was not a wall of bricks but a wall of men. "Men," said a certain sarcastic journalist, "are cheap." No. If "men" be what is meant by certain advocates of "muscular Christianity," then men are cheap, but when I look at Paul I remember that it is not muscle that makes a man. If you mean by a "man," an undesigned result of molecular forces, then men are cheap, and they ought to be, but a man is not the consummation of a tadpole. If by "men" you mean an average human being, men ought to be cheap; but many a human being passes for a man who is not so much a person as a thing. What I mean by "man" is a son of Adam, who has been born again, and who is therefore a Son of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and of whom we may say, "Like father, like son." I want to blow into infinite space the mean, false notion that anything will do for a missionary; anything will not do. Before you are a missionary you must be a "man." II. THAT HAVE HAZARDED THEIR LIVES. This, in itself, is not matter for plaudit. Most extreme must be the case, when the author of life sanctions the hazard of life. But, while grace makes us understand the sanctity of life, grace inspires us with a will to give ourselves to the service of something higher than life. That man is not worth calling a "man" who lives to save himself. The man who answers to the standard we are now looking at, is a man who, being called to the service of Christ, is prepared, if need be, to hazard his life for that service. III. FOR THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. This means that the men hazarded their lives—1. Out of love to Christ. The name of a person is the person to whom that name belongs. We all know the rousing, or soothing, or melting magic of a name. But no name has such power to stir the hearts of men as the name of Jesus Christ. When it was first uttered to the Jews, it stirred their hearts to hatred. Among the most inexorable and deep haters was Paul. He breathed out threatenings and slaughters till Jesus stopped him. After that, the love of Christ set his life on fire. What have we hazarded for Christ? Where is your love to Christ? Is that the thing you call love? Then love knows how to take care of itself; looks upon religion as a question of safe investment and social respectability; sometimes joins the Church like a traveller taking his ticket who books himself quite through, wraps his rug around him, and goes to sleep till the train stops; hates originality like the plague. What you call love I call prudence. But love, whether to God or man, tends to scorn of consequence, and to the forgetfulness of self. 2. Out of obedience to Christ. "If ye love Me keep My commandments." The commandment now waiting for our obedience is, "Go, make disciples of all nations." Now it is strange the first thing men in general do is to give their opinion about this. One man is of opinion that it is unnecessary; another, that it is impossible; another, that we should look at home; another, that we should civilise first; another, that every nation has already its own religion fitted to its own nationality. But Christ waits not for our opinion but our obedience. The question is how we can best obey. Some can best obey in this way, some in that. The principle is not that Christians should leave work at home for work abroad, but that all Christians are charged with the evangelisation of the world to do it between them. Though the difficulties may be massive, they are not your concern. "Charge," is the captain's cry. Say, as the negro said, "Does Jesus Christ ask me to jump through that stone-wall? Here I go at it." 3. In the service of their fellow-men. It is a great service to save lives, and a noble thing when men do it at the hazard of their own. Lady Edgeworth, in the days of King Charles II., had suddenly to defend the family castle at Lissom, in the absence of her husband. In doing so she had to go down and fetch powder from the castle vaults. On her return she said to the woman who had gone with her, "Where did you put the candle?" "I left it stuck in the barrel of black salt." Then did that glorious lady go down to the spot where the candle was burning into the powder, and put her hand round it like a cup, and lift it up and take it out, and so at the hazard of her own life saved the lives of others. Dear, glorious lady, that was well done. The life-boat with its brave crew shoots out into the night over the swaying hills of water, to snatch twenty men off from a wreck. On their return, when the cry comes on the wind, "All saved," my heart gives a great bound, and I say, "There is a noble service nobly done." "The Son of Man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them"; and if it be a great thing to save the lives of bodies through the hazard of our own bodily life, it is a small thing to hazard it to save the lives of souls. Conclusion: We learn from these men—1. How our faithful and mighty Master through all hazards keeps His servants alive until their work is done. 2. Only men like these hazard their lives, and the men who at Christ's call to service

most totally give themselves up, most totally let themselves go, are the men whom the "King delighteth to honour." (*C. Stanford, D.D.*) **Who shall also tell you the same things by mouth.**—*Preference for the spoken word:*—The Dean of Rochester said: A woman said about a certain preacher, "He's a very nice gentleman, but he has no deliverance." He himself had been wont for years to preach written sermons. One night, to his horror, the church was so dark that it was impossible to read his sermon. He passed through a brief period of anxiety. Then, thinking, "Have I nothing to say to these people? Am I really a servant of God?" he threw himself on the Holy Spirit's help, and spoke as best he could. The churchwarden apologetically told him that the people said "It was the best sermon he had ever preached, and they hoped he would never read another." "Nor did I," said the Dean; "and then I awoke not to find myself famous, but at any rate more useful than I had been before." *The spoken word:*—A preacher is, in some degree, a reproduction of the truth in personal form. The truth must exist in him as a living experience, a glowing enthusiasm, an intense reality. The Word of God in the Book is a dead letter, it is paper, type, and ink. In the preacher that Word becomes again as it was when first spoken by prophet, priest, or apostle. It springs up in him as if it were first kindled in his heart, and he were moved by the Holy Ghost to give it forth. He is so moved. (*H. W. Beecher.*)

Vers. 28–31. **For it seemed good unto the Holy Ghost and to us.**—*The Holy Spirit and the Church:*—Here we have—I. THE SPIRIT GUIDING THE CHURCH. 1. This was in accordance with the Saviour's promise. 2. This was demonstrated by the previous history. Pentecost; the mission of Philip to Samaria, and to the Eunuch; that of Peter to Cornelius; that of the disciples to Antioch, and that of Paul and Barnabas to Cyprus and Asia Minor. With each of these the work of the Spirit was directly connected, and each pointed to the widening of the Church's boundaries so as to embrace the Gentiles. 3. This is guaranteed still, and may be detected. (1) In the evangelistic impulses of the Church. (2) In the doors of opportunity opening to the Church—the second invariably following the first. II. THE SPIRIT'S GUIDANCE ACKNOWLEDGED BY THE CHURCH. "It seemed good," &c. 1. "And to us" is not an assumption of co-ordinate authority, for the Church is a creature and servant of the Spirit. It simply means acquiescence in the decision of the Spirit as indicated by recent events and no doubt by special inspiration. 2. "And to us" gives weight to the Spirit's decision, inasmuch as—(1) Part of the Church had been opposed to what was now clearly the mind of the Spirit. (2) Part of the Church had known the Spirit's mind, but had taken no further steps. (3) Part of the Church had fully acted in the disclosures of the mind of the Spirit. So the divided Church was now united upon the only true basis of union. This is a lesson to the Church in all ages. When men, in spite of early training, prejudice, &c., give themselves to the work of God, what a mighty testimony to the Spirit's guidance. III. THE SPIRIT'S GUIDANCE SEEN IN THE DECISION OF THE CHURCH. 1. In the liberality of its sentiment, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty." 2. In its sanctified common sense. Certain things were "necessary" in order that Jews and Gentiles might work together. (*J. W. Burn.*) *The upshot of the first ecclesiastical assembly a triumph of the Holy Ghost:*—1. As a Spirit of freedom over the yoke of external ordinances. 2. As a Spirit of faith over the illusions of our own wisdom and righteousness. 3. As a Spirit of love over pride, obstinacy, and narrowmindedness. (*K. Gerok.*) *The first principles of Church life and action:*—1. In things necessary, unity (ver. 11). 2. In things doubtful, liberty (ver. 19). 3. In all things, charity (vers. 7, 11, 20). (*Irenæus.*)

Ver. 36–Chap. xvi. 10. **And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren . . . and see how they do.**—*Churchvisitation:*—Paul felt that he was not called to spend a peaceful though laborious life at Antioch, but that his true work was "far off among the Gentiles" (chap. xxii. 21). He knew that his campaigns were not ended; that as a soldier of Jesus Christ, he must not rest from his warfare, but must endure hardness, that he might please Him who had called him. As a careful physician he remembered that they, whose recovery from sin had begun, might be in danger of relapse, or to use another metaphor, he said, "Come, let us get up early to the vineyards: let us see if the vine flourish" (S. Song vii. 12). We notice here for the first time, a trace of that tender solicitude concerning his converts, that earnest longing to behold their faces, which appears in the letters which he wrote afterwards, as one of the most

remarkable and attractive features of his character. Paul was the speaker, not Barnabas. The latter's feelings might not be so deep, nor his anxiety so urgent. Paul thought, doubtless, of the Pisidians and Lycaonians, as he thought afterwards at Athens and Corinth of the Thessalonians, from whom he had been lately taken (2 Thess. ii. 17, iii. 10). He was "not ignorant of Satan's devices." He feared "lest by any means the tempter had tempted them, and his labour had been in vain" (1 Thess. iii. 5). He "stood in doubt of them," and "desired to be present with them" once more (Sol. iv. 2). We are here reminded of the importance of continuing a religious work when once begun. We have had the institution of presbyters, and of councils, and now we have an example of that system of Church visitation, of the happy effects of which we have still some experience, when we see weak resolutions strengthened, and expiring faith rekindled, in confirmations at home, or in missionary settlements abroad. (*J. S. Howson.*) *The pastor's visit to his flock* :—Solomon tells us that "to everything there is a season," &c. Among these he specifies a time to plant and a time to build up. The husbandman must not only sow, but he must use other arts of cultivation, to ensure the abundant crop; and the architect must not content himself with laying the foundation, but must rear the superstructure. Thus, too, it should be with the ministers of the gospel. There is a season when they are to break up the fallow ground, and one in which they should examine whether their labours have been successful—a season when, having laid the basis, they are to build thereon, and raise to higher elevation that structure which is to grow into a holy temple of the Lord. I. LET ME OFFER SOME PREFATORY REMARKS WHICH RISE OUT OF THE TEXT. 1. Christianity is a religion of benevolence. Those greatly mistake its character who suppose that its possessors are to become recluse. Nor does it merely refine and direct our social affections, in reference to the ordinary engagements of life, but it renders their subject solicitous for the best welfare of those by whom he is surrounded. It was on the principle of holy love giving birth to pious zeal, that Paul and Barnabas went among the heathen preaching the gospel of the kingdom. They were solicitous for the improvement of those who had received the truth in the love of it. Here is a test by which to try our ministry—we are not to be content with calling men "out of darkness into marvellous light," but we must be anxious for their advancement in religion. 2. Christian ministers and people should stir one another up to works of usefulness. Barnabas was incited to this particular part of his work by Paul. Now this teaches us to provoke one another, "to love and to good works." This association is important. It often happens that one has knowledge but no wisdom, ardour but no discretion, and therefore his companion may act as a regulator to the rapid movements of the watch or a machine, &c. Besides which, "two are better than one," in counsel, strength, courage, probable success, because, by a combination of their talent and energy, they may accomplish what the solitary individual could never effect. 3. Wherever the disciples of Christ travel, they should endeavour to do some good on the spots which they visit. 4. Expectations of fruitfulness in proportion to the means of cultivation are justly cherished. Paul and Barnabas visited the Churches, hoping to witness the auspicious results of their missionary efforts. II. INDULGE IN SOME CLOSE INTERROGATIONS AS TO YOUR STATE. 1. Personally. (1) Sinners! How is it with you? Have you reaped any advantage from the discourses which you have often heard? (2) Believers! How do you do? What of your knowledge? is it more clear, extensive, deep? What of your faith? does it embrace more firmly the testimony of Jesus? What of your love? is it more fervent? What of your patience? does it bear with more submission the afflictive dispensations of providence? What of your zeal? (3) Backsliders! How is it with you? Have you seen your error and mourned your departures from God? (4) Afflicted Christians! How do you do? Are your trials mortifying your corruptions? (5) Young people! How do you do? (6) You that are advanced in life! how is it with you? Are you like old trees stretching your fibrous roots wider and deeper into the earthly soil on which you stand? 2. Relative. My inquiry is, whether you whom God has set in families have established an altar in your houses. Is there a spirit and life in your sacred transactions? And are you guarding against those hindrances to these engagements which will multiply upon us without great caution? Do you, mothers, take your little ones alone, and converse with them about Him who says, "Suffer little children to come unto Me"? Do you, fathers, charge your offspring to fear the Lord in their youth? But, perhaps, some will say, we have no families. Have you any leisure hours? Are you living an idle and a selfish life?

3. Collectively. Suffer me to ask whether as a Christian society you are constantly bearing one another on your hearts before God in prayer—whether you are regular in your observance of the Lord's Supper, and are walking in love, as Christ also loved you and gave Himself for you? whether you are sustaining the several institutions connected with your place of worship? III. GLANCE AT THE ADVANTAGES WHICH ARE LIKELY TO RESULT FROM THIS INQUIRY. 1. It will tend to the removal of obstructions to the prosperity of our Christian society. The artificer and the engineer frequently look into the works of the watch, or the wheels and different parts of the machine, that they may remedy any defect which examination may discover. The husbandman often walks along the fields which he has sown, to notice whether the weeds are growing there; and he cuts down the thistles and nettles, which would hinder the growth of the corn. Thus we may discover and correct those evils which are apt to creep into the best constituted communities on earth. 2. It sets the minds of many at work. The spirit of anxiety on behalf of yourselves will necessarily produce a solicitude on behalf of your families, &c. Thus all reap the benefit. 3. May I be allowed to make a reference to our own ministerial encouragement and satisfaction? You, who are in business, are not content unless you are making a profitable concern of your avocation, and are grieved if you are not making a good percentage on your capital. And do you think that we do not long for success in our occupation of saving souls from death, and winning them to Christ? 4. To all which I will add, that another result will be the extension of such an aspect in the Church, as to produce a favourable impression upon spectators without. They will see that Christianity is not a mere profession, but a real and important business. (*J. Clayton, A.M.*) *Revisiting the Churches* :—I. REVISITING THE CHURCHES. The converts' old faults still clung to them in part, and their union in the same Churches stirred up strifes. They were but weak bands in the midst of worldly and licentious communities. No wonder that their spiritual father felt the necessity of confirming their faith (vers. 36, 41). Brief report of a large work, parts of which are more fully disclosed in the epistles. Such labours are the main work of every pastor, too commonly underestimated in comparison with revival effort. The evangelist comes to a people with many advantages, and no wonder that he succeeds. But the hardest work yet remains—to lead the new converts from the excitement of revival scenes to the steady activity and growth in daily religion in commonplace surroundings. II. THE NEW WORK. Old scenes arouse longings for new service. On the edge of the light the darkness is terribly visible. The better to do this new work, Paul finds a companion to take Mark's place in Timothy, who had doubtless been converted with his mother and grandmother during the apostle's first visit, and had already gained the confidence and praise of the Church. He is circumcised, simply to avoid needless irritation of Jewish prejudice, and then ordained, making a good profession before many witnesses. The work in Phrygia and Galatia is told in a single sentence, with that inspired reticence which is more surprising than speech. Paul and his companions seem to have been inclined to devote themselves to a region so important and receptive; but God was calling them another way. We note in passing that this heavenly control is attributed first to the Holy Spirit, then to the Spirit of Jesus, then to God. So Ananias and Sapphira are said to lie to the Holy Ghost, unto God, and to tempt the Spirit of the Lord. These unstrained allusions show how deeply fixed in the early Church was the doctrine of the Divine Trinity. Very striking, also, are the disclosures of the Lord's guidance of His servants. In planning his journey to this point, the apostle depended upon what we may call business sagacity—his knowledge of the Churches and their needs. Now pushing on to promising work, he is suddenly turned away by direct supernatural interposition. Then comes the most vivid disclosure, calling to strange and overwhelming tasks. How like the Christian life of to-day! At one period our path leads on in common, uneventful ways. We realise no Divine guidance, no special care or appointed mission. Again, in the thick of useful labours, we are hindered, forbidden. Sickness, loss, failure, &c., sharply arrest us, to our wonder and grief. But there are glorious hours when the call comes divinely clear, as it did to Paul at Troas. The blood of Trojan and Greek had stained the earth where he stood. Xerxes, Alexander, and Cæsar had lingered here, and crossed to their conquests. But the grandest event which ever happened on that shore was the vision and the cry which led the gospel of Christ into that continent which ruled for centuries the mind and the heart of the world. Conclusion: One great truth breathes through the whole—the living Christ is always present in His Church. 1. How else could

He trust us with such interests? 2. How else could we bear such responsibilities. (*Sermons by the Monday Club.*) *Paul's second missionary journey*:—I. THE WORK RESUMED. 1. Working together. The Council at Jerusalem had been an interruption, but was more profitable to the Church than if the apostles had kept on with their work. For the settling of great principles, at times even a revival may well stop. And the principle which they went to settle was one that strengthened the nerve of revival effort among the Gentiles. 2. Working apart. (1) The cause of the separation, from which we learn that a quarrel can arise—(*a*) Over a very good cause. (*b*) Between very good men. (*c*) Between very good friends. (2) The results of separation. A division of the field of labour. By this the whole field was more quickly revisited, and Mark made into a good worker for Christ. II. THE WORK PROSPERED. 1. The workers increased (chap. xvi. 1). 2. The Churches increased. The Churches were strengthened by the visit, and so "increased in number daily." Each day was a birthday of souls. There were no blank days in their books of record. III. THE WORK ENLARGED. 1. Guided by the Spirit. Twice the Spirit did not allow the missionaries to preach the Word where they were inclined to proclaim it. He suffered them to work in Galatia and Phrygia. In the latter region they gathered some disciples (chap. xviii. 23), and in the former there grew up some Churches as the fruit of their labours (Gal. i. 2). But they were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to speak the word in Asia, and when they essayed to go into Bithynia, the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not. 2. Called by the Spirit. "Come over into Macedonia, and help us." Now they understood why they had not been permitted to preach in Asia, or to go into Bithynia. God had closed those doors that He might open to them a wider one. The call of the heathen to-day for the gospel is a call of the Spirit. (*M. C. Hazard.*) *Paul's second missionary journey*:—I. A NEW JOURNEY DECIDED ON. 1. The reason for this decision. It shows Paul's zeal. Had he not already done his share of this perilous work? It was very pleasant at Antioch. It needs a missionary fully to understand the sweetness of that simple phrase, "with the disciples." It was not only pleasant to abide at Antioch; certainly they were very useful there, "teaching and preaching the word of the Lord." Why not let well enough alone? What an appalling mass of work yet remained to be done at home! But God saw that the best thing for Antioch herself was to send forth her best men to distant and still darker fields. The missionary force sent to Antioch, and then to Asia Minor and to Europe, did not weaken—it strengthened—the Church at Jerusalem (chap. xv. 3, 4). It rolled back to the Churches at home accumulating and mighty evidence of the power and faithfulness of their living Lord. 2. The preparations for the journey. Who shall form the party? Important question! It is a vital matter, both for their happiness and their usefulness, that they should be congenial companions—especially that they should feel great confidence in each other. Paul felt that he must be sure of his comrades. Still, it is not strange that Barnabas should have favoured his young relative. They could not agree, and accordingly they wisely decided to divide the field. So, to a great extent, our missionaries do to-day. It would be somewhat difficult for Methodists and Baptists and Presbyterians and Episcopalians all to work together in the same party and on the same ground. And they need not. The field is large enough to give to each body a place of its own. Yet their hearts are one. Paul chose Silas, already well known and useful, for his companion, and after a farewell meeting in which the Church with prayer and words of love "commended them to the grace of God," the two departed. II. THE PLAN OF THEIR JOURNEY. 1. The former fields were revisited. (1) What did those fields need? (*a*) Sympathy. He knew that the converts must suffer "much tribulation." And there are tens of thousands of Christian converts in heathen lands to-day in equal need of sympathy from us. (*b*) Inspection. "Let us go again and see how they do." Read closely the allusions in the Acts and Epistles to the first Churches, and you will see that they needed careful supervision. These converts had just been plucked out of utter paganism. Even their elders and preachers were in many cases men who had never seen a Christian example except for a few days in Paul. It was inevitable that errors and abuses should creep in. This necessity is the same now. (*c*) Instruction. A thousand questions plain to us were new and full of perplexity to them. Discussions about so simple a thing as the meats they might eat arose, and there was need of special warning and teaching respecting some matters of the most ordinary morality (chap. xv. 29). Think of Paul in the fulness of his Christian knowledge and his power burying himself for years in remote provinces to teach these weak, dark-minded people the first beginnings of

Christian truth on such points as these! It may well rebuke the folly and fastidiousness of any Christians who feel themselves too nicely educated to take a Sunday-school class, and the vanity of any preachers who think themselves too gifted to expend their lives on the heathen or even on a "country parish" in their own land. (2) What they gave. (*a*) Multiplying converts. Paul found that the Churches he had planted "increased in numbers daily." His visit gave them a new impulse. The parallel between missions then and now is still maintained. In no part of Christendom to-day is the rate of increase in the Churches equal to what we see in the Churches planted in heathen lands. (*b*) Ripening Christian character. These converts were "established in the faith." Notwithstanding the faults to be expected both in Paul's day and ours, there has always been witnessed growth in knowledge and grace, and on every field lives which have filled the hearts of our missionaries with joy. (*c*) Most notable help. From the neighbourhood of Derbe came Timothy. The annals of modern missions tell of numbers who, without his advantages, have more than equalled the devotion and courage of Timothy. Have you ever read the life of Quala, the native preacher of Burma, or of Papehia, the first fruits of Tahiti? 2. New fields were opened. Phrygia and Galatia, large provinces north of Lycaonia, are traversed by them. There also Churches sprang up as the result of their labours (1 Cor. xvi. 1). At a point about a hundred and fifty miles from the coast Paul would stand with Bithynia on his right, mountainous, but wealthy and populous, a favourite region with the emperors of Rome; on his left Asia, with its great ports and cities, Ephesus, Sardis, Thyatira, Laodicea, Philadelphia, Smyrna, with vast populations sunken in idolatry and utterly ignorant of the gospel. What a field! And it is just at hand. It seems a well-laid plan, but it is for some unknown reason "forbidden by the Holy Ghost." Paul then turns northward; but again "The Spirit suffered them not." Mysia also, under the same Divine intimations, they are compelled to "pass by." It must have seemed a strange providence! What is this unknown plan which God has laid? At length they reach Troas. It is a great mercantile city. Is this their destination? No. Thus far all their own plans are thwarted, although no doubt formed with thought and prayer. But they need not mourn. They are now to see God's plan disclosed. That night there is given to Paul a vision: "There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us." Yes, to another continent the seed of the gospel is to be borne. It is to be planted. God shall watch over its growth and spread in those new lands. Then Paul may return and preach in Asia. (1) It is a circumstance useful for us to notice that even so good a man as Paul is often led by God in the dark. (2) A lesson is found in Paul's interpretation of the vision. That Macedonian phantom called for help. Upon the wharf at Troas stood four way-worn travellers, unknown, penniless. What succour had Greece to ask from them? There never had been a civilisation on earth equal to hers, and yet there she lay, wretched and guilty beyond anything which we are permitted to describe. What wonder is it that when Paul heard that prayer for help he "gathered assuredly that the Lord had called him to preach the gospel unto them"! Give the gospel, first of all, if you would give sure help to any people. Would you help a fellow-man? Tell him of Christ. Would you help your country? See to it that every village and every lane in her crowded cities is reached by the gospel. Would you help this unhappy world? Then hasten in the spirit and the wisdom of Paul to hear the gospel to every Macedonian shore. (*A. Mitchell, D.D.*) *Paul's second missionary journey*:—1. Christianity is essentially missionary in its purpose. 2. God will direct by hindering or helping His servants in doing His work. 3. God wants the best equipped servants for missionaries. 4. God will not allow honest differences among His servants to hinder the gospel's progress. 5. God will always give increase in numbers where His people are established in the faith. 6. The gospel will have accomplished its purpose only, when there shall be none to cry—"Come over and help us!" (*J. M. King, D.D.*)

Vers. 37-39. **And Barnabas determined to take with them John.**—*The contention between Paul and Barnabas*:—The contents of this chapter are famous for two things, that had most contrary events. The one, how a great variance was concluded with a happy concord. The other, how a small variance did proceed to an unhappy discord. The great variance was, whether such as were converted to believe in Christ must continue in the observation of the law of Moses. For some in the first verse of the chapter were so rigid that they held, except ye be circum-

cised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. This point was decided. And they that were Jewish were overborne by a moderate determination agreed upon by all the apostles and elders that met at Jerusalem. But when matter of doctrine and deep dispute could not divide the Church, Satan laid a smaller stumbling-block in their way, and the two most holy servants of God, Paul and Barnabas, dashed their foot against it; and they that plucked a beam out of their brother's eye were troubled with a mote in their own. It was not about a point of doctrine, but upon a circumstance of a person, no way considerable to the main benefit of the gospel, that begat a quarrel and a disjunction between them. Rather than Barnabas would suffer Mark to be discountenanced, he would forsake Paul. Rather than Paul would consent to Mark's re-admission, he would forsake Barnabas. And the contention was so sharp between them that they departed asunder the one from the other. Upon the handling of the text in several points—1. We must enter in at a breach. Here was a contention. 2. This struggling was not between mean and ordinary persons, but between the champions of the holy cause, between Paul and Barnabas. 3. It was not carried with meekness and cool temper, but it swelled high, it was παροξυσμὸς, a sharp, a fretful contention. 4. They fell not out for anything that touched the life of truth, or the honour of Christ; the fortunes of Greece, as the proverb is, did not lie upon it; it was only about the accommodation of a person, whether Mark were fit for the present work: that was all the matter, and no more. 5. As small a matter as it was, it waxed to a separation, and to disjoin these two in body as well as in mind. They departed asunder the one from the other. Now I resume all this again. I. And that which we meet first of all at the door of the text is CONTENTION. None of the least sins, none of the least punishments. For if Babel itself could not be built up among discord of tongues, how much more can Sion never be well built up with discord of hearts? If the nets be broken, the fishers of men may catch a draught, but they can keep nothing. Cut a seed of wheat in twain, and the pieces lose the nature of fructification. If words be not well put together they will make no sense; and if men's senses do not well join together in one profession, they will make no Church. Contention is the devil's wedge to rive asunder the Cross of Christ; it turns order into a heap, amity into jangling, unity into schism, and truth into heresy. The work of men is contention, the way of God is peace. We are sure He is in the still voice, and we are sure that He is not in the whirlwinds of controversies and uproars. Be it therefore propounded what we should do as well as pray, that we may be one, and that no contention fall among us. First bring a supple, a soft, a tractable mind, that hath a good affection to agreement, and I will undertake to furnish you with rules enough, that if you differ in no greater things than Paul and Barnabas did (yea, what if they were greater?) you may soon greet one another with the kiss of peace. "Only by pride cometh contention," says Solomon (Prov. xiii. 19). He that is wise in his own opinions will never want occasions to begin them, nor arguments to maintain them. And he that thinks the yielding party loseth in his honour, had rather lead and perish than follow after and be preserved. But humility is limper, and will easily bend; it is never given to contradiction; it stands not upon vain points of reputation, to carry the sway in every opposition. For let the wrangler get the better in obstinacy, the modest Christian shall overcome in charity. Mortify self-love, and peace will please you better than victory. The best that he can say for himself that continues in contention is, It is unreasonable that I should yield, for I am in the right. It were no hurt for a modest judgment to suspect itself in that confidence of persuasion. After this which I have required, that men be not rigid, but humble and flexible, the rules to be kept for composing smaller debates, and my text reacheth to no other, are these: 1. There is no exception to be made against the sentence of the law under which we live. 2. As the kingdom hath statute-law, so the Church hath canons, which served our turn, to much benefit, in the best ages, before imperial laws came forth to help us. 3. When some cases fall out, for which neither laws nor canons have provided, custom hath much force to decide them. Long permission is a tolerable confirmation. 4. If it fall out that laws are silent, and customs are contrary one to another, then, by the privilege which we have above beasts, we must resort to reason. 5. I report me to the apostles, how they handled a discord in this chapter. Some would have all the ceremonies of Moses kept, which would have made the Gentiles become Jews, and not Christians. To prevent all schism, the apostles and elders fall upon that course, which we call *media consilia*, a middle temper. Some ceremonies the Gentile shall conform unto, that will appease the Jew. Some ceremonies the Jews shall forego,

that will edify the Gentile. 6. What think you of arbitration? And the fewer arbiters the better. When many take the thing in hand, commonly it is so long a doing that it is never done. Make the appeal then to few. II. Though there are so many remedies to stop contention, law, canons, custom, reason, middle temper, arbitration, yet my text tells you they do not always prevail, for THE MOST CONSIDERABLE MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S BODY WERE AT ODDS, Paul and Barnabas, which is the next point. Had they been enmities with infidels and pagans, with those that are without, they had been natural: for "what agreement hath light with darkness?" But this was a jar at home, among themselves, a civil war. God help us if the right hand fight against the left, when both are made to defend the body. When the rams of the flock contend, the poor sheep that look on must stand amazed. But I stand to this doctrine, that Paul and Barnabas, and such good men as they are, may pursue a good meaning in a contrary way one to another, and be guiltless. For it is the ignorance of good men, and not their perverseness, which makes them seek the true end by multiplicity of means, and very opposite. Cloth of the same making hath not always the same dye. And they that are propense to glorify one God in the same Church, with the same charity, do not always build with the same materials. Paul loves the Church as well as Barnabas, but he would not offend it for want of justice. Barnabas loves the Church as well as Paul, but he would not offend it for want of clemency and compassion. Here is one wool and one cloth, but dipped in two colours. Then I let you see, that for their part that do equally consent to maintain the true gospel, the inequality of their judgments may be inoffensive. I would I could say for our own parts, that the dissensions of our Reformed Churches were unblamable, and that there were no transgression against charity in our discords. And no wonder if there be turbulent opinions in the congregation of malignants; for the best of God's servants draw not the same yoke without a little jogging of the ark, there was a contention between Paul and Barnabas. III. Nay, to our wonder, it rested not there, IT EXCEEDED THE BOUNDS OF MEEKNESS, for in the third point my text says it was παροξυσμὸς, a sharp contention. "An unanimity of opinions is not necessary to friendship," says Aristotle very well. Dear friends may retain the sweetness of love together, and yet vary in some conclusions of judgment. The dissensions of them that keep benevolent minds are not fallings out, but wranglings. As Paul resisted Peter to his face (Gal. ii. 11) boldly, but charitably. His confidence for the truth became him, and his inoffensiveness commended him. It was otherwise at this bout between him and Barnabas; passion and provocation transported them both so far, that it was a sharp contention. The Greek word παροξυσμὸς hath a cursed meaning in it. When a disease hath intermitted awhile, and begins its access and violence again, that is called a paroxysm of sickness; and when a babble is worse and worse louder and louder, that is a paroxysm of contention. These two, that had been fellow soldiers under Christ's banner, in so many travails, in so many perils, in so many persecutions, they cannot bear with one another with patience; and they that were ready to die together cannot live together; they that were the strongest confederates in the world are the strongest opposites. Oh what a fickle and fallacious thing is the concord of men! Yet I must not say that the sharpness between two such sweet olive branches had any taste of the acid of reproach, or that they pierced one another with opprobrious speeches. I do not onerate them with any such accusation. Have they no regard of their common brotherhood in Christ, who are not satisfied to contend, but they must mix sharpness with it? And no small quantity. A sting is a little matter; they tear one another in pieces as with the paw of a lion. Their pen drops nothing but gall and venom, as if their quill were plucked from the wing of a cockatrice. And who is there of a candid and a clean soul that will not sooner be gained with the coolness of charity than with the heat of rage. IV. Having acquainted you that Paul and Barnabas did disagree, and not simply so, but with some eagerness and provocation, might not a solid judgment suspect that some great offence had thrust itself in between them? You shall find it otherwise, THAT THE CONTENTION WAS IN NO WEIGHTY CAUSE; it touched not the life of truth, or the honour of Christ. The verse before my text will tell you all in the beginning of it, "Paul thought it not good to take Mark with him." And our translation gives it more than is due to it, as I conceive. We say that "Paul thought it not good," as if it were a matter of good or evil. Much better thus, as I apprehend, "Paul thought it not fit." It was not what was good, for it was good either way, but what was more fit and meet that made the controversy. "This is fit," says one; "'Tis not so fit," says his partner; a poor beginning for

a sharp contention. It may be supposed, as I find it in part in a good author, that Barnabas pleaded on this wise for Mark. He had shrunk indeed from his calling, and left Paul at Pamphilia; but it was not strange in a novice to be a little daunted, when he was in jeopardy of his life. But give him his due, he had not renounced the faith, but retired home for fear of the world's anger. Yet he defended not this fault, but repented, and bewailed it. Now he would fain begin afresh, for he felt himself by the grace of God more strong and resolute than ever. Should not indulgence be shown to his unfeigned repentance? Surely the son of so good a mother deserved some mildness and favour from the presidents of the Church. And what was more proper to Christ's commissioners than to reconcile offenders that had gone astray? These reasons prevailing not with Paul, you may imagine with me, if you please, that his sentence was to this purpose. That they are worthy of great reproof that make excuses, and follow not Christ when He calls them. An easy pardon would flatter him in his fault; this repulse would make him know the magnitude of his sin. And why might not Paul have remitted a little of his rigour to have gratified Barnabas? And why not Barnabas have taken the denial friendly to content Paul? Sacrifice small and indifferent things to the fruition of peace. To hold fast to our conclusions in petty matters with all the strength of our will and wit is not constancy, but a worse thing. V. This is the last point, and the saddest word of the text, this ἀποχωρησις, THE DEPARTING ASUNDER. To come even with the time I will fall presently upon the use. 1. This is utterly against our Saviour's rule, "Go and be reconciled to thy brother" (Matt. v. 24). A wound will never be healed but by drawing the parts together that were dissolved. Affability and sweet conversation strikes fire out of a flint. But disjunction of persons is an eclipse of friendship, till the light of one doth shine with a propitious aspect upon the other. I know that in the case of these two apostles, though they were prevented with an error, yet shortly after their unkind farewell they returned to their Christian temper, and afterwards in sundry texts of Scripture Paul did put himself in the same scale with Barnabas, as with his sworn brother, as 1 Cor. ix. 6: "I only, and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?" And Gal. ii. 9: "James, Cephas, and John . . . gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship." Here is another thing worthy our consideration. If Paul and Barnabas had both gone to Cilicia, Cyprus had wanted them; or if both had gone to Cyprus, Cilicia had wanted them. Now they were singled they propagated the faith of Christ both by sea and land. Barnabas sailed into Cyprus, and Paul journeyed into Cilicia. This was not like a bow-string snapped asunder; but they were two strings to one bow, and that which was division to themselves was multiplication to the gospel of Christ. Finally, they performed what they intended, to "visit their brethren in every city, where they had preached the Word of God" (ver. 32). All governments, in all ages, have approved this to be the best way to conserve unity. It is impossible to avoid a multitude of corruptions in faith, and not to contract a prodigious licentiousness in discipline. Paul and Barnabas supervised the several cities where they had laid the foundation of evangelical faith; and, like careful rulers, interposed the power with which Christ had endued them, to keep their brethren dispersed far and wide in one. Though they were two upon a small disgust, yet they remembered there was but one Shepherd and one sheepfold, whose peace they studied to preserve by their pastoral vigilancy. (*J. Hacket, D.D.*) *The dissension between Paul and Barnabas:*—The two men were bound together by early associations, perhaps had been schoolmates at Tarsus. When Paul came to Jerusalem, Barnabas was the first to trust and welcome him. They were both devoted to the work among the Gentiles, and had shared the dangers and the glories of the first missionary tour. This companionship ended with the controversy about Mark. However unfortunate, it was not strange. Barnabas had reason for his confidence, Paul for his distrust. Both were right, both were wrong. They could agree only to disagree; and the second missionary tour was begun in unhappiness. Many familiar suggestions arise from this scene. I. VERY GOOD MEN MAY HAVE FAULTS. These two had confessed at Lystra that they were men of like passions with us, but now each seems to have forgotten that; neither will make allowance for the other. We cannot expect always to have our own way, even when we are in the right. Were it certain that our opponent is wholly in the wrong, we have no right to forget that, notwithstanding this error, he may be a good man. Trust his proved character. Do not lightly imperil a fellowship which has grown up in kindly helpfulness. A few hot words may undo the love of years, as a few blows of the axe cuts down the oak of a century's growth. The Master had only

faulty disciples, but He never lost one real friend. What would have become of them, of us, did He dwell upon real faults as much as upon possible virtues? II. PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS AND SURROUNDINGS AFFECT THE JUDGMENT. Barnabas was Mark's uncle; he knew him better than Paul could, and loved him better. The trusting spirit which had welcomed the newly-converted persecutor now received the repentant backslider; yet this charity of itself did not prove the young man was deserving of such a trust. Charitableness and affection become leniency, putting unfit men into responsible positions. Courage and self-denial stiffen into severity in judging weaker brethren. III. ONE SIN BRINGS OTHER SINS AND MANY SORROWS. Mark's weak shrinking shamed himself, dishonoured his Lord, and betrayed these true yoke-fellows into a pitiable strife. IV. CHRIST USES IMPERFECT LABOURERS. He has no other. God must make the folly and wrath of man to praise Him, since folly and wrath appear even in true disciples. V. TRUE CHRISTIANS WILL NOT REMAIN AT VARIANCE. How glad we are for that message from Paul to Timothy, "Take Mark and bring him with thee, for he is profitable to me for the ministry"; and for the commendatory mention of Barnabas ten years later, in writing to the Corinthians. (*Sermons by the Monday Club.*) *The quarrel of Barnabas and Saul:*—The fact that such a scene is recorded proves the genuineness of the men. Had it been their object to impose upon mankind, such a scene as this would have been either not mentioned at all, or would have appeared in such a form as to conceal altogether what is morally offensive. As genuine men, they reveal themselves to us in the costume of real life, with all their imperfections about them. Note here—I. THAT PROBABILITY IS NO CERTAIN GUIDE FOR US IN JUDGING THE FUTURE. To all who were acquainted with these apostles, nothing could have appeared more improbable than that they should ever quarrel. They were both good men, they were old friends. They had been fellow-labourers for a long time. They were apostles too, acting under the inspiration and direction of Christ. Under such circumstances, could anything appear more improbable than that such men should quarrel? Yet they did. We look to the future, and say, probably such an event will happen; yet how often the future falsifies our calculations and disappoints our hopes. II. THAT LITTLE THINGS ARE OFTEN MORE TRYING TO THE TEMPER THAN GREAT. These men for years had been in the most trying circumstances together. They had contended together with the bigoted Jew and the idolatrous Gentile. They had just returned from Jerusalem, where they had engaged in a most exciting debate, and seem to have gone through the whole of these things with unbroken equanimity. But now the mere question as to whether John should accompany them produces great irritation. Now this seems to us a small matter compared with other things that engaged their united attention; and yet it was this that broke the harmony of their friendship. It is often so. Call men together to discuss small questions, and they will quarrel; call them to work out a great object, and they will be cordial and unanimous. The best way to promote Church union is to engage in great works. Flies irritate the noble steed more than the roll of the chariot wheel. III. THAT CHRISTIANITY ALLOWS SCOPE FOR DISCRETIONARY ACTION. These apostles took upon themselves to decide as to whether John should accompany them or not. No principle was involved in it—it was a mere question of expediency. We are allowed no discretionary action either as to moral principles or cardinal truths. But there is much in connection with the methods of extending Christianity that is left entirely with our judgment. Hence the discussion at Jerusalem was under the direction of the Holy Spirit. But here there was no special direction. Many such questions are left for such treatment—Church government, &c. IV. THAT THE BEST OF MEN ARE NOT ABSOLUTELY INFALLIBLE. When the apostles spoke and acted under the inspiration of the Spirit, they were infallible. But they did not always thus speak and act, as the event we are discussing shows. There is but one perfect example, and thank God there is One; and He is to be followed through evil as well as good report. V. THAT UNDER THE GRACIOUS RULE OF HEAVEN EVIL IS MADE SUBSERVIENT TO THE PROGRESS OF GOOD. 1. An increased area of usefulness. Instead of one district for both, which was contemplated, there was one for each. It led Paul into Europe. 2. An increased power of usefulness. Instead of two men there were four. VI. THAT EARNEST WORK WILL INEVITABLY RECTIFY OUR TEMPERS. They had not been parted long, I presume, before every particle of animosity went out. We find Paul referring kindly to Mark (Col. iv. 10; 2 Tim. iv. 11; Philem. 24), and also to Barnabas (1 Cor. ix. 6). (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The quarrel about John Mark:*—As a general rule there is nothing more miserable than to dwell upon others' short-

comings. I call attention to the faults of three disciples to see that the old Adam is not utterly killed in the best of men. I. THE SHARP QUARREL BETWEEN PAUL AND BARNABAS. Mark, fired perhaps by the zeal of Paul, or impelled by the roving fancy of youth, had gone with the two to Antioch. They then took him on a missionary tour, but just when most needed he deserted. By and by, when another tour was in contemplation, Barnabas proposes to try him again. Paul refuses, and the contention was sharp. The only wise thing about the whole matter was the separation. It is far better for men who cannot work comfortably together to separate. If the contention had been patched up neither could have gone to the work with whole-heartedness. There were faults on both sides, but it would be difficult to say on whom the lesser blame rested. On the one hand there was the brave consistency which felt that a weak and irresolute man was not to be trusted with such a perilous mission; on the other there was the honest conviction that Mark was worth another trial. 1. The most godly men are still liable to sudden falls. A man never becomes so advanced in holiness as to get beyond the danger of old faults of temper. Let us seek the grace that makes a man the conqueror of his own spirit. 2. Those who are engaged in the same work may have antagonistic views on matters of prudence. It is no use trying all to see with one eye. Meanwhile we must have the spirit of charity, and bear with schemes which seem stupid and court failure. II. THE DIFFERENT STAGES OF MARK'S LIFE WHICH THESE VERSES REVEAL. The unpromising youth often surprises us by superior development. Soldiers who have quailed before the first fire have afterwards distinguished themselves as brave men. So with Mark. Barnabas' encouragement, combined with the sharp tonic administered by Paul, made a man of him. Both are needed to-day. III. THE HONOURABLE CONFESSION OF PAUL THAT MARK HAD TURNED OUT BETTER THAN HE HAD EXPECTED. (*E. H. Higgins.*) *Paul and Barnabas, their contention and separation:*—I. THE APOSTLES WERE NOT GOING FORTH AS THE DELEGATES OF A SUPREME CENTRAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY. 1. There was union between the Churches, but that was purely spiritual. 2. The visit was perfectly natural. 3. Being a second visit, it was calculated to show that they were not ashamed of their principles, nor afraid of their opponents. II. STABILITY OF CHARACTER WAS NECESSARY TO USEFULNESS IN SUCH A MISSION. 1. Friendship is no reason in itself why a man should be promoted to office. 2. Fickle men are not to be trusted in the service of truth when there is difficulty in the way. III. DIFFERENCES OF OPINION SHOULD NOT LEAD TO THE ABANDONMENT OF PRINCIPLE. 1. Some wreak their vengeance on the cause of truth. 2. When two men cannot agree to toil in the same corner of the vineyard, let them honestly divide, and betake them to other departments. 3. The holiest men may have ruffled tempers sometimes. 4. The apostle afterwards received Mark into fellowship. "To err is human—to forgive, Divine." (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The separation of Paul and Barnabas:*—We are now out in the open air again (ver. 35). For some days we have been in a stifling atmosphere, listening to great men debating the vexed question of circumcision. We feel our need of rest, after the passionate excitement through which we have gone. We will now live amongst friends, and be quiet and trustful, and grow in our apprehension of Divine purposes. Yet this is not to be. We come out of one contention into another. This is life all through and through—namely, a series of conflicts. Observe—I. PAUL'S LOVE OF WORK—"Let us go again." Paul was bitten again with mission hunger. He himself was earnest; therefore he could not tolerate insincerity. There was no breach in his all but infinite integrity, and therefore a flaw in other men was not an accident but a crime. In his criticism of Mark, Paul gave a criticism of himself. Paul meant his work to be solid and enduring. This was the very purpose he had in view—namely, to consolidate young believers and immature thinkers and students; and to take with him, on such a mission, a man who himself had turned back from the plough, was an irony which vexed his soul. His purpose was to "confirm the Churches," to make them stronger and stronger; and to be working with an instrument which had already broken in his hands was a moral irony, from which his very spirit recoiled. Everything depends upon the kind of work you are going to do. There is a place in the Church for every one, and that is the problem which the Papacy has solved. The Papacy can use all sorts of men; Protestantism can use only one or two kinds. We must learn to employ men in proper departments who do not come up to the Pauline standard of excellence. Do not throw away any man for the sake of one fault, or even two. There may be a great deal of soundness in the apple that has upon it one patch of rottenness. II. BARNABAS'S

CHARITY. He is willing to give a man another chance in life. By so much he was a great man. From the point of righteous discipline, there can be no doubt of the grandeur of Paul; but a man who would give a youth another chance seems to me to have in him the true spirit of the Cross. Take heed how you administer discipline. Thank God for the few men here and there who are willing to try us again! We owe them our lives: we ought to live for them. We have hitherto considered Barnabas only a well-disposed, loving man, who would sit down or stand up, go or come, just as some superior nature might suggest or require. Such are often amongst the sternest men. Barnabas said to Paul, "No!" and even Paul could not change that No into a Yes. Afterwards the judgment of Barnabas was vindicated. Barnabas was in this respect a further-sighted man than Paul. There is only one infallible Person in the Church, and he is its Lord. Paul was but a man at the best; he himself said so. "Who then is Paul and who is Apollos?" In this respect Barnabas was a greater man than Paul. He is the true intellectual reader who says about a young man, "He has the Spirit of God in him, and the indestructible seed of the kingdom." And he who, twenty years after, simply gives in to facts is not a man of penetration at all. Young man, live in the warm sunshine of those who hope the best about you. You owe nothing to the men who affirm your excellence when they cannot deny it. III. THERE ARE MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES IN THIS CONTROVERSY. 1. Both men were honest. It is something to have to deal with honest men, even when they oppose you. 2. The contention was not about the Master. Paul and Barnabas did not take two different views of Christ. They are not going to found separate theological sects. 3. The work was not abandoned, but was doubled. The destinations they selected were revelations of the spirit of the men. Barnabas goes into obscurity, Paul rises like a sun into a broader firmament. 4. The parties afterwards become reconciled. We have already said good-bye to Peter; so now we must say good-bye to Barnabas and Mark. At this point they both retire from the Acts of the Apostles. The withdrawment is in a kind of thunderstorm. Surely this cannot be all. Such lifelong friends cannot part in this way! We must know more about this. In 1 Cor. ix. 6 we hear again about Barnabas, and in 1 Peter v. 13; Col. iv. 10; Philem. 24; 2 Tim. iv. 11 we hear again about Mark. Well done, Mark! Well done, Paul! Few men have moral courage to correct themselves openly, to repair wrongs which, however unconsciously, they once inflicted. (*Ibid.*) *Unity in disunion*:—I. ST. PAUL'S PROPOSAL (ver. 36) TO REVISIT THE CONGREGATIONS WAS A PROOF OF HIS SENSE OF THE PRECARIOUSNESS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. Throughout his Epistles we have the expression of the same spirit. He has scarcely left a place, when his anxiety about the well-being of his converts becomes too painful for him to bear. He sends back his only companion, and consents to be entirely solitary in a strange city, if he may but gain the desired tidings as to the stability of those whom he has left behind. It was so already at this early point in his ministry. It is a good thing to form new plans, originate new machineries, and carry the ministrations of the Church into homes and haunts which they have not yet penetrated. But in all this we must take heed lest we be chargeable with not well following up a work which has been well begun. When an impression is by God's grace secured, still it may fade and flag and at last disappear if it be not vigorously and earnestly and constantly renewed. Oh, how precarious is the work of grace in the most promising of us all! What snares does Satan lay for the young, the newly confirmed, the just awakened, the recently reformed! So soon is the ground once cleared again overgrown; so soon is the impulse once communicated checked and impeded; so soon is the seed once sown snatched away, or scorched in its first budding, or choked finally in its growth; that there is need to say in the words here before us, "Let us go again," &c. II. THE RESULT OF THE PROPOSAL. Barnabas shared St. Paul's feeling. But in settling the details of the enterprise a grave difference presented itself. 1. The subject of this dissension was a Christian subject. They were at variance as to the best way of prosecuting Christ's work. It was not a quarrel arising out of this, that one of the two had gained, what both could not have, of the riches or honours or pleasures of the world. It was not that one had disparaged the ability or the probity or the spirituality of the other, and that this must awaken in the natural mind a resentment to be shown in retort or cherished in malice. Happy should we be, if our faults were only those of an excess of zeal and tenacity in reference to the work of Christ and the interests of souls! 2. That infirmity was redressed in the wisest and best of ways. It was with the dissension of two apostles, as with the dispute of Abram and Lot. Where no Divine law

compels coexistence, separation is oftentimes the best cure for discord. "Live and let live." If two of God's servants cannot see things alike, let them agree to see them differently. If they cannot act together, they can at least believe together, and hope together, and together love. If each has Christ's work and glory at heart, they will all be reconciled by the great reconciler: death, which is the gate of heaven, will make the crooked straight, and the rough places plain. 3. Separation was in this case followed—we know it—by concord. III. THE VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE HISTORY. 1. The Holy Scriptures are no flattering tale. There is no screening, no palliating, of the infirmities of holy men. If men will make mischief of this they must. If men will say either, Because a saint did this, therefore it cannot be sin; or else, Because such a man did this, therefore he cannot be a saint: they are left to do so. The business of the Holy Scriptures, in these respects, is with facts, not with inferences. That Book which paints not men as either demons or heroes; that Book which tells me just what is true, and teaches me how to rise out of this which is truly the natural man into this which is as truly the Christian man; how to mourn over myself without despairing, and how to deal justly with others and yet not condemn; that I call a true Book: I see there man as he is, and God as He is: I see there a light to my steps, because it describes truly the wilderness which I traverse, and because it shows me how and by what guidance I can traverse it in safety. And if I see that the Book describes all else truly, because according to my daily experience of man and of man's world, then I can believe it when I see that there is one Person, just one, and one only, whom it paints as indeed without sin; perfect Man, as much in the blamelessness of His life, as in the completeness of His nature. 2. This passage sets before us an all-working and all-ruling and all-restoring Providence of God. Out of evil comes forth good. Out of human infirmity there grows Divine strength. The unity of the work is broken, but out of the one divided there has sprung a twofold completeness. (*Dean Vaughan.*)

Ver. 41.–Chap. xvi. 1–8.—**And he went through Syria and Cilicia confirming the Churches.**—*Paul as a model for all gospel ministers:*—He recognises the importance of—I. ESTABLISHING NEW CONVERTS IN THE FAITH. In this visit he does not break new ground, but goes over the old scenes. Who that remembers the treatment which he met with at Lystra can fail to admire his magnanimity and dauntless heroism in entering this place again? Note in relation to his confirmatory work—1. The method (ver. 4). He carried with him wherever he went, and expounded, the apostolic letter from Jerusalem (chap. xv. 23–29). 2. The success (ver. 5). Here was—(1) Moral increase—"established in the faith." Their views became clearer; their principles struck a deeper root; their attachment to Christ attained a greater strength. Their religion passed from the region of theories and feelings into their heart and life. (2) Numerical increase—"increased in number daily." Let Christians improve in character, and converts will multiply daily. This confirmatory work is pre-eminently the work of Christians in this age and land of ours. A reconverted Church is essential to the conversion of the world. II. ENLISTING TRUE COADJUTORS IN THE WORK. On the page of history stands there a man more brave, mighty, self-dependent than Paul. Yet he needs a companion. He lost Barnabas, and he "chose Silas," and took with him Timotheus. Christ knew our social needs, and hence, in sending out His disciples and apostles, He sent them in twos. One supplements the deficiencies of the other; in the breast of one there lies a spark to rekindle the waning fire of the other's zeal. He selected the best man as his social helper. In a great work, link not yourselves to spiritually common men when you may get moral peers and princes. III. ACCOMMODATING HIMSELF TO PUBLIC SENTIMENT. The Jews believed in circumcision. Although the rite was no longer binding, it was not yet a moral wrong; and hence Paul, in accommodation to the popular sentiment, circumcises Timothy. His fixed line of procedure was to act on the cities through the synagogues. But such a course would have been impossible had not Timothy been circumcised (chap. xxi. 29). The very intercourse of social life would have been almost impossible, for it was still "an abomination" for the circumcised to eat with the uncircumcised. In all this Paul was consistent with himself, with his own grand axiom, "I am all things to all men, that I might save some." IV. YIELDING TO THE DICTATES OF THE DIVINE SPIRIT (vers. 6–8). 1. There is a Divine Spirit, and that Spirit has access to the human spirit. 2. If we are the true ministers of Christ, His Spirit, according to His promise, is with us—"Lo, I am with you always." (1) The will of that

Spirit must be obeyed: to oppose that is sin, weakness, ruin. (2) The will of that Spirit is knowable: He gives indications by impressions within and by events without. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

CHAPTER XVI.

VERS. 1-3. **Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and behold a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus.**—*Timotheus*:—1. The first of Paul's missionary journeys reached its furthest limit at Lystra—the most uncivilised place he ever visited. Even here, however, he left a Church which he now found standing steadfast, and among its members a youth of peculiar promise, who bore the now famous name of Timothy. 2. On the mother's side Timothy was a Jew. Both mother and grandmother were devout, and it is therefore surprising that "his father was a Greek," and probably a heathen. Mixed marriages were held in horror by orthodox Jews. At Lystra, however, Jews were few, and the rigour of custom must have been relaxed. Timothy had never been circumcised. But what might escape remark in Lycaonia, would prove a scandal elsewhere; and with his usual practical judgment, Paul "took and circumcised him" before he led him forth to work. 3. The spiritual ancestry of Timothy is as clearly marked as the natural. Prepared for the willing reception of the gospel by the godly education of his childhood, he became Paul's "own son in the faith." In the interval between the two visits he had advanced to a character of marked ability and usefulness. Paul, always on the watch for helpers, saw the materials lying ready for a noble missionary life. "Him would Paul have to go forth with him." And with this period we connect the numerous allusions to his ordination service. The Church appears gathered in solemn assembly. He makes "a good profession before many witnesses." Then the apostle explains the labours and the risks of the Christian warfare, and charges his "son" to be brave, patient, and believing. The laying on of hands succeeds; and the prayer of the Church rises to heaven on his behalf. Nor in vain; for to that moment is referred the special anointing of the Spirit which fitted the young man for his future ministry. And, amid smiles and tears, we see him going forth into the great world, in the footsteps of the Captain who had chosen him to be a soldier. 4. Timothy's work constantly widened in range and in importance. Very young when he went out with Paul, it was fitting that he should at first remain in the background. But, from references in the epistles, we discover how usefully and industriously he was employed. From Corinth he is sent to the Thessalonians, "to establish and comfort them in their faith." From Ephesus he is sent to the Corinthians "to bring them into remembrance" of the truth they seemed to have forgotten. He passed through his apprenticeship in a loyal and loving spirit; and presently rose to be a master, with enterprises of his own. Still comparatively young, he is left at Ephesus with an Herculean task on his hands. He becomes the recognised successor of the great apostle, invested with an authority hardly inferior to his own. When that apostle's end draws near, and he seeks some one to be his comforter and executor, it is to Timothy that the summons is sent; and we learn, from the Epistle to the Hebrews, that he was imprisoned for Christ, and, if tradition is to be trusted, he died at last a martyr's death in the streets of his own turbulent Ephesus. 5. With little beyond allusions to guide us, it is difficult to decide on Timothy's qualities. His bodily health was feeble, and required stimulants; his natural disposition appears to have been as sensitive as Paul's, and perhaps deficient in forwardness and courage. The situation of affairs at Ephesus was at the time extremely difficult and even dangerous. The bravest might easily have lost heart in such an atmosphere, and would have needed to sustain him every motive which an apostle could supply. Paul did not think meanly of his follower. On the contrary, he speaks of his unfeigned faith, his unwearied service, his strict fidelity. He declares that in all the chosen band of his fellow-labourers there is none so disinterested, so full of sympathy, so much after his own heart. More dazzling names than his are to be seen in the firmament of the early Church; Apollos flames across the sky, leaving behind the brilliant sparks of his Alexandrian rhetoric: but the star of Timotheus beams on with a gentle, gracious, and unfading lustre, holding forth

the word of life. 6. Whatever the contrast between Timothy's mission and ours, his character is one which, in its strength, its modesty, and its devotedness, may be ours. Character is a building of which God is the architect, and all the designs are His. But the building rises stone on stone, and is the work of many different hands; and it is useful to inquire what influences we can trace as helping to make this man what he was. (1) One was the Bible. "From a child" it had been his great lesson-book. And now, in this great age of making books, where, by common confession, is there a book that will do for character what the Bible does? (2) No less helpful were personal influences. The Bible is the best of books; but the character of those who teach it adds immensely to its power. Now the earliest Scripture-lessons of Timothy were mingled with the happy associations of hours spent at the feet of his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. When they and he were parted, the same good work was carried on by apostolic hands. How much may be done to impart interest and impressiveness to the Word of God! The desire to see her child become another Timothy lives in many a Christian mother's heart: does not the power to make him so, under the Divine blessing, lie largely in her hands? The Bible-class, wisely conducted, becomes the very garden of the Lord, where the young plants are nourished to a full stature and strength. (3) Yet, after all, the main human force at work in the formation of Timothy's character was Timothy himself: for the determining will was his own. (*W. Brock, jun.*) *Timothy; or maternal goodness*:—I. TIMOTHY'S BEAUTY OF CHARACTER IS TRACEABLE THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE. He was not converted from sin and shame in mature life. From a child he knew the Holy Scriptures experimentally, as well as being the founts of doctrine and the rules of conduct. A young man, just budding into strength and freedom, he became a Christian, whose character endeared him to the community of which both his grandmother and mother were distinguished ornaments, and whose gifts, exercised and proved, commanded the Church's admiration. Every way it is important that the young should feel that their youth belongs to Christ. It is contrary to the spirit and intention of our holy religion to treat them as the subjects of a depravity which must have its way, and consign them to years of separation from God. A young soul may be rendered hopeless of spiritual good through misrepresentation of the actual facts of life. Children naturally fall into what you say they are. The Saviour of men is the Saviour of the young. He who took them in His arms and blessed them, is always longing for the homage and affection of fresh, young hearts. He deprecates one hour spent in the service of evil. The history of Timothy proves the possibility, and shows the beauty of Divine life in youth. II. THE SACRED INFLUENCE OF A MOTHER'S PIETY. Eunice was a Jewess—and to "the unfeigned faith which dwelt in her" is to be traced the spiritual development of Timothy. How many of the most renowned of the Church's heroes have been born again through the prayers and example of pious mothers! We think of Jochebed, Hannah, Mary, Salome, &c. As a mother is her child's world, it is evident that on her must depend its first impressions. As she is kind and gentle, graceful and sweet, pure and devout, or the reverse, so will her child's life be. How mothers should cultivate their own hearts and watch over their own doings! III. THE HOME HINDRANCES OF TIMOTHY'S SPIRITUAL LIFE. "His father was a Greek," which indicates not only the diversity between himself and wife, as of different races, but that his wife believed, and he remained an idolater. This divergence had of necessity to be made manifest to the child. The mother taught him the truths of the religion his father despised. It is a picture on which, even in these days, we are often called to look. There was sometimes sorrow in the house, because there was no spiritual sympathy. The strength of his mother's faith and love were enough to overcome this hindrance. But it is not always so. Sometimes the dead weight of a godless husband or wife is sufficient to drag down and crush the goodness which is allied with it. The waters wear the stones, and sometimes the marriage bells ring the knell of the spiritual life and profession. (*W. H. Davison.*) *Paul and Timothy*:—I. PAUL TOOK SILAS WITH HIM, but he could not give up a man like Barnabas and think no more about him. He who can forget old friends is no apostle of Jesus Christ. Besides, Paul was going "again" to the churches. The people would ask about Barnabas. We ask questions that open graves and heart-wounds. The man who has not seen you for years asks you how that sweet little boy of yours is, and it seems to you incredible that a grief that filled your house with darkness had not made itself known to your friend. What must Paul's answer have been? He was a faithful man, true as steel: he knew not the genius of

equivocation and the fine art of telling lies. We have to account for old associations being ruptured, we have to explain new faces and new relationships. II. Paul came to Derbe and Lystra, and found "A CERTAIN DISCIPLE NAMED TIMOTHEUS." Long ago we read about a young man whose name was Saul. We begin in obscurity, we are pointed at as hardly to be identified. If the foolish tree could be taking itself up in order to show its antecedents, it would soon be killed. All that we have to do is so to lift ourselves up in God's light and rain, as to bring forth fruit. We may be now nothing more than "certain disciples," but we may still be disciples. III. TIMOTHY WAS THE SON OF A JEWESS AND A GREEK. Happy man, to stand between two civilisations! What must the boy have been? Two such fires meeting in his blood; two such histories recounting themselves in his memory! How able to look well round him and to understand the mystery of Law and the mystery of Beauty! His religion might go up into superstition, his philosophy might develop into scepticism and sneering; if he touched Christ, he touched One who to the Jew was a stumbling-block and to the Greek foolishness, but to the believing Timothy the power of God and the wisdom of God. We ourselves see this double relationship sometimes in life. Your mother prayed—your father never prayed. You are a child of the night and of the day, and you feel it, and sometimes you are plunged in the darkness of the one parentage, and sometimes you are away on the bright broad wings of the other into the light. But is it possible that a Jewess could marry a Greek? I should have said, No, but for what *you* have done. IV. TIMOTHY "WAS WELL REPORTED OF." Character is very subtle. Timothy never asked any man to speak well of him, and yet no man could speak ill of the youth. Do not appeal to one another's charitable judgment for a character, but so live that character will come. Live your character; do not be painted as good men, but paint your own character in your own blood. V. "HIM WOULD PAUL HAVE TO GO FORTH WITH HIM." Paul could not do without youth. A young man can run, and is not burdened with a sense of his own respectability. God bless the young life! There are those who would snub the youthful soul, and never permit him to be seen or heard. Paul loved the young, and would never give them up so long as they were true; but if ever they began to prove themselves fickle, he would give them up and their uncle Barnabas with them. A soldier could not do with a coward; only be true, and Paul would be your lifelong friend. VI. HE TOOK AND CIRCUMCISED TIMOTHY. This from Paul, who would not circumcise Titus! But the reason is given (ver. 3). It was therefore no breach of the apostle's stern policy that, under circumstances so peculiar, he should respect a temporary prejudice. Now they start, Paul, and Silas, and Timotheus (ver. 4). Do not be afraid of the word "Decrees"; they were decrees of liberty. What they signed was the Magna Charta of the Church; freedom centred in God and in the Cross. Christ's followers are not lawless; they have decrees to keep. The spirit of authority is the spirit of rest when it brings with it the assurance that the authority is not arbitrary but rational, not local but universal, not imperfect but Divine. VII. "SO WERE THE CHURCHES ESTABLISHED," &c. These are the true results which accompany every true mission—edification first, and evangelisation second. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Trained from childhood*:—As Alexander the Great attained to have such a puissant army, whereby he conquered the world, by having children born and brought up in his camp, whereby they became so well acquainted and exercised with weapons from their swaddling-clothes, that they looked for no other wealth or country but to fight; even so, if thou wouldst have thy children either to do great matters, or to live honestly by their own virtuous endeavours, thou must acquaint them with pains-taking in their youth, and so bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. (*Cawdray.*) *Children, cost of training cheap in the long run*:—An Englishman visiting Sweden, noticing their care for educating children, who are taken from the streets and highways and placed in special schools, inquired if it was not costly. He received the suggestive answer, "Yes, it is costly, but not dear. We Swedes are not rich enough to let a child grow up in ignorance, misery, and crime, to become a scourge to society as well as a disgrace to himself." (*The Lantern.*) *Early impressions permanent*:—I stood in a house in one of the Long Island villages, not long ago, and I saw a beautiful tree, and I said to the owner: "That is a very fine tree; but what a curious crook there is in it." "Yes," said he; "I planted that tree, and when it was a year old, I went to New York, and worked as a mechanic for a year or two, and when I came back I found they had allowed something to stand against the tree, and so it has always had that crook." And so, I thought, it was with the influence upon children. If you allow anything to stand

in the way of moral influence against a child on this side or that side, to the latest day of its life on earth and through all eternity it will show the pressure. No wonder Lord Byron was bad. Do you know his mother said to him, when she saw him one day limping across the floor with his unsound foot: "Get out of my way, you lame brat!" What chance for a boy like that? (*T. De W. Talmage, D.D.*) *Early piety, importance of:*—The most important ten years of human life are from five to fifteen years of age. The vast majority of those who pass twenty irreligious are never converted at all. Dr. Spencer tells us that, out of two hundred and thirty-five hopeful converts in his church, one hundred and thirty-eight were under twenty years, only four had passed their fiftieth year. I have been permitted during my ministry to receive nearly one thousand persons into the Church on confession of their faith, and not one dozen of these had outgrown their fiftieth year. I did indeed once baptise a veteran of eighty-five, but the case was so remarkable that it excited the talk and wonder of the town. Such late repentances are too much like what the blunt, dying soldier called "flinging the fag-end of one's life into the face of the Almighty." (*T. L. Cuyler, D.D.*) *Children early taught idolatry:*—The heathen mother takes her babe to the idol temple, and teaches it to clasp its little hands before its forehead, in the attitude of prayer, long before it can utter a word. As soon as it can walk, it is taught to gather a few flowers or fruits, or put a little rice upon a banana-leaf, and lay them upon the altar before the idol god. As soon as it can utter the names of its parents, so soon it is taught to offer up its petitions before the images. Who ever saw a heathen child that could speak, and not pray? Christian mothers, why is it that so many children grow up in this enlightened land without learning to pray? *Mother, influence of:*—The mother of the Beechers prayed during life and in death, "that her children might be trained up for God." One of her journals contains this simple record—"This morning I rose very early to pray for my children, and especially that my sons may be ministers and missionaries of Jesus Christ." What has been the result? That for all her children her prayers have been answered. Her five sons are all ministers and missionaries of Christ. One of them she has welcomed to heaven; another is now the most powerful preacher in America; and her daughter, Mrs. Beecher Stowe, is, by her writings, not less widely or favourably known. (*W. Landels, D.D.*) *Mother, influence of:*—Some one asked a man of wisdom when the education of a child should be commenced? "Twenty years before his birth, by educating his mother," was the reply. (*Christian Advocate*). *Mother, influence of:*—Upon a tombstone erected by a family of children was the inscription "Our mother; she always made home happy." When Madame Campan asked Napoleon what was the great want of the French nation, his reply was "Mothers." *Mother, prayers of a:*—Samuel Budgett was about nine years of age, when, one day passing his mother's door, he heard her engaged in earnest prayer for her family, and for himself by name. He thought, "My mother is more earnest that I should be saved than I am for my own salvation." In that hour he became decided to serve God, and the impression thus made was never effaced. (*W. Arthur.*)

Vers. 3–5. **Him would Paul have to go forth with him.**—*Using new converts:*—It is good for young converts to be set at work; it is good for them. It is good for every Church to set its young converts at work; it is good for the Church. "All at it, and always at it," was the old Wesleyan cry. And it was in that way that the Methodist Church gained and grew so wonderfully. It was long ago said of the Waldensian Church, that its peculiar vitality was accounted for by the fact that as soon as a new convert had been seven days a believer, he was set to teach some one who was not so far along as he was. And that is the way for a Church to have greatest activity and widest efficiency on the part of its membership. Of course, when it comes to assigning special duties to young converts, there must be wisdom shown in their selection. If a man is to be sent into another field, he ought to be one who has a good reputation in his own field. He who lacks the confidence of those who know him, ought not to be helped to new acquaintances by a local church or by a foreign missionary society. (*H. C. Trumbull.*) *Paul and Timothy colleagues:*—I. THE IDEAL MINISTRY IS THAT OF PARTNERSHIP. "Two are better than one," either as pastors or missionaries. 1. No one man is fully equipped for all the duties of his office, though two may be. The one often supplies what is lacking in the other; and common interests are promoted by the interchange of thought and affection, and by the division of labour. What one may have no adaptability for

the other may have in abundance. Able preachers are not always good pastors. Happy the Church which has two ministers: one who can visit, another who can preach. 2. Partnership was the plan of the Master who sent His disciples out "two by two." It was the plan of the apostles. How often we find Peter and John in conjunction. It was Paul's plan, who never laboured alone if he could help it. II. THIS PARTNERSHIP MUST BE BASED ON HARMONIOUS QUALITIES. Not necessarily identical qualities. Persons of similar ideas and temperaments have not always been good colleagues. Opposites are not necessarily antagonistic: they are often complementary. The most angular persons have often worked well together, because the angles have been made to fit laterally instead of pressing on the points. Paul could not, under existing circumstances, have worked with Mark, and so far he was wise in refusing his companionship; and it is doubtful if he could have permanently worked with Barnabas. We may see a wise Providence in their separation if not in the means by which it was brought about. Paul could get on better with Timothy, whom he could train in his own methods and aims. III. THIS PARTNERSHIP WAS REALISED IN THE CASE OF PAUL AND TIMOTHY. What one lacked the other possessed—inexperience and experience; the desire to learn and the ability to teach; sedateness and energy; evangelistic genius, and pastoral and governmental gifts. (*J. W. Burn.*) **And as they went through the cities they delivered them the decrees for to keep.** *The decrees of the Church at Jerusalem:*—I. THE MESSENGERS WHO DELIVERED THESE DECREES. II. TO WHOM THEY WERE DELIVERED. III. THE END FOR WHICH THEY WERE DELIVERED. IV. THE RESULTS OF THIS DELIVERY. 1. Confirmation. 2. Augmentation. (*W. Burkitt.*) **And so were the Churches established.**—*The establishment and increase of the Church:*—The ultimate success of any system must depend upon its truth. A lie may partially succeed; but its final doom is certain. It carries in itself the elements of its own destruction. Truth, on the contrary, is imperishable. However persecuted and misrepresented, it will infallibly vindicate its birth and greatness. It is, therefore, a matter of the utmost importance that the truths of the gospel should be maintained in their entireness and purity. For, in proportion as error mingles with truth, its influence will be counteracted. And when antiquated rites or modern conceits are substituted for evangelical doctrine, the pernicious results of error become still more apparent. The facts on which these observations are based may be found in this and the preceding chapter. Note here:—I. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CHRISTIANS IN THE FAITH. The term "faith" is often employed to signify Christianity as a religious system; doubtless, because by believing we become partakers of its blessings (Acts vi. 7; Gal. i. 23; 1 Tim. v. 8; Titus i. 13). This establishment of Christians in the faith includes—1. Their confirmation in doctrinal truth. The evangelical writers constantly assume that there is such a thing as an authoritative standard of truth, to which reason and opinion are obliged to bow (Rom. vi. 17; 2 Tim. i. 13; 1 Tim. vi. 3; Titus i. 9; 1 John ii. 21, 24). And it is assumed throughout the Scriptures that these truths are capable of being understood by every order of mind so as to exercise their influence over the whole man (John viii. 32; 1 Tim. ii. 4). Now that the apostles are no longer on earth to explain their own meaning, it becomes us to be the more careful in the use of the means we possess, that we may avoid error, and arrive at the "knowledge of the truth." We must "search the Scriptures," asking for the "Spirit of truth to guide us into all truth." 2. Their establishment in piety to God, and love to one another. The "faith" to which they were pledged, and of whose truth they were now reassured, was a faith which embraced in its regards the entire economy of the human spirit, and exerted a sovereign influence over all its faculties. When evangelical truth is received with humble faith, certain saving results immediately ensue. All spiritual graces followed in due succession, sustained by faith, animated with love, and crowned by the hope of immortal life. Now this connection between the doctrines to be believed, and blessings to be enjoyed, is illustrated and confirmed by the passage under consideration. An unsettled creed is always unfavourable to a settled piety. The "dissension and disputation" (chap. xv. 2) must have been detrimental to their spiritual welfare. They were "troubled," and their "souls subverted" (ver. 24). Accordingly, when the disturbing force was removed they "rejoiced for the consolation" (ver. 31). 3. Out of our establishment in faith and holiness will arise a settled practice and a steady devotion to the service of Christ. Where the principles of Christianity are loosely held, and its blessings are only known by report, there you may anticipate laxity of morals, or open violation of the Divine law. II. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CHRISTIANS IN THE FAITH AND THE

PROSPERITY OF THE WORK OF GOD. 1. The establishment of Christians in the faith disposes them to overlook minor points of controversy, and to devote themselves to the propagation of vital truth. It was on this principle that the Apostle Paul refused to dispute on points non-essential to salvation, and exhorted Christians to liberality of sentiment. So the true Christian says, "If we are to debate, let it be on matters worthy our character and intellect. If we are to labour, let it be in a field where our toil shall not be wasted." 2. A settled piety permits our attention to be drawn off from our personal anxieties, and to be fixed on the conversion of others. We cannot be content with our own happiness; we want to make others happy also. 3. Consistency and harmony in the Church have their influence on the minds of the undecided, and induce them to join themselves to the disciples. If the religion of Christ were properly represented in the spirit and conduct of the professing Church, the world could hardly withstand its attraction. 4. God has established the connection between piety and usefulness, and therefore confers His special blessing on the labours of established Christians, and the enterprises of pure and devoted Churches. He is not dependent upon any particular set of instruments. But there is one rule which He never violates—He never employs unholy men or fallen Churches to represent Him in the world, or to fulfil the saving objects of His redeeming scheme. (*W. Williams.*) *The establishment and increase of the Church:*—I. THE CHURCHES WERE ESTABLISHED IN THE FAITH. The phrase is used as a comprehensive description of Christianity. 1. Primitive Christian Churches were composed exclusively of such as professed to believe in Christ, and to conform their lives to the holy requirements of the gospel. Their members were consequently Christians, not in that loose sense of the term in which it is now so commonly used, but as disciples of Christ who had been "born of water and of the Spirit," and upon whom the "unction of the Holy One" rested. Hence they are variously denominated by the apostles as the "beloved of God—saints—faithful brethren"—those who are "sanctified by God the Father, preserved in Christ Jesus and called"; and are always addressed as persons who could understand the sentiments and the language of doctrinal, vital, and experimental religion. And their piety being thus sincere and vital it was capable of increase. Accordingly, under the instructions of these inspired men, they made a very observable progress in the Divine life. There was a manifest growth in grace. 2. Christianity as a system is eminently social. Hence its converts have from the first been formed into Churches. This was done by collecting them together, and uniting them in the joint observance of the laws and ordinances of Jesus Christ. Such societies have continued to exist from that time to the present, and seem to be the destined means, under the Holy Spirit, of perpetuating and extending the kingdom of the Redeemer. II. THEY INCREASED IN NUMBER DAILY; either, that is, these several Churches already established increased in the number of their members, or the Churches themselves were multiplied, or both. The increase, whether of members or of Churches, is said to have been "daily." The expression seems to indicate both the rapidity and the constancy of the increase. It was not such an increase as we are accustomed to witness, when at distant intervals a few individuals enter the fellowship of the Church. The evangelists seem never to have preached but souls were converted; and the Churches never to have come together, but they had the high privilege of receiving many new disciples into the communion of saints. Nor did this last for a few days merely. As the increase was rapid, so it was constant. III. THE CAUSE FROM WHICH THIS PROSPEROUS STATE OF THINGS RESULTED. The Holy Spirit most manifestly attended upon the labours of the apostles. Apart from His gracious influence, apostolic eloquence and zeal would have accomplished nothing. Not less necessary then than now was that life-giving energy which proceeds alone from Him. There were, however, certain subordinate and subsidiary causes to which, in the order of means, this prosperity may be traced. 1. The apostolic settlement of the question, that converts from among the Gentiles were not to be subject to the institutions of Moses (chap. xv. 31). Being delivered from a yoke of bondage which would have fatally depressed their rising zeal, they were free to throw all their newly awakened energies into the cause of the Redeemer. The preachers, also liberated from all trammels, might now come forward simply with the doctrine of the cross. Nothing is so calculated to produce either a vigorous state of personal piety, or a prosperous state of Church fellowship, as a simple, clear, and Scriptural exhibition of the "truth as it is in Jesus." 2. The devotional spirit of the early Christians, combined with their fervent zeal. 3. There was none of that timid neutrality respecting the profession of the gospel among the first Christians by which modern Chris-

tianity is so lamentably distinguished. When a man was converted, the next thing was to join the Church. There was consequently a line of demarcation, broad and deep, between the Church and the world. None were ashamed of Christ, or ashamed to avow their attachment to His followers, and His cause. 4. The spirit of union and Christian love. Believers were of "one heart and one way." Separate Churches there were, as now, but separate denominations there were none. "The communion of saints" was not then what it has since become—a cold article in a formal creed, but the practical and sweet experience of every day. The uniting bond was not an exact coincidence of opinion in every point of doctrine, or a perfect uniformity of practice in matters of government and discipline; but it was love. Let Christians of all parties forget their differences, and approximate among themselves to something like the union subsisting between Christ and His Father; let them be one, as they are one, and the influence will be irresistible. (*E. Steane, D.D.*)

Vers. 6–10. **Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia.**—*Paul's first visit to Galatia, A.D. 51 or 52:*—The form of the Greek expression implies that Phrygia and Galatia are not to be regarded as separate districts—but the land originally inhabited by Phrygians, but subsequently occupied by Gauls. Paul does not appear to have had any intention of preaching the gospel here. He was perhaps anxious at once to bear his message to the more important and promising district of proconsular Asia. But he was detained by a return of his old malady "the thorn in the flesh"—some sharp and violent attack which humiliated him and prostrated his physical strength. To this the Galatians owed their knowledge of Christ. Though a homeless, stricken wanderer might seem but a feeble advocate of a cause so momentous, yet it was the Divine order that in the preaching of the gospel strength should be made perfect in weakness. The zeal of the preacher and the enthusiasm of his hearers triumphed over all impediments. "They did not despise the temptation in his flesh. They received him as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. They would have plucked out their very eyes if they could and have given them to him." It can scarcely have been any predisposing religious sympathy which attracted them so powerfully. The gospel as a message of mercy and a spiritual faith stood in direct contrast to the gross and material religions in which the race had been nurtured. But if we picture to ourselves the apostle, as he appeared before the Galatians, a friendless outcast, writhing under the tortures of a painful malady, yet instant in season and out of season, by turns denouncing and entreating, perhaps also, as at Lystra, enforcing his appeals by some striking miracle, we shall be at no loss to conceive how the fervid temperament of the Gaul might have been aroused. In the absence of all direct testimony we may conjecture that it was at Ancyra, now the capital of the Roman province, as formerly of the Gaulish settlement, "the most illustrious metropolis," as it is called in formal documents; at Pessinus under the shadow of Mount Dindimus, the cradle of the worship of Cybele, and one of the principal commercial towns of the district; at Tavium, at once a strong fortress and a great emporium, situated at the point of convergence of several important roads; perhaps also at Juliopolis, the ancient Gordium, formerly the capital of Phrygia, almost equidistant from the three seas, and from its central position a busy mart; at these, or some of these places, that Paul founded the earliest Churches of Galatia. (*Bp. Lightfoot.*) **And were forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach the Word in Asia.**—*The guidance of the Spirit:*—Who can read this account without being tempted to ask—Why should the Holy Ghost forbid the apostles to preach in Asia? Why not suffer them to go into Bithynia? Were not the inhabitants sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death? And did not Christ die for them? Now as God giveth no account of His matters; and as the Lord of the harvest may send forth labourers into whatever part of His harvest He pleases, it might be enough to answer that it belongs not to us to pry into those reasons which it has pleased Him to keep secret. But the matter admits of a most satisfactory explanation. No doubt the souls in Asia and Bithynia were dear to God; but Paul and Silas could not be labouring both in Asia and Macedonia at the same time; and He, who knew the hearts of all, knew in which country the minds of men were most prepared to receive the gospel. That there was such a preparation in Macedonia is intimated by the very nature of the vision. The whole may be illustrated by a familiar image. A farmer perceives his fields white for the harvest, and hires labourers to reap the corn. They go into one field, and prepare to cut it down, but he forbids them: they look to another, and attempt to enter it; but he suffers them not; he conducts them to a third which

is most fully ripe, and says, "This is the field, work here." Would any say that he did not care for the corn in the other fields because he passed them by? Would not every one be sure that he only took the third before them because it was most ready for the sickle, and that he would take the others in due time? So when the Lord forbad His servants to preach in Asia and Bithynia it was not that He did not care for the souls there, but that Macedonia was the most prepared. How well prepared it was appears from Paul's epistles to the Churches in that country, at Philippi and Thessalonica. But were Asia and Bithynia therefore neglected? No. We find Paul afterwards preaching in Troas, the very port of Asia whence he sailed to Macedonia. In Ephesus also, the principal city of that Asia where he had been forbidden to preach the Word, he abode two full years, so that all they, both Jews and Greeks, that dwelt in Asia, heard the Word of the Lord Jesus. We may observe, too, that the first epistle of Peter is addressed to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. Yes! the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. His tender mercies are over all His works: and we have the authority of Paul for saying that He will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (*J. Fawcett, M.A.*) *Divine guidance:*—You want to know what to do, how to act, where to go. There is one safe and sure method—and only one. It is Paul's. He thought, he used his natural reason; his instinct was to travel on, his inclination was to visit Asia, then Bithynia. Having done his best to choose, he submits his choice to a higher guidance. He carries the question in prayer to God, then he feels he is not to go—knows not where to go, obeys this intuition which happens to be opposed to his own wishes, waits, but waits not long. The vision and the voice follow speedily. It is at length from these that he "assuredly gathers"—infers truly his next step. It is even so. Use your faculties, submit your judgment to the highest, be true to what seems to you the highest leading, and the Divine message will grow clearer and clearer—the intuition, the vision, the voice—but, mark you, clearer only for the next step. The whole of Paul's journey was not mapped out. He could not see far, but he was not left in doubt. He "assuredly gathered" the next move. Perhaps he thought he was now bound for Rome—Rome attracted him far more powerfully than Athens. Yet he was not to go to Rome that time, nor could he have guessed, when he started for Philippi, that he was going to Athens and preach there to the scoffing, subtle Greeks. (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) *Paul called to Europe:*—Dull Asia had heard the gospel. Now it was brought to that Europe which has furnished to the world its civilised energy. Probably in Paul's mind the European passage was but one of many journeys. But to the eye of history, seeing before and after, it was the challenge of Christianity to civilisation, to intellect, to world-controlling energy, to come and be ruled by Christ. Before this journey, however, there went—I. THE TIME OF WAITING. Proconsular Asia and Bithynia were before Paul and his companions; they were without the gospel; they needed it; Paul was ready to give it. And yet the gospel was not preached. It was not a time to labour, but a time to wait. 1. Yet it was a time of endeavour to labour. Paul did not choose the waiting for himself. He honestly and earnestly tried to preach the gospel. He went to the frontier of the province of Asia Minor intending to enter and preach. Prevented there, he tried Bithynia next. Preaching was the one word that summed up all Paul's life. Every Christian is called to work. His mission in life is to proclaim Jesus Christ. 2. Paul's endeavour to do his work was thwarted. He wanted to labour for Christ, and he was prevented from doing so. He went into many a place only to be driven out with stones. He planned great journeys and found himself in prison. It would be a very instructive thing to look over the Scriptural records of Paul's life and tabulate the thwarted plans recorded. No man makes every Christian endeavour he undertakes a success. As God makes the flower cast many a seed to the ground that one or two plants may spring up, so He gives it as a law of spiritual accomplishment that there shall sometimes be many failures to one success. And Paul, like a wise man, did not quarrel with law. 3. The strange part of Paul's experience at this point was that the thwarting of his purpose to preach the gospel in proconsular Asia and Bithynia was directly due to God. Some of Paul's failures were due to the interference of Satan (see 1 Thess. ii. 18), who we may believe goes about endeavouring to hinder God's people in God's work. What are we to think of this? (1) God was leading Paul away from the conversion of Asia Minor to the conversion of Europe. Paul, having but one human life and one man's natural power, could not do both. God set before him the larger work. To accomplish it involved the exclusion of the smaller. (2) Asia Minor was undoubtedly

approached more advantageously by the gospel from the westward, when the weight of European success added a new commendation to Paul's teaching, which it lacked when it came from the eastward. If you want to win a man to anything it is better to await the favourable moment than to rush in at first sight. It was better for Asia Minor and Bithynia not to have the gospel preached to them just yet. (3) God's thwarting of Paul's plans would have been all right even if we could see no reason whatever in it. 4. The Holy Spirit was present with Paul, directing and equipping him, quite as well in the time of waiting as in the time of work. II. THE CALL. Paul had found his intentions foiled; Asia Minor and Bithynia were closed to him; Europe remained. Should he seek those shores? He needed direction, and it was given. The vision of the Macedonian, perhaps authenticated as from God in some way unknown to us, showed Paul where his labour lay. 1. The vision was that of a pleading man. The gospel is for the world, and the whole world. 2. The figure in the vision voiced the need of help; it did not define just what was needed. The call that rises from the human race is a cry for help, whatever the help be. It is not always a cry for the gospel; for many times when the gospel is offered it is blindly refused. It is the function of the gospel sometimes to create desire as well as to satisfy it. When Paul landed in Macedonia he found no crowd standing with outstretched hands to welcome him. No, he "tarried certain days" before there was any sign of the gospel being wanted, and then the sign came only to Paul's search for it. 3. The Macedonian was a representative. He said not "Come over and help me," but "Come over and help us." All needed Christ, and not only the few souls who were already near to the kingdom—like Lydia, the first convert. 4. The request that was made by the pleading man of the vision was in Paul's power to grant. He could go over and help them if he wanted to. So can we help the nations who seem to stand before us in vision beseeching us to help them. III. THE ANSWER. 1. Paul was led to make an answer by using the mind God had given him. He and his companions consulted together and "concluded that God had called them for to preach the gospel unto them." The supernatural vision seems to separate Paul's experience from ours. We are not so led in our work. But his consulting with his friends and reasoning out as well as he could the conclusion which God wanted him to make, brings his way of being led back into similarity with our own. 2. Having made up his mind that he ought to go to Macedonia, Paul "sought" to carry out that purpose. Assurance of success and the accomplishment of success are in God's hands, but we can at least try. If God is willing to bless, and we are able at least to try, if Christian work sometimes does not greatly prosper, what is the reason? 3. Paul's answer to the meaning of the vision was immediate. "Straightway we sought to go." The reaction of Paul's converted soul in the presence of spiritual need was instant. If he responded instantly to the call of need we can respond so too, if we will. 4. The call's being from God was what made Paul's reply so quick. Obedience was a primal element in Paul's religious life, and so he is seen to be truly of the company of Him who was "an obedient Son." IV. THE RESULT. 1. It was not visible at once. Over in Troas there was the exciting vision of the pleading Macedonian. But in Macedonia there was nothing but indifference. Paul was received, as the missionary of the cross is almost always received, with perfect indifference. 2. Paul used means to bring a result about. He did not sit down with folded hands, saying to himself, "Macedon has cried to me for help; I have come a long way at great trouble in order to give help: now if the Macedonians want me let them speak out." Paul assumed that the Macedonians needed everything and acted as though they desired nothing. He waited not for them to seek him, he sought them. Work is a spiritual as well as a natural condition of success. 3. A small beginning was made. Paul was not disheartened at its smallness, but content with its being a beginning. No heathen were allured to the gospel at all. No men were reached. One woman, and she half converted already before Paul's appearance, was the harvest of Paul's effort. The beginning is not yet the end, but it surely has the end hidden in it, in however small circumference. 4. Fellowship was established. Lydia brought her household into the faith and took Paul and his friends into the sweet communion of this new Christian home. When that Christian fellowship was formed the success of Paul's Philippian mission was assured. A group of real Christian friends can leaven a city. V. LESSONS CONCERNING MISSIONARY WORK. 1. The relation of God and man in gospelising. God calls; man's imperative and immediate duty is to obey. God sends the Holy Spirit to direct and empower in Christian work. "For it is God that worketh in you." God sends us to try all plans in the world with His

gospel. He only knows where we shall succeed in planting it. 2. The laws of gospelising. Persuading for Christ is like other persuading. Paul did not preach when he made his first European convert. What a spectacle he would have made if he had proceeded to deliver a thunderous oration like that on Mars' Hill to these half-dozen women! He sat down and talked with them. The gospel begins its work in small ways. Europe's conquest for Christ is heralded in the saving of one woman. The gospel uses the God-made relations of human life for its propagation. Lydia brought her household to Christ. The family is recognised and utilised by the gospel. (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*) *Permission to preach the gospel strangely conveyed*:—The Rev. John Thomas, who may be regarded as the founder of the Friendly Islands' mission, had laboured for some time at Hihifo, in Tonga, with but little fruit, being continually thwarted and persecuted by the Pagan chief Ata: when, having heard that the paramount chief of Haabai had renounced idolatry, and was anxious to have a missionary, he made up his mind to remove thither. But as the commencement of a new mission in another group of islands would involve considerable expense, he wished first to hear from the missionary committee in London, who had some time before been written to on the subject. Whilst waiting at Nukualofa, in a state of considerable anxiety and suspense, in the month of January, 1830, an incident occurred which clearly shows the superintending providence of God in the affairs of the missionary enterprise. A small box was washed on shore, and brought to Mr. Turner by one of the natives. On being opened it was found to contain a letter from the missionary secretaries, giving the sanction of the committee for the extension of the mission in the Friendly Islands, and the appointment of a missionary to Haabai without further delay. The vessel by which this communication had been sent, a schooner from Sydney, had foundered at sea, and all on board were lost. It is said that neither vessel, nor crew, nor any of the goods with which she had been freighted were ever seen or heard of again. The package containing that letter alone, a messenger of mercy for a people waiting for the law of the Lord, guided by Him "whom wind and seas obey," escaped the general wreck, and was cast on shore at the right place and the right time to relieve the minds of the anxious missionaries, and to enable them to go forward and enter the openings which appeared before them for the proclamation of the "glorious gospel of the blessed God." *The Spirit's direction*:—That you may know the Divine plan for you, go to God Himself, and ask for it; for as certainly as He has a plan or calling for you, He will somehow guide you into it. And this is the proper office and work of His Spirit. By this private teaching He can show us, and will, into the very plan that is set for us. And this is the significance of what is prescribed as our duty—namely, living and walking in the Spirit; for the Spirit of God is a kind of universal presence, or inspiration, in the world's bosom; an unfailing inner light, which if we accept and live in, we are guided thereby into a consenting choice, so that what God wills for us we also will for ourselves, settling into it as the needle to the pole. By this hidden union with God, or intercourse with Him, we get a wisdom or insight deeper than we know ourselves; a sympathy, a oneness with the Divine will and love. We go into the very plan of God for us, and are led along in it by Him, consenting, co-operating, answering to Him we know not how, and working out, with nicest exactness, that good end for which His unseen counsel girded us and sent us into the world. In this manner, not neglecting other methods, but gathering in all their separate lights, to be interpreted in the higher light of the Spirit, we can never be greatly at a loss to find our way into God's counsel and plan. The duties of the present moment we shall meet as they rise, and these will open a gate into the next, and we shall thus pass on, trusting and securely, almost never in doubt as to what God calls us to do. (*Horace Bushnell.*) *The supernatural element in labour*:—1. Here is the direct action of the Holy Ghost. The early Christians realised that they were living in the age of the Holy Spirit. Why should there be any difficulty in believing that spirit may affect spirit? We believe that matter affects matter. It is quite scientific to believe that; yet to believe that mind can affect mind, that spirit can touch spirit, is fanaticism! I have not so learned life. It is easy for me, having seen the action of metal upon metal, to believe that there may be a kindred action of soul upon soul, God upon man. 2. The action of the Spirit is as morally mysterious as it is personally direct. Why should the Holy Ghost forbid the apostles to preach the Word anywhere? That we cannot explain; but then you cannot explain yourself. We are forbidden to do certain things. The things themselves are good, but the time is wrong, or the place is ill-chosen, or another opportunity is

greator and ought to be absorbent. It is not enough that you are in a good place, doing a good work; your object should be to live and move and have your being in the Spirit of God, so that wherever He may point, your heart may outrun your feet in attaining the destination. Where life is bounded by programmes and outlines, and purposes merely human, life will be a succession of mistakes and stinging disappointments. 3. It is, to our degenerate piety, quite difficult to believe that the early apostles—yea, the prophets ages before them—could live so familiarly in the presence of the supernatural. Everything depends upon the level of your life. It is possible to live so high up in intellectual and spiritual companionship as to receive with grateful ease and friendly recognition appearances and communications which at one time would have affected us with the surprise of a miracle. 4. What did Paul see, then, in his vision? (1) A man. He who truly sees a man must ever be moved by the pathetic sight. We do not see one another whilst we are in the crowd performing the day's jugglery. We do not see the man, but having once seen him under favouring lights, we must feel that man is a name high up in the register of life. (2) A man in earnest prayer, praying to a fellow-man. It was all, perhaps, the Macedonian suppliant could then do. We are allowed to pray at such altars as we can find. If you fell down before the least flower, before your mother's old arm-chair, it would be shrine enough. And by and by you will want a whole heaven for a church and altar. Begin where you can. (3) A man in earnest, and a man seeking help. There are cowards that run away when poor, ill-used people call for "help." Christianity is "help" or it is nothing. This is a typical instance. If the Church could have its eyes opened to-day, it would see every unevangelised country and every land in sore strait or difficulty typified in this Macedonian man. 5. "And after he had seen the visiou, immediately we endeavoured——" Luke here joins the company. Up to this time the narrative has been written in the third person; it will now be written in the first. The missionaries came "to Philippi." There is a city plan of evangelisation; the apostles followed that plan. They did not hide themselves in obscure places; we find great names in their record. What is the justification of these metropolitan names? This—and higher there is none —"Beginning at Jerusalem." So we shall find in these missionary records Jerusalem, Antioch, Corinth, Philippi, Athens, Ephesus, name upon name of local eminence and dignity, yet all the names put together are not equal to London! Give us London, and we have the key of the world. Converted London would seem to mean converted England; and converted England would be almost equal to a converted world! (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Vers. 8–12. And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas, and a vision appeared to Paul in the night.—*Paul's vision at Troas*:—I. ITS BENEVOLENCE. What is the gospel? Help for man. It helps man—1. To know God. 2. To preach Christ. 3. To promote civilisation. II. ITS INFLUENCE. It recognises—1. The independent capacity of man as a moral agent. 2. The weakness of man. III. ITS MINISTRATION. The appeals of humanity to Christianity are various. 1. By the information of history. 2. By the general operation of Christian principles. 3. By inward impressions. (*Caleb Morris.*) *What might have happened had the vision not occurred*:—That figure represented Europe, and its cry for help Europe s need of Christ. Paul recognised in it a Divine summons; and the very next sunset which bathed the Hellespont in its golden light shone upon his figure seated on the deck of a ship whose prow was moving towards the shore of Macedonia. In this passage of Paul, from Asia to Europe, a great providential decision was taking effect, of which, as children of the West, we cannot think without the profoundest thankfulness. Christianity arose in Asia and among an Oriental people; and it might have been expected to spread first among those races to which the Jews were most akin. Instead of coming west, it might have gone eastwards. It might have penetrated into Arabia and taken possession of those regions where the faith of the False Prophet now holds sway. It might have visited the wandering tribes of Central Asia, and, piercing its way down through the passes of the Himalayas, reared its temples on the banks of the Ganges, the Indus, and the Godavery. It might have travelled farther east to deliver the swarming millions of China from the cold secularism of Confucius. Had it done so, missionaries from India and Japan might have been coming to England at the present day to tell the story of the cross. But Providence conferred on Europe a blessed priority, and the fate of our Continent was decided when Paul crossed the Hellespont. (*J. Stalker, D.D.*) **There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Mace-**

donia and help us.—*The Macedonian spectre*:—Sometimes men hear better with their eyes than with their ears. Truth will get in through the imagination when it will make no impression through the intellect. Hence Bunyan was as philosophical as he was ingenious in representing Mansoul as having Feel-gate, Nose-gate, Mouth-gate, as well as the chief among them all, Ear-gate and Eye-gate. But when the grand attack of Diabolos was made it was found that Captain Resistance was established above Ear-gate; but Ear-gate was much more slightly defended. In Scripture there is constant recognition of this comparative ease of entering the human soul by the way of the eyes. Hence we are sure to find some splendid vision whenever a fresh messenger is appointed from God to men. Observe:—I. THAT THIS VISION WAS ADDRESSED TO AN INSPIRED MAN. It found him shaken with uttermost perplexity, and was the only thing which availed to give direction in his present duty. Twice in succession their intentions were suddenly held in check by a power higher than their own. The man of those regions deepens the impressiveness of such a strange discipline. For while the apostle was urging his way east the Holy Ghost was constraining him to go to the west. "Westward the star of empire takes its way," seems to be the Divine rule for human history. Learn: 1. That the great Head of the Church retains guidance of every form of Christian enterprise. It was the "Spirit of *Jesus*" which stopped Paul now, just as He did on the road to Damascus. That we must ask God's decision, when we set about religious effort. We are to invite Divine co-operation in selection of methods, as well as in choice of ends, and so to discern in failure a stimulant to faith, and in success a reason for our giving new glory to God. II. THIS STORY THROWS LIGHT UPON "CALLS" TO SERVICE. 1. Any real declaration of want is a call. Anything that has a voice can utter a call. Adaptations to usefulness are direct calls to usefulness. 2. The supreme necessity of a lost human soul. The words which the world at large is speaking are "Come over and help us." It does not appear to have occurred that the spectre could have possibly had any meaning beside a religious one. All men the world over have one point in common at which they need succour: they must have pardon for sin. 3. The "calls" to duty which one has afford a safe exposition of his heart. A politician would have imagined that a struggling people were sending for soldiers to fight for their cause. A philanthropist would find some signs of a famine. Thus each would discover his own. III. HOW READILY THESE MESSENGERS OF CHRIST STARTED OUT ON A FOREIGN MISSION. 1. Note the intense form of expression: "immediately," &c. 2. The finest picture in this world is that of a human will surrendered in sublime obedience to the will of God. The beauty of the Troad is famous: think of Mount Ida, the city of Priam, the tomb of Achilles. But the chief fame of that region now is found in the remembrance that there four men set out upon the sea to conquer Europe unto Christ. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The Macedonian phantom*:—I. ST. PAUL'S NEED OF FAITH AND DIVINE GUIDANCE. The apostles differed from ourselves in that they were endowed with extraordinary gifts. 1. It might have been thought that, possessed as they were of superhuman might, there would have been but little opportunity or demand for that trust which is required from ourselves. But that the apostles were able to work miracles did not secure to them the supply even of their daily wants. It was a strange, but an instructive spectacle, that of a man who could raise the dead, obliged to labour like a common artisan in order to procure a meal. But God, in order to keep His servant dependent on himself, would not allow him to exercise, on his own behalf, the powers which were so mighty in subjugating the world. 2. The apostles had the gift of prophecy, and, privileged with immediate revelation, they knew far more than common men of the will and purposes of the Almighty. But this was no more allowed than their power of working miracles, to diminish the necessity for the exertion of faith. You might have thought that such men would never have been at any loss with regard to their own plans. Yet this was far from being the case. The Apostles appear to have had just our trials of faith; they were called upon for the same patient waiting on God, the same watching the leadings of His Providence, the same studying the minute indications of His will. If you look at the verses which immediately precede our text, you will find abundant evidence that St. Paul and his companions were required, like ourselves, to go forward in faith, uninformed as to the precise course which God would have them take, but acting on the assurance that He directs the steps of all such as commit themselves to His guidance. 3. At last, there is granted unto Paul the vision recorded in our text, from which he is enabled assuredly to gather that the Lord designed him to preach in

Macedonia. We hear much of the leadings of God's providence; and it is our business to be always on the watch for the leadings; assured that, as God taught His people of old by the cloud upon the tabernacle, He will not fail now to vouchsafe guidance to those who in all their ways acknowledge Him. But we are not to expect that the leadings of Providence will be always, or even often, marked and distinct. This would be to change the character of our dispensation; for if the pillar of fire and cloud went visibly before us, it would be by sight, and no longer by faith, that Christians were required to walk. It is the easiest thing in the world to imagine the leadings of Providence, where we have already got the leadings of inclination. And we may learn from the instance of St. Paul that, even where there is prayerfulness and entire submission, it may be only by dark intimations, and after many frustrations, that God's providence will mark out our course. II. ST. PAUL'S VISION. There is not one who does not consider that sleep is a sort of image of death. The heathen spake of death as a sleep; and Scripture, from the very first, made use of the figure. But the metaphor has not been carried to its proper extent. 1. I do indeed think that God designed sleep as the standing image of death. But I think also that God hereby meant to fix their thoughts, not only on their dying, but on their rising from the dead. Why, when every morning calls us from our beds, strung with new energy, and, as it were, freshened into a new life—why are we to speak of sleep as though it imaged our death, but not also our resurrection? 2. But our condition whilst asleep furnishes notices of our condition whilst we lie amongst the dead. (1) In sleep it is not the whole man, it is only the earthly part that falleth asleep. The bodily senses and faculties are suspended from their usual exercise; but the mind is more than commonly active. What flights will the soul take during sleep. It may be well doubted whether the soul is ever inactive: we do not always remember our dreams; but, probably, we always dream. And what ought we to gather from this? Surely, that the soul shall be active while the body lies dead. (2) Neither is this all. Such passages of Scripture as our text teach us that while the body is asleep the soul may be receiving instruction. It is every way observable that God should have made such frequent use of visions or dreams in the communicating intimations of His will. He might have given these intimations through many other modes; for nothing can be more vague or uncertain than a dream. And it may have been that in thus frequently employing dreams, and employing them more frequently whilst there was less distinct information as to man's state after death, God's purpose was to direct attention to the capacity of the soul for receiving instruction, yet not through the organs of the body, but whilst those organs might be closed and unable to discharge their ordinary offices. The separate state shall not be a state of dull inactivity or low attainment: that state is imaged by sleep; and as if to tell me what the righteous may expect in that state, God hath come to His servants in visions of the night, and taught them in sleep what they had vainly striven to discover when awake. And now I am not to give room to any fears that, whilst the flesh lies slumbering in the grave, the soul will not be admitted into acquaintance with portions of God's will which it may vainly have endeavoured to ascertain whilst on earth; enough that St. Paul, whilst awake, had meditated to preach in Asia, and assayed to go into Bithynia, seeking fruitlessly to determine what God's will might be, and yet that St. Paul, in sleep, which is the image of death, was thoroughly instructed in regard of that will—there stood by him in a vision, "a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us." III. ST. PAUL'S INTERPRETATION OF THE VISION. There is no reason to think that any further revelation was added; the expression, "assuredly gathering," implies that the disciples were left to draw the inference that "the Lord had called them for to preach the gospel unto them." They never seem to have imagined that there might be any other way in which they could help the Macedonians, that the Macedonians could want any other sort of help. Do you not, then, see that St. Paul and his companions lived for only one object? that they acknowledged but one supply for all the wants of the world? Ah, how very different would it be amongst ourselves! Let the phantom be sent to one of our statesmen; let the form of the wild Indian, or of the African, stand by his bedside in the stillness of the midnight, and breathe, in accents compelling his attention, the simple entreaty, "Come over and help us," and how would the politician interpret the call? He would probably conclude that ruthless foes were invading the distant country; and his first, his only thought, might be to send an army to its succour. Or let the spectre go and speak to one of our merchants—he would presently think of commercial embarrassments or commercial openings, and if he

"assuredly gathered" anything it would be that he must freight a vessel and send out a mercantile establishment. Or if it were even to one of our benevolent and philanthropic men that the phantom addressed itself, the likelihood is he would think of famine, or pestilence, and he would hesitate as to what help could be given, till he had made out some particular and temporal evil under which they were labouring. And yet, whatever our occupation, we are professed servants of Christ, and all bound, by the vows of our profession, to take as our chief object the advancing Christ's kingdom. It was not merely because St. Paul's business was that of a preacher that he interpreted a cry for help into a cry for the gospel; St. Paul was also a tentmaker; St. Luke was a physician; but it never occurred to either the one or the other that assistance might be wanted to teach a trade or heal a disease: their ruling desire was that of glorifying Christ; they could not, therefore, be invited into a country and not seize on the invitation as an opening for Christianity. They believed that in carrying Christianity to a land, they were carrying that which would best rectify disorders, alleviate distresses, assuage sorrows, and multiply happiness. And, therefore, they never stopped to consider whether they had at their disposal the particular engine which, on a human computation, might be suited for counteracting a particular evil—enough that they had the gospel to preach; and they felt that they had an engine which could in no case be inappropriate and in none inefficient. Let us learn, from the example of St. Paul, to set a higher value on the gospel: whether it be as a nation or as individuals that we are called upon by the Macedonian for help; whether the cry, borne from heathen lands, be a cry specifically for religious instruction, or the cry generally of suffering and degraded humanity. IV. ST. PAUL'S OBEDIENCE TO THE VISION. Observe how ready they were to obey God's will the moment they had ascertained it. "Immediately." It had not been into Macedonia that they had been wishing or purposing to go, and unbelief might have suggested, Shall we let a phantom guide us? ought we not at least to wait for some less dubious intimation? But no; there was sufficient reason to think that God's will was now discovered, and there was nothing to be done but to hasten to the sea and seek the means of embarking. Alas! we are all ready enough to follow the leadings of God's providence when they concur with our own wish; but how reluctant are we when God points in one direction and inclination in another! This is the trial—to set out for Macedonia, to which duty calls us, in place of staying at Troas, to which our own wishes bind us. But a Christian should have no will of his own—he is the servant of a Master in heaven, and the only thing for him to ascertain is where that Master would have him work, and what He would have him do. Has the phantom been at his bedside? Then he ought not to confer with flesh and blood. He is indeed to take every just means for assuring himself that he is not deceived, that the phantom has not been woven from the imagining of his own brain, but has really been sent to him by his Master. But this having been done, there is no room for hesitation. And are we not summoned to Macedonia? and is not the voice for assistance more thrilling and more plaintive than that which fell, in night visions, on the ear of St. Paul? It is the voice, not only of the Macedonian, the foreigner, the heathen; it is the voice of our own countrymen. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *The cry of the Macedonian to Paul*:—The cry—I. WAS HUMAN. 1. A man—(1) Not an angelic intelligence. (2) Not a member of a class, but of a race. It was not a philosopher, artist, priest, warrior, king; but a man. 2. It is the humanity in heathendom that is in moral distress. The aid that is so deeply required is not secular, political, educational, military, but moral. Help to the conscience, soul; help to man as man in his spiritual and eternal relationships. II. WAS SIGNIFICANT. "Come over and help us." It implies—1. A sense of need. Man everywhere feels that there is something wanting to make matters right between him and his God. "Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord?" 2. Conscious inability to supply the need. The Macedonian felt that the Macedonians, with all their wealth and intelligence, could not supply the necessity. Heathenism has no self-redemptive power. 3. Faith is the power of Christians to help. The Macedonian took it for granted that Paul could help. Macedonia represents the western world. Once this call sounded for help from the heathen West to the Christian East; now it sounds from the heathen East to the Christian West. III. WAS OBEYED. Paul attends at once to the call. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The cry of the heathen*:—Consider—I. THE WANTS OF THE HEATHEN. Think of the millions of India ignorant of God, of Christ, and of the way of salvation; destitute of hope, victims of the most degrading superstition. Of their rites we may well say with St. Paul (Ephes. v. 12; Rom. i. 29-32),

II. THE CHARACTER OF THE BLESSING. 1. It offers a Divine atonement. 2. The Holy Spirit applies it and imparts the state of mind essentially necessary (Mark xvi. 16). III. OUR OBLIGATIONS. 1. It is the command of Christ, "Go ye," &c. (Mark xvi. 15). 2. Common humanity demands it. IV. THE MOTIVES WHICH URGE US. 1. The facilities offered for the propagation of the gospel. Multitudes are prepared for it. The Bible is translated into their tongues, there is a disposition to read it, prejudice is wearing away. God is pouring out His blessing on the means already employed. 2. Our abundant means. We have wealth, piety, influence, talent, all at our command. 3. The magnitude of the work calls forth our exertions. V. IMPROVEMENT. 1. The glory of the Redeemer is involved in the extension of His Church. Has not God given Him the heathen for His inheritance, &c. Every soul saved adds one gem to the Redeemer's crown. Is not this the object of our daily prayer, "Thy kingdom come," and can we consistently use the words without employing the means? 2. Gratitude, as enlightened Gentiles. Here God was once unknown. All the blessings we enjoy we owe to the labours of those holy men who left their peaceful homes to preach among us "the unsearchable riches of Christ." 3. Compassion to their deplorable state. The temporal salvation of millions of men is not equal to that of one soul. (*Pulpit.*)

The vision and the call:—I. THE VISION. "They came down to Troas"—that is, to Troy, a modern city bearing the name, and marking the region, if not the site, of Priam's Troy, the City of the Iliad and the blind singer's deathless song. Such places are fountains of inspiration in themselves. Hill and grove, stream and plain, are vocal with great memories; and the soul that is worthy of such a scene hears, as Augustine heard voices in the air saying, "Let us, too, conquer something." But more depends upon the soul than on the scene; for whatever it looks upon the eye can only see what the eye brings with it, the means of seeing, for everything wears the hue of the spirit. Xerxes, Alexander of Macedon, Julius Cæsar, and many more came to this famed region, and each one saw and heard according to the spirit that was in him visions of battles. But the man who had now come to Troy had brought with him another spirit and an eye capable of nobler visions. He brought with him a great soul, wide in the range of its sympathies, sensitive, impressionable, and glowing with the quenchless passion of love to God and man. Never in all its eventful history had Troy an eye so rich in the means of seeing whatever Troy could show. And what did Paul see upon the Trojan plain? Behold, then, the new Troy that God would have besieged and conquered, as the spring besieges, and as the summer conquers the land! Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up, and the message that moulded his life came to him from the very lips of God, speaking in person. That was the highest vision of which the best man in that stage of the world's spiritual development was capable. But Paul in that great moment, not only of his life, beheld, not the Lord high and lifted up, but a man of Europe, one of ourselves, and heard a human voice pleading in the darkness for such help as he could give. It was the vision rendered possible by the Incarnation of the Son of God, and necessary by the state of the world. He beheld a man! That is the vision needed to-day. In all our difficulties in England, political, economic, social and ecclesiastic, the devil's policy is still to raise such a dust of controversy as to hide man from man. Penetrate to the heart of any question of the day, and there you find a man, a man asking for help. At the heart of the Drink Question, at the heart of the Labour Question, there are men, not monsters, but men, flesh of our flesh, men with difficulties, crying to us, calling to us, pleading with us. And our only hope of settling these questions lies in laying the cloud of devil's dust of passion and prejudice until we can see the man and hear what he is saying. And this great matter of missions, what is it? Do some of you young people think that, after all, it is nothing but a war of religions? that it is simply a crusade of one creed against another? Nothing of the sort. It is man's ministry to man. How shall we figure heathenism to ourselves to-night? Shall we call up a vision of idols and groves and temples and mitred priests and garlanded victims? No; all that is mere detail. If you want to see heathenism in the fullest pathos and tragedy of its fate, think of it under the guise of a man with soul enough to conceive the sublime ideas of Brahminism, with conscience enough to appreciate the grand moral precepts of Buddha, with brain enough to frame the marvellous scheme of Confucius, and spirituality enough in him to see with Zoroaster that the difference between good and evil is no measurable distance, but a distance as between day and night. We have to approach them rather in the spirit of brotherliness; for a man stands before us, and yet in a spirit of compassion for this man,

so noble, so subtle, so mighty of intellect, is weighed down, is cramped, he is weary with searching and cannot find, he is a baffled man, and he asks us to help him with that very thing in the possession of which alone we are superior to him, the thing which, perhaps, when we have handed it to him he will be able to make a very much better use of than we have made. II. THE CALL. Human need is always sacred and ever oracular, for through it God speaks. The will of God is the only plain thing in this universe, the only thing that is absolutely known. Everything else has darkness and mist about it, but the will of God is absolutely plain. The will of God is gladness, sunshine, music, life. It is everywhere. Go forth into the byways and highways of London with open eye and reverent heart, and you shall see it written upon every human need, and you shall hear it speaking to you in every human cry. It is the will of God that men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth; and God's will be done! The call of God is a call to unity. "When he had seen the vision we sought to go forth." It is noticed that the word "we" comes in here for the first time. The men felt that it was a call not only to action, but to united action. There had been quarrels and partings at Antioch. Paul and Barnabas had separated; but this revelation of the need of the world came to give compression and compactness and unity to this little band. If you want to see the quarrel at Antioch in its true nature, look at it in the light of Europe's need; and if you want to see the divisions and the jealousies that divide Christian people at home, look at them against the world's need to-day. God is not calling us simply to action, but to united action, to co-operation, to Christian unity. Twice one man is not simply two, but two plus their unity. It does not matter how many they are. It is not the number of men that work; it is the spirit in which any number work; their unity tells. III. THE WORK. "God had called us to preach the gospel unto them." Dr. Owen, in his sermon on this text, says: "No men want help like the men that want the gospel." But what is the gospel? 1. Preaching the gospel; what is it? It is calling the righteous to repentance. There were good folk in Philippi, and Paul found them engaged in a good work on a good day. Well, then, let well alone? No, for it is not at all well. Nowhere in all Philippi was Paul more needed than among these good folk praying on the Sabbath-day by the river's brim; and there is no one in all England that needs a mission more than many a good, blameless, irreproachable, man. But are there good among the heathen? Oh! yes. I am no more concerned to deny goodness to India and China than St. Luke to Philippi. There is goodness among the heathen, conscientiousness, aspiration, prayerfulness. Why, then, send missions to good people? Why? Because the goodness of the world, almost more than its badness, demonstrates the absolute necessity of the gospel. If the badness of the world proves how far down man can fall left to himself, the goodness of the world goes to show what a very little way, left to himself, he can lift himself from where he has fallen. 2. Preaching the gospel, what is it? Deliverance of the captives. As Paul passed and repassed through the streets on his way to the place of prayer, to preach to the good, kind people, he saw another phase of European life—a poor girl, on whose supposed powers of divination greedy men were making a fat living. Well, she, too, as well as Lydia, should be helped. Paul held a gospel in trust for her. Oh! yes: but think of the difficulties and the danger of doing it! For timid friends tell Paul, who had never been in Europe before; never been face to face with downright heathenism before: "She is a property, a human chattel; she belongs to the men who live upon her powers." Salvation for her means ruin for them: good money is good in Europe, and what it might mean ultimately for Paul no one could say. Then think of the scandal, the interruptions of the good work so nicely begun —all this to be stopped and a great scandal raised, and Christianity itself, perhaps. Yes, there were strong reasons for not touching this matter, and Paul seems to have shrunk from doing so. But God forced his hand. The girl followed him day by day, advertising the mission that he had been sent upon, until, at last, able to bear it no longer, he stood there in the open street and, in the name of Christ, opened fire upon the devil in her, and the more malignant devil in her masters. Yes, there was a scandal and tumult, and much trouble came of it. But it had to be done, for in this matter peace is with the devil and the fight is with God. 3. Preaching the gospel to the heathen is preaching Christ as the Saviour of lost men. Philippi held not Lydia only, not girls like that poor lost, wild one; but men like this gaoler, coarse, hardened, sceptical. What can Paul do to help that man? What does that man want? Why, he wants everything; he wants the chief thing. And so, from obeying the vision they saw and following the call they heard, God led these people

into a work that touched the European town at every point of its life, and stirred it to its lowest depths. They left it in a few days a different place from what they had found it. (*J. M. Gibbon.*) *The cry of the heathen*:—This was no doubt a special vision sent of God for the direction of the apostle. And yet the vision may be very readily accounted for by natural causes. Men usually dream of that which is most upon their minds. Who marvels that the miser dreams of gold, the mother of her infant, the soldier of battle? No wonder that Paul, whose whole soul was full of his Master's cause, should have a vision concerning a new field of labour. God sometimes tells men in their sleep the secret they could not discover when they were awake. We have heard of the preacher who dreamed his sermon and then preached it. The text suggests that—I. THE GREATEST HELP THAT CAN BE GIVEN TO ANY PEOPLE IS THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL. Those who have not the gospel stand in the greatest need of help; but when the gospel is carried, you carry everything within it. 1. Many lands are still subject to despots. How is liberty to be established in these lands? We need something more potent than steel to carve out the liberty of mankind. If liberty, equality, and fraternity, the three great words that are the world's heirloom, are ever to be fully known, it must be by the preaching of the Word of Jesus. 2. See how the nations are lying under gloomy superstition. How many have their intellect blighted, their hopes blasted, their progress stopped, by the cursed dominancy of priests. But the preaching of the gospel which teaches that believers are all priests and kings—this, and this only, is the world's hope of its deliverance from the slavery of the body and the yet more accursed bondage of the soul. 3. There are many places where all social comforts and enjoyments are as yet totally unknown. Nothing else can make the barbarian into a civilised man but the cross. 4. There are districts where the ground is red with blood. What shall we do to put an end to war? The gospel of Jesus shall yet break the battle-bow in sunder. 5. But still, the greatest help that the gospel brings is help to the soul. Does not your heart desire that the blind eye should be opened, the misguided directed, the vicious led to virtue, and the virtuous to righteousness? Ye must send the gospel far and wide. How can they believe without a preacher? How can they preach except they be sent? II. EVERY DAY AND HOUR THE NATIONS ARE SAYING, "COME OVER AND HELP US." They do not vocally ask for help; nay, if you send it, they will many of them reject it. Missionaries have been slain; but still the nations are silently crying, "Come over and help us." If I saw a person in the street faint and dying, although he spoke not to me, I should think the weakness of his silence more potent than all the power of words. Ay, and if I saw him like a maniac, pushing me from him, for that very reason I would give him my assistance; and so must you do. It is ours to thrust our kindness upon unwilling men, because we believe that their unwillingness arises from the madness of their disease. Unborn generations shall bless the men that sent the gospel which at first their fathers did reject. III. WHAT DO YOU MEAN TO DO IN ANSWER TO THE HEATHEN'S CRY? Have I one man who has a mind to go and preach the gospel in other lands? Because if I have, and if I have ten others who have a mind to give him ten pounds a year, I have an opening for sending him out at once. Who can tell?—he might be another Livingstone. Have we no young men here who are ready to volunteer? And what are you resolved to do who cannot preach? Says one, "I will pray." Do so; but in doing that, recollect that is what the Roman priest did for the beggar. The priest said he would not give him a sovereign, nor a half-crown, nor a penny. "Holy father," said the beggar, "will you give me your prayers?" "Yes," said the priest; "kneel down." "No," said the beggar; "for if your prayers had been worth a penny, you would not have given them to me." If you have nought else to give to Christ, ye need not be ashamed; but if you are blessed in your substance, you will be lying before Him if you ask Him to bless His cause and do not give of your means in its support. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Cry of the heathen*:—One sunny evening, on Mr. Mason's return from a preaching excursion among the Burmans, the first object which attracted his attention was the fine form of a Sgare chief, who, seated like a child at Mrs. Mason's feet, was earnestly imploring her to visit the karens in his village and neighbourhood. "We have heard of Christianity, and it seems to us something wonderful. We do not understand it, and yet it seems the very thing we want. Come to our jungle homes, and preach to us on our native streams. Many will believe. I have a Burman wife, and I have daughters, and sons-in-law, and brothers, and nephews, all of whom will become Christians, as well as myself, as

soon as we really understand." In a few years this man became one of the most efficient labourers in Merqui and Tavoy, and under his influence many were baptized. (*J. F. B. Tinling, B.A.*) *A cry for help*:—The form of the petition, which we may declare without exaggeration to be addressed to all of us in the periodical call of Christian missions, places in a very attractive light the work to which it refers. The gospel is designed by its Author, and is felt by its true disciples to be the help of man. The Bible is full of this aspect of the gospel. Man wants help, and God alone offers him help. I. INSTRUCTION is help. We all speak of the helplessness of the blind. See a blind man groping his way: mark the vacillation of his step, the uncertainty of his hand; see how a little child, a dumb animal, a lifeless staff, is welcomed as the guide and helper. Now what the light of the sun is to one who has to move among the things of this world, that knowledge is to a man who has to find his way through the mysteries, perils, and obstructions of this life into an eternal state. Well can you imagine yourself crying, in the words of the text, "Come over and help me! Help me by telling me for certain what I am and where; who is He above me, and what the life beyond; how I can so pass through things temporal that I finally lose not the things eternal." II. COMFORT is help. See how the Psalmist cries out for help in his hours of distress. "Shew me a token for good: that they who hate me may see it and be ashamed, because Thou, Lord, hast holpen me and comforted me." Holpen, and comforted. The two things are one. If I could only feel that some one has cared for my soul, it is help at once. It is neglect, indifference, alienation, which disheartens and makes me feel myself helpless. Let me know that God whom I have displeased yet loves, that God whom I have neglected waits for me with outstretched arm, and I can bear anything, I can do anything. It is so when first the gospel is apprehended as indeed a message of peace from God. And it is so again day by day. The gospel is indeed help for the helpless and life from the dead. III. But there are hearts of which the inward thought is, "The help I need most of all is, in the simplest sense, ASSISTANCE—aid against difficulties, enemies, temptations." Yes, here we touch the vital point. What makes a true Christian love his gospel is that he finds strength in it. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *A call for help*:—Oriental in its lineage and nativity Christianity was destined to become European in its triumphs. A few centuries saw it wither in those lands which gave it birth. Whereas transplanted to Europe it has struck here abiding roots and borne ample fruit. Nourished by the stronger soil of Western life, it is now beginning to repay the East its early obligations. The moment to which the text refers was one of the supreme turning-points of history. It was a moment sure to come. Sooner or later the gospel was bound to pass from the continent of its infancy to that robuster continent which was to prove the home of its manhood. Yet it needed quite a series of unusual providential indications to bring that mission band down to Troas. Again and again had the unseen Guide of that enterprise stood, like the angel of Balaam, barring progress. Read widely the Macedonians' appeal suggests—I. THAT ALL HUMAN RELIGIONS, GOVERNMENTS, LITERATURE, CIVILISATION, HAVE ENDED IN A CONFESSION OF FAILURE. 1. What are human religions but attempts to find God? But they strive after the unattainable. The net result of them all in Paul's day was a general scepticism respecting religious truths, and despair respecting their highest good. 2. The end of government and all social systems is the regeneration of society and a reign of justice, peace, and happiness; and at this problem men had long been working. Government by one, by a few, by the many, by the best—the world has tried them all, and under all of them has gone to corruption. 3. This failure repeats itself in the individual soul. The inward history of every man, when the net result of all life's efforts comes to be inspected, does not satisfy even the man himself. It is not what it ought or was meant to be. II. TO ALL THIS INCESSANT, PROFOUND, PATHETIC PLAINT OF HUMANITY, GOD'S ANSWER HAS BEEN THE GOSPEL OF HIS SON, or rather God's Son Himself. He is the Helper who has come over to us. He has brought light, revealing the Father whom we had ignorantly worshipped; peace cancelling guilt and atoning for transgression; power to break the bonds of evil habit, to renew the wasted moral energy, and to build up holy character. We believe in this Helper; to receive Christ is to be a Christian. Come and see if He be not the Christ of God. III. CHRIST BEING GOD'S RESPONSE TO THE CRY FOR HELP, IT FOLLOWS THAT CHRISTIANS IN THEIR TURN MUST LISTEN TO THE CRY AND ANSWER IT. If the gospel has not forgotten its own origin it can never hear unmoved the Macedonian appeal. Christianity is nothing if not a mission; and the Church's loyalty is tested by the

degree of her sensitiveness to catch and her promptness to answer the cry of perishing men. Not that the Church must wait for any formal invitation. Paul did not wait for that. Macedonia knew and cared nothing about Christianity. The cry came not from Europe, but from God. What the vision meant was that Macedonia needed and was ready for the gospel. And no other provocation is needed for the Church's missionary effort to-day. Note then—1. The need. The study of comparative religion yields two results—(1) It brings to light the seeds of spiritual truth which lie buried beneath the great old religions, and which testify to the inextinguishable cravings after God to which Christ is God's reply. (2) It shows the necessity for the Christian revelation. To know heathenism thoroughly is to know not only its fragments of partial truth, but also their insufficiency, and their witness to man's abortive spiritual struggles. There is great need for a fuller acquaintance with heathen creeds, and their outcome in heathen life. It is most difficult for men whose moral sense has been refined by Christianity to fathom the deeps of sinfulness and cruelty in which men have been plunged by unnumbered centuries of heathenism. Had Christians only an exacter knowledge of these things, compassion for the heathen would be vastly more keen and active than it is. 2. The readiness. The Church literally staggers beneath appeals for help. You can scarcely name a region that is inaccessible to the gospel. This is the privilege and perplexity of all our Churches. (*J. Oswald Dykes, D.D.*) *The world's want, the world's cry*:—It is only hearts burdened with Divine pity, and moved by Divine love, that see such visions or hear such voices as Paul saw and heard. The cold and indifferent sleep on; never hear and never see the great spirit world that wraps us close round. But we must not suppose that the Macedonians were actually hungering for the gospel. We know that they did not welcome Paul. His first sermon was preached to a few women only, and he was beaten and disregarded by the Philippians at large, and driven from their city; and when he went further south to Thessalonica, they assaulted him so furiously that he had to escape out of the city by night. And further south again in Athens they mocked him and said, "What will this babbler say?" Alas! the heathen, as a rule, do not see their darkness or feel their misery. The sheep in the wilderness, though utterly lost and in utmost peril, never seek the shepherd; it is the shepherd who has to seek the sheep. There was once an old man, diseased and worn and literally clothed in rags, who sat by the wayside begging, an object of pity: yet he never uttered a word, but simply sat there. One day a gentleman passing by was struck by his abject misery, but as no appeal was made he passed on. Yet, haunted by the man's woe-begotten appearance, he came back and said, "Are you in want?" And the old man replied, "Oh, sir! I am sick and cold and hungry." Then said the gentleman, "Why don't you beg?" And the old man, stretching out his worn, wasted hands, and looking at his rag-covered body, said, "Sir, I am begging with a thousand tongues." Yes, his misery was begging more eloquently than words. And it is thus that the heathen world is begging at the doors of the Church. It is its misery that begs; for the heathen are without God, and without hope in the world. But it is only a Christian's eye that can see that misery, and only a Christian's ear that can hear the cry. But what kind of help did the Macedonians want from Paul? and what kind of help had Paul to give them? It was—1. Help out of their debasing idolatries and superstitions to the knowledge of the one true and living God. 2. Help out of their moral degradation to a higher and nobler life. 3. Help out of darkness and death to Christ and life. (*G. Owen.*) *The beginning of European missions*:—I. THE DREAM. It seems a slight sort of thing to be the beginning of any enterprise, for a dream may arise from some slight derangement of the body, some uneasy posture, some pre-occupation of the mind. Sometimes, however, it may be the effluence of another life. Just as a telegraph wire will transmit an influence that will reach another wire quite detached from it miles away—how, no man knows—so there are souls, perhaps, with so much vitality and power to propagate an impression that they may waft their desire into other hearts by the subtle breathing and yearning of the soul. In such a case a dream may have a meaning. God "fulfils Himself in many ways," and sometimes, when He cannot get into our waking mind, He will enter into the mind while it sleeps, and convey His message there. From the result we see that this dream was a ministering angel. Mark some of the strange things about him. 1. It is very strange that He goes to the hearts that He does. Truly there was need of some angel to be the mouthpiece of creation that was groaning. For despair spread over the face of the people. The power of Rome was oppressive; liberty was extinct; the laws were

bitter and cruel in a degree we cannot easily imagine. But surely that angel went to the wrong house. Let him go to the emperor, to the Roman Senate, to some that had power to see to the well-being of the people. But he is gone to travel-stained men with no fitness for any task like this. Angel, you have come to the wrong door. But oh! woe always knows in what direction to look for help; it has an instinct unerring as the child's for the mother's breast. And the dream angel, that is the pleader for human help, is always coming to Christian hearts. They may be few and poor; but somehow the cry of distress is always coming to the Church of Christ, as if she had some secret by which to heal the troubles of men. It may be the poor people of London; the ignorance of little children; orphans; the hospital; some nation struggling for liberty; womanhood. All the sorrowful the world over passing by all others say to us, "Come over and help us." In Tokio, in Japan, a poor woman asked to be led to the Christian people. They asked her what she wanted. She said she understood that they knew how to heal the broken heart, and her heart was broken, and she wanted to find them. You cannot get out of this position. It is an evidence of Christianity little noticed, the expectation that the world has from us. Realise it. You may learn what to do in learning what the world expects you to do. The first marvel about this dream-angel is the people to whom he goes. 2. The next strange thing about this dream-angel is that he gets into the heart he goes to. It was not every heart that he got into. There are thoughts and feelings that cannot be got into our minds and hearts, for they are not big enough for them. There are some who can look upon sorrow and never see a claim in it; who can have the gospel and never feel that they have anything that can heal the woes of men. If such an angel had come to such, he might have stood at the door and knocked the whole night through, and he would not have disturbed their slumber. We would have told him that the rich man lived in the next street, or that somebody that was particularly interested in this sort of work was to be found somewhere else, or of the number of calls that we had, or turned to ask the news from Macedon: what about the crops, and the business, and the state of the frontier? The dream-angel has been trying to get into some of our hearts for years, and we do not heed him, and send him away. Blessed are the souls that are open to let him in. All Christ-like hearts listen to such appeals. St. Patrick heard the dream-voice, and the great missionaries of the Middle Ages—Boniface, the missionary of Central Europe; Raymond Lully, who went to Northern Africa; Xavier, who went to the furthest India and the edge of China. He came to our own Carey. There are some people that have never seen this dream-angel. God pity them! Blessed are they who have. II. WHAT DID THEY DO WITH THE DREAM? What would you have done? Probably you would have told it as rather a strange, curious dream, and have forgotten it. And suppose you had been with Paul; would you have given in to him, and gone to Macedonia on the mere strength of this dream? I fancy Silas would be very much tempted to say, "Well, Paul, that is you all over; your dream cometh of your compassions. When you were at Antioch you thought of Cyprus, and when you got to Cyprus you thought of Asia Minor; when you were at Syria you wanted to go to Rome, and when you get to Rome you will want to go to Spain—always 'the regions beyond.' Your dream by night just comes of your thought by day." I can fancy Luke was tempted to say, "Paul, you had a very serious illness in Galatia a month or two ago, ought you to go yonder?" Oh, if it had been you or I, we would have wanted a month or two to consider it, and we would have got everybody's opinion till we got addled by the multitude of opinions that we took, and chilled by the cold water we invited. What did they do? (ver. 10). How long it takes to convince us of any duty! We ask for light, and when light comes we look at it as if it had been something sent on approbation, and send it back, or wait for God to change His mind and show us something else; or we consult with flesh and blood, with books, and wonder whether we have to do it, or perhaps we say, "Is it necessary? Is there not somebody else that can do it?" Happy are those hearts that are easily convincible of God's love and of their own duty. These men were of that make. They "assuredly gathered that the Lord had called," and there was an end of it. Four big children, not stupid enough to philosophise, nor prudent enough to tarry for light, but heroes as well as children. "Immediately they endeavoured to go." Not lingering. How much they gained by their promptness! Why, if they had waited till to-morrow the ship would have been gone, and no one knows how long it would have been before another vessel would sail in that direction. Besides, when you are guided by God's eye, the eye that guides you smiles on you, and you walk in the light.

And they went with its bloom upon them, and the voyage pleasant, and three days do not elapse before they are in the capital of Macedon at their work. Brethren, this world is too short for us to practise delay. You are going to give a lot of money to the missions when your fortune is made. "Immediately they endeavoured to go into Macedonia"—that was Paul's example. To-morrow is not yours or mine; to-day is ours. Be like the stars, as Goethe said; not hasting, not tarrying, waiting till the light is clear; the moment it is clear, go forth. III. THE RESULT OF THIS ACTION. What was it? Perhaps not very encouraging at first. Nobody is waiting for them. They go out to the little oratory by the riverside; there is not a man, only a few women. It is true that one of them is converted; it is true that another is converted. And then, when they have got into prison, another low-natured man that it took an earthquake to rouse is added to the other two; and thus there are three to start the Christian worship in Europe. It is a strange trio—a seeker after God, a poor demoniac woman, and a great sinner. You know that is the way the Church is gathered—seekers, sufferers, sinners. Was that all? Not quite all. For these three, with two women at the head, grew into the noblest of all the Apostolic Churches. Then after Philippi they went to Thessalonica, Berœa, Athens, Corinth; and the Church grew and grew till to-day European Christianity has grown out of it. Brethren, send the ball rolling, and somebody else will keep it up. Sow one seed, and a thousand years hence some fruit of it may wave. Were they repaid? What says your heart? What would you give to have their reward in heaven? Oh! what overpowering delight would it be to any one of us to have a ten thousandth part of the reward that came to them! So all are rewarded that obey these heavenly visions. (*R. Glover.*) *The charter of Massachusetts* granted by Charles I. contains an expression of the hope that the settlers to whom it is granted "may win and incite the natives of the country to the knowledge and obedience of the only true God and Saviour of mankind and the Christian faith, which, in our royal intention, and the adventurer's free profession, is the principal end of this plantation." The first seal of the State represents an Indian giving utterance to the words, "Come over and help us." (*W. F. Rae.*)

Ver. 12. **And from thence to Philippi.**—*Philippi*:—The apostle had not paused at Samothrace—an island celebrated for its sanctity and its amulets, its gods and orgies, its Cybele and Cobira—a scene where the mysteries of Eastern and Western superstition seem to have met and blended. Nor did he stop at Neapolis, the harbour of the Thymonic gulf, but he pressed on to Philippi; and the ground of his preference was that it was "the chief city," &c. This cannot mean the chief or capital city, for that was Thessalonica; and if there existed at that period a minuter subdivision, the principal town was Amphipolis. It probably means that it was the first city of the province that lay upon his journey. It was the chief city of that part, and there was every inducement to fix upon it as a centre of operations. As it was a city and a colony, its importance in itself, and in relation to other towns and districts, made it a fitting place for present work and subsequent enterprise. You may either say that Paul went to Philippi as the first city in his path, for he had been summoned into Macedonia, and he could never think of passing the first city which he came to; or that he formally selected Philippi because of its rank and its privileges as a Roman colony. Philippi was anciently called Krenides, or the "Springs," on account of its numerous fountains, in which the Gangites has its sources. Philip, about 358 B.C., enlarged the old town and fortified it, in order to protect the frontiers against Thracian invaders, and named it after himself, to commemorate the addition of a new province to his empire. After the famous battle fought and won in its neighbourhood by the Triumvirs, Augustus conferred special honours on the city, and made it a Roman colony. A military settlement had been made in it, chiefly of the soldiers who had been ranged under the standard of Antony, so that it was a protecting garrison on the confines of Macedonia. A *colonia* was a reproduction in miniature of the mother city Rome. The Roman law ruled, and the Roman insignia were everywhere seen. The municipal affairs were managed by duumvirs, or prætors. Philippi had also the *Jus Italicum*, or quaritarian ownership of the soil, its lands enjoying the same freedom from taxation as did the soil of Italy. Highly favoured as Philippi had been, it was in need of "help." Political franchise and Roman rights, Grecian tastes and studies, wide and varied commerce, could not give it the requisite aid. It was sunk in a spiritual gloom, which needed a higher light than Italian jurisprudence or Hellenic culture could bring it. It was helpless within itself, and the

"man" who represented it had appealed to the sympathies of a Jewish stranger, whose story of the Cross could lift the darkness off its position and destiny. The spear and phalanx of Macedonia had been famous, and had carried conquest and civilisation through a large portion of the Eastern world; the sun of Greece had not wholly set, and Epicureans and Stoics yet mingled in speculation, and sought after "wisdom"; the sovereignty of Rome had secured peace in all her provinces, and her great roads not only served for the march of the soldier, but for the cortege of the trader; art and law, beauty and power, song and wealth, the statue and the drama, survived and were adored; but there was in many a heart a sense of want and powerlessness, an indefinite longing after some higher good and portion, a painless and restless agitation, which only he of Tarsus could soothe and satisfy with his preaching of the God-man—the life, hope, and centre of humanity. (*Prof. Eadie.*) *The first three Philippian converts*:—1. They are representatives of three different races—the one an Asiatic, the other a Greek, the third a Roman. 2. In the relations of everyday life they have nothing in common: the first is engaged in an important and lucrative branch of traffic; the second, treated by law as a mere chattel without any social or political rights, is employed by her masters to trade on the credulous superstition of the ignorant; the third, equally removed from both, holds a subordinate office under government. 3. In their religious training they stand no less apart. In the one, the speculative mystic temper of Oriental devotion has at length found deeper satisfaction in the revealed truths of the Old Testament; the second, bearing the name of the Pythian god, the reputed source of Greek inspiration, represents an artistic and imaginative religion, though manifested in a very low and degrading form; while the third, if he preserved the characteristic features of his race, must have exhibited a type of worship essentially political in tone. The purple dealer and proselyte of Thyatira, the native slave girl with the divining spirit, the Roman jailer, all alike acknowledge the supremacy of the new faith. In the history of the gospel at Philippi, as in the history of the Church at large, is reflected the great maxim of Christianity, the central truth of the apostle's preaching—that here "is neither Jew nor Greek," &c. (Gal. iii. 28). 4. The order of these conversions is significant: first the proselyte, next the Greek, lastly the Roman. Thus the incidents in their sequence, no less than in their variety, symbolise the progress of Christianity throughout the world. Through the Israelite dispersion, through the proselytes whether of the covenant or the gate, the gospel message first reached the Greek. By the instrumentality of the Greek language, and the diffusion of the Greek race, it finally established itself in Rome, the citadel of power and civilisation, whence directly or indirectly it was destined to spread over the whole world. (*Bp. Lightfoot.*) *Christianity in Europe*:—I. ACCEPTING CHRIST (vers. 14, 15). It is well to note—1. Who this convert was. (1) She was a woman of business. Her perceptions had been sharpened by trade. She was free from the bondage of local prejudice. (2) She was from Thyatira, a city of "Asia," in which district the missionaries had been forbidden to speak the Word. When the Holy Spirit shuts the door in one place, it may be that He intends to reach it by the way of another. (3) She was a Jewish proselyte. She had learned to worship the true God. Having made that much progress, she was prepared to go still further—much more prepared than the Jews themselves. 2. How she was converted. "Whose heart the Lord opened," &c. Paul spoke the Word, but the Lord gave the Word fruitfulness. "I planted, Apollos watered; God gave the increase." 3. How her conversion was shown. (1) Her whole family was converted with her. Through her faith, her servants, and her children, if she had children, were brought into the kingdom of Christ. (2) She constrained the missionaries to abide with her, which was no small burden. Paul, Timothy, Silas, and Luke made quite a party to take care of. And note how she puts her request. She makes it appear as though they were doing her a favour, rather than she them. They had done so much for her soul that she wanted to do something for their bodies. II. SAVED THROUGH CHRIST. We turn from one who was ready to accept Christ to one who was in the power of Satan. But the power of Christ was shown in the one case as in the other. The Lord opened the heart of the one, cast out the evil spirit from the other. 1. The evil spirit in possession. (1) Bringing gain. The unfortunate girl was owned by a joint-stock company. Her owners speculated in the credulity of men. Her insane ravings were taken as the revelation of an oracle. (2) Bringing reproach. "The same following after Paul and us, cried," &c. This she did for many days. The testimony which she bore was the same as that of the evil spirits to the Saviour. The witness was true,

but it was not from a good source. 2. The evil spirit cast out. (1) Why? "Paul being sore troubled," &c. At what? Presumably at the character of the endorsement he and his friends were receiving. With this, however, there may have been a great sympathy for the poor girl. (2) How? "I charge thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." The act was done in such a way as to show the faith of Paul in Christ, his dependence upon Christ, and as to honour Christ. Those who witnessed the miracle could not have any doubt as to the power through which the marvel was accomplished. III. SUFFERING FOR CHRIST. 1. The anger of the masters. (1) How it arose. "Her masters saw that the hope of their gain was gone." The maid now spoke rationally, instead of raving, or giving wild, weird utterances that made people think that they were listening to something supernatural. Now no one would pay anything to hear the girl speak good sense. It did not matter to them that the maid was released from a most cruel thraldom. Let a drunkard burst his bonds, and what rum-seller will rejoice over his deliverance? Let a gambler throw off the terrible fascination, and how angry are those whom he has been enriching. (2) How it was manifested. (*a*) "They laid hold on Paul and Silas," &c. The dragging, we may be sure, was not gently done. (*b*) "They said, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city," &c. The formal complaint did not correspond to the offence. They knew that the magistrates could take no cognisance of such an injury as they had received. They craftily word their complaint. They appeal to the Roman prejudice against the Jews. 2. The anger of the magistrates. The multitude became a mob, and the magistrates not much better. No form of a trial was even pretended. Against these Jews, the accusation of such respectable, dividend-receiving citizens was taken as conclusive evidence. Judgment and sentence were instantaneous. (1) The missionaries were beaten "with many stripes," more cruelly than if they had been committing a crime. (2) They were cast into the "inner prison," and their feet made fast in the stocks. What land is there where a similar heroic record has not been made? (*M. C. Hazard.*)

Ver. 13. **And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side where prayer was wont to be made.**—*The duty of Christ's servants when from home:*—This may be gathered from what the apostles did not do, and what they did when they reached Philippi. I. NEGATIVELY. They did not—1. Give up going to prayer-meeting because they were away from their home church. 2. Go to prayer-meeting and wait and wait for some one else to say something. 3. Need a fifty-thousand-dollar church, and the presence of a fashionable congregation to call out their best efforts. II. POSITIVELY. 1. They found a few women gathered in a little chapel by the river side—then and there they saw that work for Christ was to be done. 2. They did Christ's work, and forthwith one soul at least was won for the Master. 3. When all Christ's servants do their duty as unhesitatingly, what joy there will be among the angels of God, over repentant souls turning heavenward! (*S. S. Times.*) *The place of prayer:*—The place of prayer is a place of power. Miracles are done in it. When the disciples were praying, the Holy Spirit descended. When the Church was praying at John Mark's house, Peter was let out of prison by an angel. When the Church prays now, there is answer in India and China and Africa. While Christians pray there is fresh anointing from on high; they become "strong in the Lord and the power of His might." The hour we spend in communing with God is the most strengthening in the week. More prayers and less words. Less with men, and more with God. We get the victory in the prayer-room where no eye sees but God's, and all hearts are one before Him. The prayer circle is a place of instruction. Prayer is a great teacher. The word of truth is unfolded there; mysteries are explained; promises are fulfilled; deliverances are wrought. What God teaches in prayer is pure truth; what we learn on our knees we never unlearn. The place of prayer is a place of rest after toil, of comfort in perplexity and trouble. It is good to draw near to God. "Draw nigh unto Me and I will draw nigh unto you." The gates to the mercy-seat are many, and, like those to the golden city, stand open day and night, that every soul may enter in. It is a place of fellowship. Next to the joy of heaven is the gladness of hearts gathered together in prayer. It is a place for conversion of souls. Of how many it shall be written: "They were born there." It is a place for replenishing the daily losses of the heart, and enthroning God again at the seat of the soul. A Christian is always helped in his association with other Christians. Single coals do not hold fire, but gathered together there is glow. *The proseuche:*—The names proseuche and synagogue were sometimes

confounded; though at other times the distinction between them is observed. This distinction consists in the first word being used of the place of assembly, and the latter of the assembly itself. But however frequently these names were interchanged, they seem on the whole to have been used to designate different buildings, the first a temporary and tentative place of worship, the second a regular and acknowledged edifice, much as among ourselves a mission chapel is distinguished from a parish church. Wheresoever, from the paucity of their numbers, the Jews were not able to establish a synagogue, which required a certain number of men competent to bear the offices necessary to constitute a synagogue, there near a stream, as seems to have been the almost invariable practice in heathen countries, a proseuche was established—a humble dwelling partly covered, in part open to the sky, which in after times might give place to a grander edifice, and was not exclusively devoted to worship as the synagogue was. Thus at Thessalonica and Antioch and elsewhere we find synagogues mentioned; at Philippi, where there is no appearance of any Jewish colony, there is only "a place for prayer." (*W. Denton, M.A.*) *The gospel in Europe*:—I. THE FIRST GOSPEL PREACHING IN EUROPE. 1. The season—the "Sabbath." On this day the religious sentiment would be more active than on other days. Ministers should study mental moods. There are days and circumstances suited for religious impressions. There are tides in the affairs of spiritual as well as secular concerns. 2. The scene. They retired from the hum and bustle of the city into the solitudes and sublimities of nature. "By a river side." Few objects in nature are more beautiful and suggestive than a river. Emblem of life, ever changing; emblem of the universe, flowing on for ever. The Jews were accustomed to have their proseuche built near water, that they might attend to the various ablutions connected with their religious rites. To Christianity all places are alike sacred. "God is a Spirit." 3. The style. They did not stand erect in the attitude of orators, they sat "down," mingled with the people. They did not deliver set discourses, but "spake," talked. What did they talk about? The beauties of nature? the immortality of the soul? the providence of the Eternal? If they referred to these, Christ and His Cross were, we may rest assured, their grand theme. II. THE FIRST GOSPEL HEARERS IN EUROPE. Who were they? Poets, statesmen, philosophers, heroes, kings? No! "Women." Why women and not men? Perhaps because the men came at another hour, or because the women had a special service for themselves. Did wives meet there to pray for their husbands, and sisters for their brothers, &c.? All we know is, that women are always more religiously disposed than men. Note—1. That the gospel is universally appreciable. Had the apostles felt that the truth required culture, logic, philosophic acumen, they would have gone first, not only to men, but to men of the higher type. But they felt that the gospel, being a revelation of facts, character, love, all that was required was the common intuitions and sympathies of a woman's nature. 2. That the gospel honours the female character. All religions but that of the Bible degrade women; and though, as in the more civilised parts of the world, she may be petted, she is still a slave to man. The gospel honours woman. The Saviour was born of a woman. Women were amongst His followers. He showed Himself to women after His resurrection, and the apostles now preached in Europe first to women. Woman is under special obligation to the gospel. 3. That the gospel has a regard to social influence. Woman has a greater influence on the race than man has. When she acts worthily of her nature, her influence as sister, wife, mother, is regal. III. THE FIRST GOSPEL CONVERT IN EUROPE. "A certain woman named Lydia," &c. Observe—1. Her secular calling. "A seller of purple." Purple was a colour got from a shell-fish, and of great cost and richness. It was chiefly worn by the wealthy and great. This woman was in trade. 2. Her religious character. "Which worshipped God," *i.e.*, she was a proselyte; a formal worshipper of the God of Abraham. 3. Her spiritual change. (1) Its subject. The "heart." This, notwithstanding her religious profession, had been closed. The spirit of truth had not entered it. Avarice, prejudice, habit, shut up the heart. (2) Its cause. "The Lord opened" it. Not by a miracle, not irrespective of means, but by certain influences. Sabbath-day associations, natural scenery, the presence and speeches of the apostles, &c., disposed her to listen to what Paul had to say. (3) Its proof. (*a*) Teachableness. "She attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." As a thirsty soul she drank in the new truths. (*b*) Profession. She avowed symbolically the necessity of a cleansing influence for herself and household. (*c*) Gratitude. "If ye have judged me," &c. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The gospel in Europe*:—1. Here the Lord of salvation is on His way to us, bending

His steps westward. Just suppose that Paul and Silas had been ordered the other way. Then very likely these lands of ours would have been the Asia and the Africa that now are. 2. They had been staying in Philippi for certain days, as you might be sojourning in London. Paul was not a devout worshipper in Jerusalem, but a Philippian in Philippi. Had Paul been as loose in his observance of the Sabbath as some people, this story would not have been written. Forget not the ways of worship in which you were brought up when you are sojourning in London. Remember that perhaps you were brought here to open some door which, but for your arrival, would have remained shut. 3. "Lord," says the Psalmist, "I have loved the habitation of Thy house," &c. Can we say that? Is the love of worship so strong in us that when the day comes round our heart wakens up with strong desire to engage in the dear and familiar round? What a scene is presented to us! The city away back there, with its sin, bustle, and gaiety. They turn their backs on the city, and go out here to this quiet place by the river side. What a picture after all of all congregations! Where are we to-day? "Along the river of time we glide," but on the Sabbath we reach a little quiet creek, and God's own hand thrusts our boat in here; and while the river goes speeding away on to the sea, we disembark, and quietly, for a little time, while our boat rocks idly in this little bay, we rest ourselves. We land, and we sit down, and lo! God's servant comes among us, and speaks of things that belong to the kingdom of Jesus Christ; and our hearts are opened for us, so that we attend to the things that are said to us, and receive blessings thereby. 4. How unlike the Lord's "Forward" Movements are to some of which we hear. No big bills, no beating of the drum. Maybe the Lord would like us to take a leaf out of His book, and whether we do things in a quiet or public way, to make sure that we are aiming at individuals. If Europe ever is to be saved, it is to be saved man by man, woman by woman, family by family. That is God's programme. How quiet. People, perhaps, taking a stroll by the river side would cast a wondering eye upon that little group, little knowing what was there. "Who hath despised the day of small things?" No wise man; but fools do it continually—and that is a folly that we London ministers and workers are apt to be guilty of. We come to some meeting, and there are only a few women, and the very look on our face says, "The meeting is a failure. None of the men of the district! This is not the class of people we wanted to get at." One might have said, "Paul you are off the track. You are swinging about aimlessly." Paul did not think so, but he sat down and spoke unto the women who resorted thither. I am not saying a word against big crowds. It is impossible to convert empty benches, and I never want to see dead wood. Often a bad use is made of Christ speaking to the woman at the well, for He so spoke that she went and raised the town about Him. "God has much people in this city," but He gets at the multitude through quickened individuals. God bless the women who give us meetings! for sometimes if it were not for Lydia we should have no meeting at all. Do you understand that, you men? It is not that you are engaged. It is simply that you will not come. It is not that you stay at home. You go out, but you do not come this way. Still, accepting the situation as it is, if there are only a few women, let us, like Paul, say to ourselves, "This is God's opportunity, and this is my work." 5. Notice the condition of the heart of this worshipper. She was a devout woman according to her light. She knew after some dim and distant fashion the God of Israel. It is not enough to be religious after the ordinary fashion. Even Lydia needs to have her shut heart opened. But still we have to notice that she was there, and she was using the light which she had; and by using the light which she had she came to more. Notice how the preacher is suppressed, and the sermon, and how the hearer is lifted up into prominence. 6. Attention, humanly speaking, is the avenue by which Christ comes into the human soul. It is a small thing, but I am afraid a rare thing. Even supposing that you had that great apostle, still conversions would be scanty if the audience did not attend. And it is not so easy as we are apt to imagine. It needs the power of the Holy Spirit to enable Paul to preach, and it needs the same power to enable the hearer to hear. Although your face is to me, where is your mind just now? Thinking of the state of things at home, of something that was in your business yesterday, of something that is to be in your business to-morrow? Ah, how many of us are like the wayside hearers! You are unconverted, not because of a poor preacher here, but because of a mighty poor listener down there. "Hear," says the prophet, "and your soul shall live." 7. Then see how this simple narrative brings out the mystery of conversion. Her heart was opened by the Lord. I cannot explain it. I can only point you to the

fact, but what a blessed fact it is! If my heart has been opened, it was Divinely done. Oh, what a strange thing is the heart of man! Not long ago, in sport, a man handed me a purse with money in it, and I felt it, and I heard it jingle. He said, "Open it"; and in spite of my doing my utmost, I could not, it was too cunningly contrived. Such is the heart of man. It is worth the opening. Hand it up to God, and say, "O God, do for me what Thou didst for Lydia." He will. I think I see the Lord Jesus doing what I did out in the country one day. I came to a little cottage, and I went round, but the shutters were up, and I went round to the door, but the door was fastened. However, it did open; and you know the uncertain, cautious way in which you push open the door of an empty house and peer into the darkness. But I went in. So Christ to-day is coming to your heart, and He knows all the springs and locks in it, and He is opening it, and He is looking in. What a place! everything dark and desolate and dirty, for it has been God-forsaken ever since you were born. May He come in—at whose girdle hang the keys of all hearts. 8. "And when she was baptized, and her household," &c. First the heart, and then the home. She kept them; she fed them; she bore all charges for them at the very beginning. Remember Lydia at once became a contributor to the Sustentation Fund! (*J. McNeill.*) *Missionary sermon*:—That simple account is the first record of the preaching of the gospel in Europe. We are standing at the well-head of a great river. The little silver thread, over which a shepherd might step without asking it to stay its progress, broadens out into a great expanse, and the Christendom of a civilised world is developed from those simple words spoken that Saturday morning. Thus gently and unobtrusively stole into Europe the great words which were to shatter and remould its institutions, and to be the starting point of its liberties. I. THE APPARENT INSIGNIFICANCE AND REAL GREATNESS OF CHRISTIAN WORK. It was the biggest thing that was done in the world that day when Paul talked to that handful of women. Well now, the same temptation, to judge of acts by their external aspect, and to underrate their value, besets us all in our Christian work. The greatness of an action depends on three things—its motive, its sphere, and its consequences. Anything that is done for God is great. You take a pebble and plunge it into a stream and all the veins become visible, which you failed to detect as it lay on the shore, and so it is with Christian work, cast it into the stream of holy motive—let it be done for God and it is sanctified and ennobled. And so it is as to the relative greatness of the sphere of our actions; what is done for material well-being and physical life is distinctly at the bottom. What is done for the understanding is higher, and if the lightest word of a great thinker is more than all material magnificence, then decisively, by the very same reasoning, we must exalt above the mere thinker's words the words and deeds which touch the heart, and that sway the will, that cleanse and invigorate, and instruct, and invest with sovereign power the life and conscience; and the preaching of Christ's name is that which does all these things. Therefore high above all other forms of Christian benevolence and munificence is this setting forth of the name that Paul spake by the river-side that morning. But deeds are classified according to their consequences. The longer they last, the wider they reach, the deeper they go—the greater the act which sets them in motion. Go and ask about the length of time the consequences of that sublime morning's discourse will endure. When all the flaring gas lamps and rushlights are out, "they that be wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." II. THE LAW OF GROWTH IN CHRIST'S KINGDOM. The seed sown at first was but little, and though eighteen centuries have passed, and it has grown to a kingdom, it is obviously a long way from the term of its growth. So I may draw one or two lessons upon which I would touch for a moment or two. First: That the law of Christ's kingdom is found in minute and unobtrusive beginnings—noise and prominence are no parts of its power, and have little part in accomplishing the great things that are done for Him. The noisiest things are generally the little things, and the quiet things are the strong ones. Look how Jesus Christ stole into the world, into a corner of a remote little province, and went about silently doing good, and passed out of it again, and "the world knew Him not." And so don't let us be ashamed of little beginnings. They are in the line of God's way of working, and side by side with that there is the other thought, slow progress is unobtrusive and steadfast. The length which any organism takes to come to its maturity is the measure of its duration, and the man outlasts a million generations of moths, and the oak waves its unchanging branches above many, many generations of reeds

that spring and wither at its careless feet; and if eighteen centuries have but begun the development of the forces which were set loose in Europe for the first time that morning, how long is it going to be before decay sets in upon that which has taken so long to grow? A long, long duration must belong to that kingdom, the consolidation of which has been the work of all these centuries, and that must be an unsetting day, of which these years are but as a watch in the morning twilight. God works leisurely and invisibly. Treading most closely in the footsteps of Him who waited over a thousand years to send His own Son with that small beginning and slow advance, they commenced their work of the founding and building of the kingdom of Christ. III. THE SIMPLICITY OF THE FORCES TO WHICH CHRIST ENTRUSTS THE PROGRESS OF HIS KINGDOM. It seemed a most unequal contest into which the apostle and his little band had gone, led by the vision which they interpreted as the Divine monition. Think of the opposition, the antagonisms that were ready against them. There was Greece over the hills with its proud philosophies. There was Rome all active, ready to change its toleration for active persecution. They had to meet storms of heathenish idolatry, round which the superstitious dread of untold centuries gathered, and which was ever menacing with consummate obstinacy. They had to confront ordered systems of able philosophic teachers with their unlettered message. Did Cartes, landing on an unknown shore, with an unsubdued and barren beach in front and his burning ships behind, embark on a more apparently desperate venture than these men? And what were the weapons that made them victorious? First and foremost the message that they preached, the plain gospel—to which the heart and conscience of men will respond, when it is put before them as Christ meant it to be—the message, "That God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing unto them their trespasses." That was Paul's gospel, as he tells us, and that was the weapon with which he fought, which was, "the power of God unto salvation." With this most beneficent intention they fronted the universe with one word, and with that word they took the world; and you and I have it, and if we will be faithful and will use it, we shall have the same issues and results as they. Their power in the next place came from the earnestness with which they preached the truth. Convictions are contagious. You may reason with a man until Doomsday, and if you hammer an iceberg to powder it will be ice still, but melt it, as you can by having your own soul aglow with love and loyalty to Jesus Christ, and you can turn it from ice to sweet water. The last element of power is the presence of the abiding and indwelling Christ. The Word, mighty as it is, is vain without the mighty power and inspiration of the Spirit. As we read that verse lower down, what do we find? "Whose heart the Lord opened, that she should attend to the things that were spoken of Paul." In the measure in which we are true to Him, and yield ourselves in glad surrender to His power and presence, we carry Jesus Christ with us, and He works through us, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, which are indeed the acts of the risen Christ in the apostles. The gospel is as much the power of God unto Salvation to-day as it ever was, and the earnestness of our personal conviction is as deep as ever, and the presence and power of the indwelling Spirit of Christ is as real as ever, and the closer we keep to Christ and the more exclusively and unreservedly we trust Him the more assured will be our results. God's Church has no need of wealth. Jewels on the hilt of a sword are often in the way of getting a good grip of it, and the gilded scabbard adds nothing to the keenness of its edge. The Church has no need of worldly help. David was almost throttled in Saul's armour, he was better without it. Let us then get the old proved weapons which have been tried through many generations; we have more reason to trust them than Paul had, for we have eighteen centuries of experience to fall back upon, which he had not; and if we cleave to them, as I pray God we may, we shall find that the weapons of our warfare, not being carnal, but spiritual, are mighty through God to the pulling down of the strongholds of sin and Satan. And so I venture to commend to your sympathies the claims of the Foreign Missionary enterprise. I am sure of this, that no Church is in a healthy condition that does not lend a helping hand in the great work of foreign missions. The lamp that is placed in the window gives no less light in the room because its rays are illuminating the darkness outside. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

The gospel in Europe:—1. In ver. 12 we read of "certain days"—days which needed not to be named—the ordinary process of time. But in ver. 13 we read of "the Sabbath"—the day that has a name; the one day into which all other days flow as streamlets and rivers flow into the sea. There is none like it. You need not bolster up the Sabbath by argument. Its Divine authority is written in the heart, and we shall see

it to be so when once awakened and inspired by the Holy Ghost. The Sabbath must be its own argument. 2. "And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by the river-side." Church-hunting! A journey that was allowed. To leave home thus on Sunday is to seek the greater home. You cannot stop at home on the Sabbath day. That were insult to the very home you profess to love. To leave it is to seek it; to go from it is to get at it. We must go out on the Sabbath day, if the Spirit of Christ be in us, in order to help to complete the family gathering. Let us not be led away by the foolish fantasy that a man can read the Bible at home, or have a Church at home, in some sense which dispenses with the common joy of kindred sympathy and soul. Christianity does not isolate men, but brings men together in sacred, sympathetic brotherhood. We know what it is in strange places to seek the particular Church we know and love on the Sabbath day. 3. "Where prayer was wont to be made." How singular is the cause of reputation or fame! There are famous battle-fields to which men make pilgrimages. How can a man be in Belgium without feeling some constraint towards Waterloo? That is natural. There are men who would make long pilgrimages to see where John Bunyan was born. The land through which the apostles passed was full of historic interest, but they cared little for the histories which have beginnings and endings; they lived in the nobler history which continues through the everlasting duration. They sought the place where soul-battles had been fought. You might have known whither the men were moving; they were praying as they were going. We must keep up the spiritual frame. 4. "The women which resorted thither." Have men forsaken religion and left the women to keep it up? Do "women keep up the Church"? It may be; but it is a fool's gibe! The woman does keep up the Church—God bless her! But she keeps up more. Oh, thou blatant, mocking fool, to taunt the very saviour of society! There be those who say that the men have given up Church. Yes, but only in the same proportion in which they have given up love, purity, patience, home! 5. "And a certain woman named Lydia——." This is like the "days" and "the Sabbath." What subtle little harmonies there are in this inspired book! How part balances part! As there are days that may be mentioned in the plural number, so there are men and women who may be mentioned in their plurality; but as there is one day which is always named alone, so there are individuals who head every catalogue; names which have whole lines to themselves. Look at the case of Lydia. I. SHE WAS A BUSINESS WOMAN—"a seller of purple." So, then, women of business may be women of prayer. We ought to have more women of business. It is one thing for a woman to be a slave, and another for a woman to work and to love her work. He, or she, who loves work, makes all the week a kind of introductory Sabbath to the great religious rest. I would that all women were Lydias in this respect of having something definite to do every day and doing it, and finding in industry a balance to piety. II. SHE WAS A RELIGIOUS WOMAN; she "worshipped God." It is one thing to be religious and another to be Christianised. Religion is a general term; Christianity is a specific form of religion. It is not enough for you and me to be religious, we must take upon us by the mighty ministry of the Holy Ghost a particular form, and that particular form is Christianity. In this respect Christianity is a heart-opening; a heart enlargement. III. WHEN SHE BECAME THE SUBJECT OF CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE, AT ONCE SHE WOULD HAVE A CHURCH IN THE HOUSE—"If ye have judged me," &c. In that suggestion there is a whole philosophy. That was impulse Divine. When the two travellers felt their hearts burn within them, by reason of the converse of the third Man, they said, "Abide with us." Lydia would have a fellowship at once. Souls that are kindred must never leave one another. Christians must abide together. In the olden time "they that feared God met often one with another," &c. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) **And spoke unto the women that resorted thither.**—*Paul and the women of Philippi*:—I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES. 1. It was upon the Sabbath day. 2. It was by the river side. A river may remind us of the Spirit, by whose influence we are enabled to drink of the "streams which make glad the city of God." 3. It was a place where prayer was accustomed to be made. II. THE POSITION. "They sat down." III. THE OPERATION (ver. 14). 1. Something implied. (1) Ignorance. (2) Prejudice. 2. Something described. (1) Before conversion. (*a*) Conviction. (*b*) Perception. (*c*) Willingness. (2) After conversion. (*a*) Consciousness. (*b*) Longings. (*c*) Enlargement. (*Dr. Andrews.*) **And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple.**—*The conversion of Lydia*:—I. THE CHARACTER OF LYDIA, PREVIOUSLY TO THE APOSTLE'S ARRIVAL. This will, in a considerable degree, account for that absence of intense feeling by which her conversion was

distinguished. You are not now invited to look on the rough Roman soldier, or the dissolute vagrant. But Lydia stands before you, marked by the mildness of her sex, the native pliancy of the Asiatic character, and the respectability of her standing in society. For you find that she was a woman of Thyatira, a Lydian city, and a respectable householder in Philippi. And her employment, as a seller of purple, was calculated to produce a certain degree of morality and gentleness; for trade has a tendency to repress open profligacy, and to remove moroseness of temper. And the peculiar branch of commerce, which engaged Lydia's attention would tend, by bringing her into contact with her superiors, to foster a submissive and obliging disposition. But the most important fact of her early history is her proselytism to the Jewish faith—she "worshipped God." It cannot hence be inferred that she was really pious, for in chap. xiii. we find that those individuals at Antioch, characterised by the same term, and called in our Bibles "devout women," were among the violent persecutors of Paul and Barnabas. Many of these proselytes were, doubtless, like the Jews themselves, but professors of the tenets of Judaism. Yet the religious profession of Lydia will prove that she was to a certain extent instructed in the writings of the Old Testament; and the narrative shows her to have been an attendant in assemblies for Divine worship. And this knowledge, and this attention to the rites of religion, would give an aspect to her mind, very different from that of her depraved neighbours. The ruggedness of the heathen character would be thus worn away, and the law, as the forerunner of the gospel, would have "prepared the way of the Lord, and made straight in the desert a highway for our God." Lydia then, at this period, although unchanged by the Holy Spirit, may be described as moral, amiable, industrious, domestic, and instructed in the leading principles of religion. II. THE SCENE OF HER CONVERSION. And in this there is much to harmonise with the characteristic of her conversion itself. Lydia is not roused beneath the strong arches of a prison, by an earthquake, like the savage jailer. But time, and place, and employment, all tell of tranquillity. III. THE MANNER OF THE DIVINE OPERATION. We have not time now to enlarge on the sentiment, that an immediate Divine influence is necessary for the conversion of a soul, although this is sufficiently established by the present history. "It is God which worketh in us, both to will and to do of His good pleasure"; and then listen to the language of Jesus Christ, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." But we have here to advert particularly to the gentle manner in which the Spirit affected the mind of Lydia. This is implied in the word "opened." The hearers of Peter, on the day of Pentecost, were pricked to the heart." The hearts of others are represented as "broken." Indeed, the convinced soul sometimes reminds us of a city taken by storm: the bars of iron are cut asunder—the gates are battered down—the assailants pour in like a torrent. But the heart of Lydia was opened like the gate of Peter's prison. Now, there are two circumstances recorded in the narrative that will illustrate the mildness of the Divine agency. 1. The first is that the preaching of the gospel was the instrument of Lydia's conversion. The Spirit in His saving influences always affects the mind by bringing it into contact with truth; and, indeed, with that portion of truth which He has been pleased to communicate to man in the Scriptures. "Of His own will begat He us by the word of truth." This is the sun of the moral world. "The law of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." But light does not always strike the eye from the same point: sometimes the sun pours on it his direct effulgence; at others, the rays reach it through all the varieties of reflection. And thus the truth is not always communicated to the mind in the same manner. It impresses one man amid the silence of meditation; another, while perusing the Bible; it smites a third in the rebuke of an enemy; it came to Paul in a voice from heaven. But the more common manner of conveying to the mind the truths of revelation is by the preaching of the gospel. 2. The other circumstance to which we allude is that the operations of the Spirit did not interfere with the calm exercise of Lydia's mental powers. The influences of the Spirit, indeed, never supersede the employment of the intellectual faculties; for then man would cease to be responsible. But in the early stages of some conversions, there is but little calmness in the employment of these. The feelings are too much agitated to allow of close attention to the various bearings of truth. Imminent peril occupies too large a space in the field of vision to permit the presence of other objects. But such was not Lydia's case. "She attended unto the things which were spoken by Paul." Her heart was engaged with his discourse. While Lydia heard that Christ was "bruised for our transgressions," she felt that she was a transgressor. True, she

had been industrious, amiable, moral. But now she perceived that religion required much more than outward decency. She began to feel the meaning of the Psalmist's prayer; "Create in me, O God, a clean heart." She saw that the anxieties of business, and the cares of a family, had interfered with supreme love to God. And Lydia received the testimony of God. She saw its extent, embracing time and eternity; the character of man, and the nature of God—and she received it all. IV. THE SUBSEQUENT CONDUCT OF LYDIA, as according with the gentleness which we have noticed as predominant in her history. She was not called, like the apostle to whose language she had listened, to raise her voice in the public assembly, or to expose her life in perilous journies. But there was a little congregation to whom she could introduce the word of truth—her household. It is evident that Lydia discharged her duty to her family, for they too were baptized. And mild as Lydia appears in the centre of her family, regarded by its members as the instrument of their own conversion, she is not seen in a light less amiable, when performing towards the apostles the rites of Christian hospitality. Mark with what urgency she pleads with Paul, her father in Christ, to come, with his companions, beneath her roof; till, constrained by her grateful importunity, these holy men became her guests. And so closely was Christian friendship cemented by their brief intercourse, that we find Paul and Silas, as soon as they were released from prison, hastening to the house of Lydia, to share with their anxious hostess the joy of their deliverance. And her considerate regard to the temporal wants of the apostles was not limited to the transient attentions of hospitality. Read the Epistle to the Church at Philippi and you will find that, at the introduction of the gospel into Macedonia, this Christian society alone ministered to the necessities of the apostle. Twice at Thessalonica and once at Corinth did this Church aid, by its pecuniary contributions, the mission of Paul among the heathen. And from whom do you suppose this liberality originated, but from Lydia, the first fruits and centre of the Philippian Church? Such is a rapid sketch of Lydia's conversion. And surely it is not less illustrious for being distinguished by a placidity which among men would be esteemed incompatible with the production of a mighty effect. The operations of God must not be estimated by a human standard. Feebleness is restless, omnipotence is calm. Look on its noblest works. When the sun was formed, was there the accumulation of materials, or the toil of labourers, or the clang of machinery? No. "God said, Let there be light," and the glorious orb existed, blazed, and threw abroad its infant rays amid the songs of the sons of God. And how was that more marvellous work, the spirit of man, produced? God "breathed" into the beauteous clay "the breath of life, and man became a living soul"; and the eye beaming with intelligence opened upon the tranquillity of Paradise. And then, think of the incarnation of the Son of God. No earthquake shakes the mountains—no trumpet summons the nations—no chariot of fire cleaves the air; but the glory of a single angelic messenger shines around a group of shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem. In the application of this subject we might observe—1. That the conversion of the moral and the amiable is frequently attended with comparatively small degrees of mental excitation. This consideration may console those who resemble Lydia in their character and in the manner of their conversion. 2. That a calm entrance upon the Christian life will not necessarily interfere with decision and activity in the Church of God. In the full prospect of persecution Lydia professed her faith, and identified herself with the cause of Christianity. 3. That attention to the public ordinances of religion should ever accompany dependence on the Spirit of God; nor should we absent ourselves from a service because thinly attended, or inferior to others in excitement. 4. Finally, we observe, that natural excellence of character will not render conversion unnecessary. If it would, why was it needful that the Lord should open the heart of Lydia? (*T. C. Everett.*)

Lydia:—The ordinary blessings of life are distributed with great inequality; indeed, we often find that the worst characters enjoy the largest portion of them. The reason is this—they are not essential to man's happiness. Whatever is necessary to the happiness of all is placed within the reach of all. True religion is, however, necessary to our dignity and to our happiness; and, therefore, it is placed within the reach of every person, and, especially, within the reach of the poor. There are many striking illustrations of this. One is now before us. The sacred historian makes no mention of Philip or his warlike son—he says nothing of Augustus, or of Brutus; but he mentions with peculiar honour an humble individual from Thyatira. Let us notice—I. THE INDUSTRY OF LYDIA—she was "a seller of purple." 1. A dog which had been eating a Conchilis or Purpura, and whose lips had been deeply

tinged with a purple colour, gave occasion to the discovery of this elegant and costly dye. At one time it was more valuable than gold, and articles of dress dyed by it were worn only by sovereign princes; but in the days of Roman luxury they were used by the noble and wealthy in general; hence it is said of the rich man that "he was clothed in purple and fine linen." 2. Lydia was employed in preparing and selling this. As idleness is quite opposed to the virtue and happiness of man, it is necessary that all persons should follow some employment. Even those who are placed in independent circumstances should not be idle, but should employ their time, talents, and influence in doing good to others. What a noble example does the life of the benevolent Howard furnish to persons placed in such circumstances as these! Such, however, as have, by their own exertions, to provide for their personal and family wants should be diligent in their calling, whatever it may be. 3. And whatever else we attend to or neglect, we should attend to the soul. "For what is a man profited," &c. There are many persons who plead that they are placed in such circumstances that it is out of their power to attend to the one thing needful, but this is a vain excuse; for we shall find that there have been persons in all ages distinguished for piety, who have been placed in circumstances the most unfavourable to religion. II. LYDIA'S PIETY. 1. "She worshipped God"; that is, the true God, according to the practice of the Jews. 2. Such was the power of principle with Lydia, that neither the fear of man, nor the love of lucre would lead her to desecrate the day which the Lord had sanctified. How far does her conduct surpass that of those who enjoy superior advantages! How shamefully is the Sabbath desecrated. If, in reference to an individual, drunkenness be an inlet to every other crime, in reference to a community, Sabbath-breaking is an inlet to every other evil. 3. Witness the advantages that resulted to Lydia from the course of conduct which she pursued. She went to the house of prayer, and there received the end of her faith, even the salvation of her soul. It is a great principle in the Divine administration, that God honours them that honour Him. III. THE CHANGE WHICH LYDIA EXPERIENCED. 1. The Jews used the term, "heart," to describe the understanding, the will, and the affections. Now Lydia listened to the doctrinal statements of St. Paul, and she so listened as to understand them; when understood they commended themselves so that she embraced them with her will, and cherished them in her affections. Thus her heart was opened—she believed and received the Saviour with all His fulness of evangelical blessing. 2. Now it is not to St. Paul's preaching, but to the influence of the Spirit, that this great change is attributed. Paul might have preached till the present hour, and Lydia would have remained what she was unless the Spirit had accompanied the ministrations of the apostle, and rendered the word effectual. 3. It is more difficult to accomplish the redemption of a fallen human spirit than it was to create this vast universe. For when God proceeded to employ His high attributes in the work of creation there was nothing to impede the operations of His hand. But when God proceeds to accomplish the great work of spiritual regeneration in the heart of man, his pride, his passions, his prejudices, hid deep-rooted depravity, oppose that influence. How necessary, then, that we should pray for the Holy Spirit, without whom all human means are in vain! IV. THE EVIDENCE FURNISHED BY LYDIA OF THE REALITY AND EXTENT OF THIS GRACIOUS CHANGE. 1. "She was baptized." Man is a sentient being, and, therefore, it is necessary that he should receive instruction through the medium of his senses. Under every dispensation God has accommodated Himself to this. Although the ceremonies of the law have been abrogated, still God condescends to our weakness in the two sacraments. Now, baptism is an initiatory and dedicatory ordinance. By means of this we are introduced into the Christian Church and devoted to the service of God. It is also emblematical of regeneration; and as we can enter into the visible Church only by the sacrament of baptism, so we can enter into the real Church only by regeneration. Now, Lydia, having embraced the Christian faith, manifested not merely confidence in Christ as her Saviour—not merely respect for Him as her Prophet, but subjection to His authority as her King, by submitting to the rite of baptism. 2. "She was baptized and her household"—that is, we apprehend, all the members of her household who were under fourteen years of age; for this appears to have been the Jewish practice in reference to the admission of proselytes into the Jewish Church. 3. She also received the messengers of mercy in her dwelling. This was a proof of her gratitude. But it was also a proof of her sincerity. At that time a profession of Christianity exposed those who made it to various privations and sufferings. (*R. Alder, D.D.*) *Lydia*:—I. HER EMPLOYMENT. She was not "idle, wandering about from house to house; and not

only idle, but tattlers also, and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not." Trade is respectable, and nothing is so disgraceful as beggary and shabby gentility. The Jews always give their children a calling; and said that "he who brings up a son without a trade teaches him to steal." Seneca declared, "I had rather be sick than be idle." And truly has Dr. Watts said, "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do." II. THE PLACE OF HER EXTRACTION. Thyatira was a great way from Philippi. How few die where they were born; or even settle where they were brought up. The events leading to their removal often seem very casual; and they are so as to the individuals themselves; but they are Divinely known and arranged. The Lord fixes "the bounds of their habitation," and with regard to His own people, the disposals of His Providence are in subserviency to the designs of His grace. The man says, "I will go into such a city, and buy, and sell, and get gain"; and he goes; and he finds there, though he never looked after it, "the pearl of great price." Many, when they look back on life, will know that, had it not been for such or such an occurrence, they would have remained in places where they might have been corrupted and destroyed. III. HER CHARACTER. She "worshipped God." She is, therefore, very distinguishable from the jailer. The grace of God is infinitely free: and accordingly, we sometimes find it operating on individuals the most unlikely; and even publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of God before Scribes and Pharisees. So when the apostle, writing to the Corinthians, enumerates a dreadful catalogue of sinners, he adds, "and such were some of you"; some, but not all." Some talk as if they had a kind of advantage in having been converted from a state of profligacy. But sin is a bad business, and it is a mercy to have been preserved from it: and one peculiar advantage arises from having been moral before we became spiritual, namely, the avoiding of the injuries which sin does to others, by influence and example. IV. HER ATTENDANCE. She "heard us." What induced her to be there we know not; but she could say, "I being in the way, the Lord led me." It is well to be at the pool, "waiting for the troubling of the water." Whatever brings persons under the preaching of the Word is to be viewed with thankfulness, for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Sin entered by the ear, and so does grace. Listening to the devil we fell, hearkening unto God we rise. "Hear, and your soul shall live." V. THE CHANGE SHE EXPERIENCED. "Whose heart the Lord opened." 1. Her heart therefore had been shut. Shut, as ice shuts up the water that it cannot flow—as the miser shuts up his compassion from the poor—as a door is shut to keep the house from the entrance of the owner. This is our Saviour's own image: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock," &c. 2. The Lord opened her heart. Our state is such as to require the Almighty to "work in us, both to will and to do." Every saved sinner is "His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." An operation is required, to effect which is above the power of education, example, and moral suasion. But nothing is too hard for the Lord. The heart is under His dominion and agency; and "what He has promised, He is able also to perform." VI. THE EVIDENCES SHE GAVE OF THE REALITY OF HER CONVERSION. 1. Her regard to the Divine teachings. "She attended," &c. 2. Her readiness to dedicate herself entirely to the Lord in a profession of His name. "She was baptized, and her household." A profession of religion, without the reality, is nothing; but we are not only to be Christians, but to appear such. "With the heart," indeed, "man believeth unto righteousness"; but "with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Experience is necessary; but our "light is to shine before men," &c. And you will observe, she did this immediately, without reserve, and relatively as well as personally; devoting her whole family in the same rite; and thus saying, with Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." 3. The pressing solicitation she gave to the apostles. Evincing—(1) A desire for spiritual improvement, and to have her house further blessed. (2) Liberality. She was willing to "minister to the necessities of the saints"; and "given to hospitality." (3) Affection for God's servants. Like begets like, and attracts like. "By this we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." (4) Pious fortitude. To perceive this you must remember that at this time Christians were a "sect everywhere spoken against." (*W. Jay.*) *Lydia*:—I. HER STATE AND CHARACTER BEFORE CONVERSION. 1. A proselyte who maintained in the idolatrous city of her adoption a devout attachment to the worship of God. There can be no doubt of the reality of her devotion, for not only did she observe the Sabbath, but, having no other opportunity for attending the ordinances of public worship, she "went out of the city," &c. While engaged in prayer the blessing came—a striking proof of its efficacy.

God does indeed sometimes surprise a prayerless sinner, as in the case of the jailer, but there is no promise except to prayer, and that promise is unlimited and sure. "Ask and ye shall receive," &c. 2. While pious according to her light, her heart was nevertheless closed against the truth as it is in Jesus. (1) Such is the natural state of every man. (*a*) The understanding is shut against the light of the gospel. (*b*) The conscience is seared as with a hot iron. (*c*) The heart is hardened. (2) There are many obstacles to the entrance of truth. There is the bar of—(*a*) Ignorance. Many hear the Word but understand it not. (*b*) Unbelief, which rejects the testimony of God. (*c*) Enmity, for "the carnal mind is enmity against God." (*d*) Presumption or pride. "The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God." (*e*) Discouragement and despair. "Thou saidst, There is no hope; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go." (*f*) Unwillingness. "Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life." (*g*) Worldly-mindedness. "The cares of the world . . . choke the Word." (*h*) Sloth. (*i*) Vicious passions and depraved habits. 3. But how could the heart of such a woman be closed? The answer is that Lydia's case is not a solitary one. Devout and honourable women opposed Paul, and Paul himself and Nicodemus were at first proof against the gospel. II. THE MEANS BY WHICH HER CONVERSION WAS EFFECTED. 1. There was a direct Divine operation in her heart, which consisted in opening — (1) The understanding to discern the light of God's truth. (2) The conscience, to feel its convincing power. (3) The affections to receive its sanctifying influence. 2. Means were employed. "The Lord opened her heart to attend," &c. It is by the truth that the great change is wrought; and hence we are "born of the Spirit," but also "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, even by the Word of God." III. LESSONS. Note—1. The care with which God provided for the instruction of sincere Jewish inquirers. 2. The efficacy of prayer as a means of spiritual advancement. 3. The necessity of a spiritual change in many sincere religious professors. 4. The relative functions of the Word and Spirit, and the duty of combining the use of means with dependence on the Divine blessing. 5. The different feelings of those whose heart the Lord opens towards His ministers, and those of the ungodly multitude. (*J. Buchanan, D.D.*) *Lydia's conversion*:—1. Philippi is famous as the spot where the world's future trembled in the balance when Octavius met Brutus and Cassius in terrible conflict. The two republican generals here ended their stormy career, and universal empire crouched at the feet of Cæsar. As long as time endures, Philippi will be remembered as one of the greatest names in history. But when time shall have passed away Philippi will still have a name as the place where the first herald of the Cross cried, "Europe for Jesus," and won his first victory in our quarter of the world. More fraught with blessings to the human race was that conquest of a woman's heart, than all the laurels which Octavius had reaped upon the bloody field. 2. The introduction of Christianity into Europe is a very humble affair. It was an open-air service by the river-side. Happy augury of the results of open-air preaching in after times! Let us look at Lydia's conversion—I. IN ITSELF. 1. It was brought about by providential circumstances. (1) She was a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, famous for its dyeing trade, which had flourished there ever since the days of Homer, and situated in that part of the country into which Paul was forbidden to preach; therefore, had Lydia been at home, she could not have heard the truth. But providence brings her to Philippi at the right time. Here is the first link of the chain. (2) But how is Paul to be brought there? He must be shut out of Bithynia, and he must be silenced in his journey through Mysia, &c. In this case God rules and overrules all things to bring that woman and that apostle to the same spot, and everything in God's providence is working together for the salvation of the elect. 2. There was not only providence, but there was also grace preparing the soul. The woman knew many truths which were excellent stepping-stones to a knowledge of Jesus. She was a proselyte of the gate, and therefore well acquainted with the oracles of God. As in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch, the Scriptures she had read had prepared her mind: the ground had been ploughed ready for the good seed; it was not a hard rock as in the jailer's case. 3. Her conversion took place in the use of the means. On the Sabbath she went to the gathering of her people. Although God calls men when they are not hearing the Word, yet usually we must expect that being in the way, God will meet with them. It is somewhat extraordinary that the first convert in Europe was converted at a very small prayer-meeting. Wherever we are, let us not forget the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is. Do not say "only a prayer-meet-

ing!" God loves to put honour upon prayer. 4. It was assuredly a work of grace. (1) She did not open her own heart. Her prayers did not do it; Paul did not do it. God alone can put the key into the door and open it, and get admittance for Himself. He is the heart's master as He is the heart's maker, and conversion in every case is the Lord's work alone. (2) Yet—for one truth must always march arm in arm with another—although the Lord opened the heart, Paul's words were the instrument of her conversion. The heart may be opened, and willing to receive, but then if truth enter not, what would be the use of an open door? 5. It was distinctly perceptible by the signs which followed. As soon as she had believed in Jesus she put on, together with her household, the profession of her faith in Christ Jesus. II. BY WAY OF CONTRAST. 1. In the case of the jailer, we see nothing like a previous preparation for the reception of the Word; he was coarse, rough, brutal. The earthquake comes, &c. In Lydia's case there was much which went to prepare the way for the grace of God. 2. She was in the way where the grace of God was likely to meet with her. But the jailer is not in a place where the gospel is at all likely to come. His occupation was not that which would foster any religious ideas. But in a moment, at God's voice, the current of his thoughts changes its direction, and flows where it had never gone before. 3. In Lydia's case there was no earthquake; it was a "still, small voice." The jailer sprang in, and came trembling; but we find nothing about Lydia's being overwhelmed with the terrors of conscience; she was gently led by the finger of the eternal Father. Grace came to her as the shower which first begins as a mist, and then thickens into a heavy dew, and then becomes a gentle sprinkling, and afterwards empties the clouds upon the soil. To the jailer it was like an April storm beginning with big drops, and dashing into a torrent in a few moments: to the jailer it was as though the sun should rise in an instant, and turn the thickest night into full blaze of noon. Do not expect all to be converted in the same way. Our God is the God of variety. III. THE COMPARISON BETWEEN THE TWO. In both cases—1. Providence co-worked with grace. Providence brings Lydia to Philippi, and shakes the prison. 2. There was a distinct work of God. 3. The Word of God is essential for the jailer as to Lydia, "They spake the Word of the Lord," &c. 4. The same signs followed. The same love to the brethren, consecration of the substance, obedience to the Divine command, "Arise, and be baptized." IV. AS A MODEL OF MULTITUDES OF CONVERSIONS. We have a summary of the work of the Holy Spirit here. 1. The Lord removed prejudice. 2. Her desires were awakened. 3. Her understanding was enlightened. 4. Her affections were excited. 5. And then came faith; she believed the whole of the record. 6. Faith being given, all the graces followed. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Lydia's conversion*:—I. CONVERSION IS HEART WORK. 1. The subject. "The heart" is the seat of spiritual feeling, conviction, and desire (chap. ii. 27). It is the real test of character, of what a man is in God's estimation (Prov. xxiii. 7). It is that part of us in which are bred all the moral and immoral qualities which make us good or bad in the sight of God (Prov. iv. 33). It has the power to exercise faith (Rom. xvi. 10). 2. The Agent—"The Lord." It was the fulfilment of the promise (Ezek. xxxvi. 25–27). God is the chief, and to a great extent the sole, active Agent in this work. Along with this there is a converse truth (Psa. xxvii. 8). The work of conversion is completed by God working, and man working; but neither working apart from the other effectually. 3. The instrumental means: whilst Paul spake the Word, the Lord opened Lydia's heart. II. THE IMMEDIATE AND PERMANENT RESULTS OF CONVERSION. 1. There was a beautiful humility which manifested itself in a desire to submit her conversion to the test of the judgment of others. "If ye have judged me to be faithful." Over-confidence in a young convert is neither pleasing nor hopeful (1 Cor. x. 12). 2. She exhibited her gratitude to God in kindness to His servants. "Come into my house and abide there." 3. She made a public profession of her faith. "She was baptized and her household." The family of a believer should be a Christian household. Personal decision is a great matter, but the head must be alone. (*A. B. Gardiner.*) *The first European convert*:—Honest, industrious people, when converted, become noble and useful Christians. This first European convert was of such a character as to be especially susceptible to gospel influences. I. HER CHARACTER. She was industrious, reliable, conscientious, generous, devout. Observe—(1) Her name—"Lydia." As no mention is made of her husband, probably she was a widow. Learn how right relationship to Jesus Christ gives immortality to the humblest name. 2. Her native place—"Thyatira," in Asia Minor, situated about midway between Pergamos and Sardia; it is still a town of some

size, though now in the hands of the Turks. She was not a Jew but a Gentile proselyte, having given up the worship of idols for that of the true God. Learn what great blessings may grow out of a little prayer-meeting, and the wisdom of laying down the yard-stick and closing the store in order to be present. II. HER CONVERSION. It was brought about—1. By human instrumentality, "us"—Paul and Silas. Probably, an informal meeting, and that both preachers not only prayed but conversed publicly and personally with those present. 2. Contact with the truth—"Heard us." It is the truth that saves—"Truth shall make you free." Revelation brings life. The preacher can communicate power only through His message. Discourses and essays on ethics, science, and politics may interest and instruct, but it is only the Divine message that can save from the guilt, dominion, and consequences of sin. "Heard us." It used to be almost literally true that faith cometh only "by hearing." Books and the ability to read them were very scarce in ancient times, so that much of men's knowledge of this world, and especially of the world to come, was gathered through the ear. "Heard us." Even now faith cometh chiefly by hearing. But in the case of Lydia the message came through the ear. "Heard us." 3. By prompt action—"She attended unto the things which were spoken." She was an admirable hearer. She laid hold of the truth, and thus the truth laid hold of her. Then she at once began to practise the truth she had just heard. She did not modify it by theorising or waste its force by delay. "She attended to the things spoken." 4. Through Divine interposition. "Whose heart the Lord opened." Why did He not open her head? God wanted this woman to feel as well as understand. There are some truths which first enter the intellect and then sink into the heart, but the profound, life-giving truths of Christianity enter the heart first and then rise to the intellect. They first give life and then light. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." Not the light was the life, but the life was the light of men. A man must be born before he can see; he must be alive before he can know. First life, then light. The opening of the heart was—(1) Gradual. Gradual in that she so honestly followed the light she had. God had so opened her heart before this that all the idols of heathenism left in it a great "aching void." "In common with the best spirits of her age she felt paganism to be a failure and a sham, and longed for something more solid and satisfying." She therefore embraced Judaism, and so we find her at prayer-meeting, still going on to know the Lord. (2) Complete, in that God personally helped her to apprehend and personally appropriate the broader, grander, life-giving truths of the gospel. (*Thomas Kelly.*) *The conversion of Lydia*:—I. Lydia was LISTENING. Great stress is laid in the Bible on hearing. "Faith cometh by hearing." Books and readers were rare. Faith then came to the majority by hearing only. Now faith comes by reading as well as by hearing. II. Lydia listened ATTENTIVELY. Some people never apply what they hear, they leave that to the preacher. Others apply to other people, never to themselves. If you lay hold of the truth, the truth will lay hold of you. Wherefore the Holy Scriptures lay much emphasis on close attention. "Incline your ear," "hear and your soul shall live." When you feel deeply interested in a subject, you stretch the neck and incline the ear that you may catch every syllable. Without this eager attention you will not be able to clearly discern the Divine Voice. When Elijah was hiding in the cave there came a "great and strong wind," &c.; "but the Lord was not in the wind," &c. And after the fire "a voice," so still and small that Elijah was obliged to come out of the cave and listen with all his might. And what is the gospel? A storm? An earthquake? Fire? No. The "still small voice" of Divine Love. Love never speaks loud. III. She listened attentively WITH HER HEART. The mind is generally divided into intellect and heart. There are truths which appeal only to the intellect, the truths of mathematics, *e.g.* But religious truths must be interpreted through the heart rather than through the head. We read of the "thoughts of the heart." In creation we see the thoughts of God's intellect; in the gospel the thoughts of His heart. And to properly understand the great heart of God we must bring to the work the little heart of man. There is a class of truths which first enter the intellect and then sink into the heart; but the truths of Christianity first enter the heart and gradually rise into the intellect. IV. Lydia was listening attentively with her heart OPENED. Two things are necessary to salvation. 1. An open Bible. Paul "expounded the Kingdom of God." The prophecies were tightly closed against the spiritual perception of the disciples; but Christ "opened unto them the Scriptures," and they were astonished at the wealth of their meaning. And that is the proper function

of the ministry. 2. An open heart to receive the open Bible. St. Paul was sowing good seed; but to secure a plentiful harvest it was necessary to open hearts to receive the seed. The words of the Old Testament which are oftenest quoted in the New are, "By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross," &c. They are quoted six times in the first six books of the New Testament. Why? To teach us the extreme danger of shutting our hearts against the "things spoken of Paul" and other inspired writers. Physicians often speak of "The fatty degeneration of the heart," an unhealthy accumulation of fat interfering with its vital functions, and often terminating in sudden death. And the Jews suffered from a like spiritual malady. They had lost all sensitiveness to spiritual things; and in this lamentable grossness of the heart is to be found the ultimate cause of their rejection of the Saviour. And so now "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." "O fools, and slow of heart to believe." It is the fashion nowaday to offer graceful apologies for the infidel; but the Bible always calls him a fool. His infidelity has its origin in a closed heart. V. Lydia was listening attentively with her heart opened WIDE, that, it appears, is the literal translation, and it implies—1. That there was a profound need. The young bird in the nest in early spring, when hunger sets in, opens its little beak wide. And when the soul becomes vividly conscious of its great need, it opens its beak as best it can—every faculty opens its mouth wide and eagerly cries to heaven for food. "A man of Macedonia stood before Paul and prayed him, saying, Come over and help us." There is in the cry a painful consciousness of deep want. Paul came; and lo! the first soul he met was wide open crying to heaven for satisfaction. 2. That the Lord had made ample provision to supply the need. He would have never opened Lydia's heart wide unless He had something to put into it. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." I took my little children to the British Channel. They were very diligent filling their little buckets; but after filling them over and over again, the ocean still remained, ready to fill a million buckets more. And you are welcome to bring the cups of your nature and fill them to overflowing with the "Water of Life;" but after filling you over and over again, the boundless ocean of the Infinite Godhead will still remain, ready to fill millions more. VI. Lydia listened attentively with her heart opened wide BY THE LORD. This opening was—1. Gradual. It was not a consequence of the preaching, but something prior to and simultaneous with it. Lydia was in all probability brought up in heathenism. But in common with many of the best of the age, she yearned for something more satisfying. Whilst yet in paganism, the Lord opened her heart too wide for the idols of the Gentiles to fill. She therefore embraced Judaism. The Judaism of that age, it is true, was very formal and corrupt; but Judaism at its worst was immeasurably superior to paganism at its best. And in Judaism Lydia found a kind of rest for her weary soul. But the Lord continued to work within her. She, it seems, was a widow. Mention is made of her family, and of her business, but none of her husband. Deeply feeling her loss, she often groans under the anxiety of business, and is glad when the Sabbath comes round that she may attend the Prayer Meeting by the river-side. Nevertheless she is acutely conscious of a great void, and when Paul turned and began to speak of Jesus, His tender sympathy and never failing succour, she perceived at once that He was what she needed—a Husband of the soul. The heart, before opened, was now occupied—the great void was now filled. 2. Gentle. Further on, we read of the conversion of the jailer. His conversion was the work of a brief hour; but it was a very terrible hour. But a gentler method was adopted to convert Lydia. This morning about six o'clock a great battle was fought in this neighbourhood, more important by far than either Waterloo or Sedan—a battle between the forces of Light and the powers of Darkness. But did the clash of weapons awake any of you? No; not one. The victory was won gently and silently. That is precisely the way in which Lydia was converted, it was a victory not of lightnings but of light. The prophet compares the Word of God to a hammer breaking in pieces the rock. Such was the case with the jailer. But the same prophet compares the Divine Word to fire melting the wax. This is how Lydia was converted, by warmth, not by force. It was only right that the swarthy jailer should be hammered a little—he had hammered many in his day; but it would be a great pity to terrify the little widow. And those two methods still continue. 3. Thorough, as is evidenced by her subsequent conduct. (1) "She was baptized." Christianity was the third religion she had professed; her neighbours might bring a charge of inconsistency. But man's supreme duty is

not to be consistent with himself, but consistent with his God—not to be consistent with his past, but consistent with the light which he at the time enjoys. Lydia repeatedly changed her religion; but each change was in the direction of light. (2) "She was baptized and her household." This, I believe, is the first instance in which it is recorded that the baptism of the parent was followed by the baptism of the family. Why? Because family religion is a characteristic of European as compared with Asiatic Christianity. And there is something remarkable that Christianity, on its introduction to Europe, was first offered to, and believed in by a woman, a prophecy of the subsequent career of the gospel upon our continent. "A man" first sought it, but a woman first received it. How to help the men of Macedonia? By improving and refining the women of Macedonia. (*J. Cynddylan Jones, D.D.*) *The conversion of Lydia:*—Though the Lord's people are thinly scattered, and sometimes throughout large cities, yet they have a way of finding one another out. True religion is a magnet to draw their hearts together. Considering the text as descriptive of true conversion, it is—I. A DIVINE WORK. It is said of the skill of the husbandman in opening the clods, &c., that "his God doth instruct him." How much more in breaking up the fallow ground of the sinner's heart, and sowing the seed of the kingdom! The heart is naturally shut: sin is shut in and Christ shut out. Prejudice, perverseness, and enmity are the bars and bolts that keep it shut. Ministers may knock at the door, but it is God alone that can open it. II. GOD'S FIRST WORK. Impressions and convictions are common, but the opening of the heart is the effect of special grace and the commencement of true religion. Previous to this the soul is dead in trespasses and sins; and now it is that the Lord passes by and says, Live! Christ in the gospel lays the foundation of a sinner's hope; but it must be Christ in you that gives existence to the hope of glory. III. AN INSTANTANEOUS WORK. In our apprehension it may be gradual, like Christ's opening the eyes of the blind man, who first saw men as trees walking, and afterwards, upon a fresh touch from His hand, all things clearly; but in itself the change is quick. IV. A WORK EFFECTED IN A WAY PERFECTLY CONSISTENT WITH HUMAN LIBERTY. God opens the heart by engaging and inclining it to that which is good. The power is His, but the act is our own. Men are not driven but drawn. Divine influence is not compulsive, but attractive. God does not open the heart as man would open a passage into a strongly-fortified place, by planting a battery against it; but by "putting in His hand by the hole of the door," and then "our bowels are moved for Him" (Cant. i. 4, v. 5; Hos. ii. 14; Rom. iii. 20). V. AN INTERNAL WORK. It is true, the ears are opened to instruction, the mouth in prayer and praise, the hands in acts of justice and benevolence, and the eyes to see the odious nature of sin and the transcendent glory of the Saviour; but the opening of the heart is previous to all this, and is the cause of all these openings. God's first and principal work is to win the heart: the sinner's first and principal work is to give the heart to Him. VI. THOUGH THE WORK ITSELF IS INVISIBLE, YET ITS EFFECTS ARE NOT SO. Grace cannot be seen but by its fruits. Where the heart is changed the conduct will be changed. New duties will result from new principles. Three blessed effects of God's opening the heart of Lydia are here mentioned. 1. "She attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." 2. She manifested her regard to the commands of our Saviour by being immediately baptized. 3. No sooner had she received Christ into her heart than she received His friends into her house; one door being opened, the other did not remain shut. VII. AN ABIDING WORK. When the heart is once opened Christ takes possession of it, and says in effect, This is My rest: here will I dwell for ever, for I have desired it (Heb. xiii. 5). VIII. A NECESSARY WORK. As we cannot be saved without the death of Christ, so neither without the work of the Spirit. More particularly—1. Satan; that unclean spirit had usurped the dominion of our hearts, and it is necessary to deprive him of his power. 2. Our souls must be cleansed, and this is done by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. 3. The heart must be opened in order to its being beautified and adorned with every grace. 4. By all these means the Lord makes us a fit habitation for Himself. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) *The hindrances to a cordial reception of gospel truth:*—We are to inquire—I. WHAT WERE THE THINGS WHICH WERE SPOKEN OF PAUL? It will not be uninteresting, and I hope not uninstructive, to take a review of the doctrine of the gospel, which may be comprised under these three heads: the ruin of all mankind; redemption and salvation by Christ Jesus; and regeneration by the Holy Ghost. II. WHAT ARE THE HINDRANCES TO A CORDIAL RECEPTION OF THE TRUTHS OF THE GOSPEL? 1. Pride in the human heart is a great obstacle. This evil

disposition works not only in the vilest of mankind, but in those who are in their outward conduct blameless, in the moral and decent. 2. Prejudice is another powerful obstacle. Would you not have thought that the Jews of old would have believed in the Saviour, and have been instructed by Him in the way to heaven, seeing He performed so many miracles as proofs of His mission before their eyes? But they did not receive His words. And why did they not? They expected a triumphant Messiah. 3. The love of sin is another very great obstacle in the way of cordially receiving the truths of the gospel. 4. Lastly, the love of the world is another great obstacle. We do not say that Lydia was a lover of sin and of the world; because it is said "she worshipped God"; but there can be no doubt that her heart was full of Jewish prejudices against the religion of Christ; and in that state she would have continued had not her heart been opened so that she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul. III. This brings me to inquire, in the third place, BY WHOM AND BY WHAT MEANS THESE HINDRANCES ARE REMOVED, AND THE CONSEQUENCE OF THEIR REMOVAL? Can man of himself remove them? No; for the Scriptures, from one end to another, declare that he has no power to do so. "Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul." The means which the Lord uses are many. He opens the heart; that is, He instils into it a longing desire to be instructed in those Divine and saving truths of the gospel. There is one truth which our text sets before us that I would wish to impress upon your minds: it is this—that we ought not to forsake the assembling of ourselves in the house of God, from an idea that we can get as much good at home. If Lydia had not gone to the house of prayer on the day she was converted, she would not then, and perhaps never at all, have heard; and therefore would have lost the inestimable blessing which the Lord bestowed upon her in the use of the means of grace. (*W. J. Kirkness, M.A.*) *The power of the Holy Spirit exemplified in the conversion of Lydia*:—I. From these words we may infer this truth—THAT THE HEART OF MAN IS NATURALLY CLOSED AGAINST THE GOSPEL. Not only is the understanding darkened, not only is the will opposed to the truth, but the heart is shut against it. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God," &c. The gospel is addressed to our ears year after year; truths, in the reception of which our happiness both for time and eternity is involved, are brought before us again and again; we may, perhaps, go so far as to assent to them; they inform our understanding, but they go no farther; the heart is not affected by them; and all the power or reasoning of men is utterly unable to cause them to produce the desired effect. If this were not the case, how different would be the effect produced even by a single sermon! One consideration only of the love of Christ in dying for us would have such a constraining influence on our lives, that we should henceforth most readily yield ourselves to His service. But, though the heart of man is naturally closed against the gospel, and though no human power can open it, yet we may observe—II. THAT A DIVINE POWER IS ABLE TO OPEN IT. It was that which was exerted in opening the heart of Lydia, or St. Paul had preached in vain. The work of conversion depends not on human eloquence, but it is altogether the effect of a Divine operation on the soul. The means too, which the Holy Spirit uses in influencing the heart, are as various as the ways in which He opens it: God is never at a loss for instruments to carry forward His designs either of providence or grace. He can make the most unlikely instruments effectual for the accomplishment of His plans, and out of evil itself can bring forth good. But, though He is not limited to the use of means, yet there are certain ordinances which He has appointed as the special channels for conveying His grace to the soul. Prayer, either public or private, is one of these ordinances. But, though this power be God's alone, it is exerted in a way perfectly consistent with human liberty; men are not driven, but drawn; not forced against their will, but made willing. Divine influence is not compulsive, but attractive. III. THE EFFECTS PRODUCED ON LYDIA WHEN THE LORD HAD OPENED HER HEART. "She attended to the things which were spoken of Paul." She not only gave attendance on his preaching, but gave attention to it. To those whose hearts have been opened by Divine grace to attend to the things which belong to their everlasting peace, I would address the word of exhortation. Consider, how great a debt of gratitude you owe to distinguishing grace! (*E. C. Wells, M.A.*) **Heard us.**—*Hearing and keeping the Word of God*:—I. HOW WE OUGHT TO HEAR IT. 1. Collectedly, away from the distractions of the world; Lydia went out of the city. 2. With a heart consecrated by prayer: Lydia went to prayer. 3. With an eager expectation of what the Lord will give: the Lord opened her heart. II. HOW WE

OUGHT TO KEEP IT. 1. Not resting satisfied with a mere temporary impression, but walking with the Lord in true fellowship of life: Lydia was baptized. 2. Endeavouring to convey to others our newly acquired faith: with Lydia, her house is baptized. 3. Labouring to pay our debt of gratitude to the Lord by self-sacrificing love to our neighbour: Lydia constrained her benefactors to come to her house. (*Lisco.*) **Whose heart the Lord opened.**—*Divine influence opening human hearts*:—I stood one evening last summer watching the pure white flowers on a vine encircling the verandah. I had been told that the buds that hung with closed petals all day, every evening near sunset unfolded and sent out a peculiar fragrance. The miracle was more than I had anticipated. A feeling of silent awe possessed me as I saw bud after bud, as if under the touch of invisible hand, slowly fold back its leaves until the vine was filled with perfect blossoms, most beautiful and sweet. And I said, "If the finger of God laid upon these, His flowers, can do this in a way beyond the power of human study to explain, cannot the same Divine touch, in ways we know not of, do as much for human hearts? It was in the quiet of the evening, when the garish light of the summer sun had softened to twilight, when the bird songs had ceased, and shadows were creeping over the fields, that this miracle of the flowers was wrought. Who can tell why they did not open earlier in the day? The shower of the morning and the sunshine of the afternoon had nourished the vine and made everything ready for the consummation, but it did not appear until evening, and who can describe the beauty and fragrance then of the revelation? Shall the flowers teach us a lesson of patient waiting and holy trust for the coming blessing? There are hearts for whom we long have prayed seemingly closed as yet to every influence of the blessed Spirit. But let us be patient. Perhaps we must wait until evening. It may be these hearts for whose unfolding we pray will open late; or they may open in the twilight of sorrow and disappointment, when the songs cease and shadows stretch over the path long before the day of life is done. True, the parallel is not perfect. The flowers never resisted the gentle influences of air and sun and rain; hearts may resist the Holy Ghost and remain, perhaps, closed against Him. And yet from these sweet blossoms we may surely learn a lesson of patient faith. The silent forces are at work; the God who cares for the flowers of the field is surely caring for these for whose perfected life in Him we pray. Let us wait and watch with Him, nor be surprised nor impatient if it requires years of discipline to bring a sinful soul, where by the Divine touch it can be transformed into a glorious, ransomed spirit. (*John Hall, D.D.*) *Lydia's heart opened*:—I. THE CENTRAL FACULTY ON WHICH THE GREAT CHANGE IS WROUGHT. 1. The heart is the generic term in which we include the entire phenomena of the animal and spiritual man. Metaphysically it concentrates all that belongs to the physical, emotional, and intellectual nature. In its Scriptural import the heart is the normal status that conditions man's relations to God. What it is that the man is. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." 2. The heart, therefore, is the power in man that most needs to be changed. (1) Tendencies, idiosyncrasies, and even moral aberrations may be arrested and mastered by culture. The heart never outgrows its inherent depravity. The painted savage and the erudite sage are scions of the same stock. "Born in sin," we must be born again. (2) Then, further, under a momentary or selfish motive man will surrender to God his most costly possessions, while he withholds his heart. "Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples." (3) To change the heart, then, is not merely to amend the life; for the life, as in the case of the rich young ruler, may be superficially correct while the heart is utterly false. For the same reason it cannot be any mere intellectual change, such as a new mode of thinking about God, or His claims; nor yet in the quickened sensibility of the conscience in its outward reverence for truth; all of which are perfectly congruous with the alienation of the heart from God. 3. The new birth is the coming into life of that which previously did not exist. Redemption through Christ is, potentially, the recreation of the lost Divine order in the soul—the re-entrance of God into man, and His enthronement over the will and in the affections as the one supreme Lord. 4. All men need this change, and must experience it just because they are men. There is no difference in the sin which vitiates and condemns, and man must plead no exemption on the ground of birth or training, lest he shut himself out of the kingdom of God. II. THE METHOD OF THIS CHANGE. Note—1. Its supernatural source. Regeneration is a work wrought by Divine power on the individual soul. It may be simulated, but it cannot be fabricated by any art of man. (1) There are two theories against which this doctrine is a dignified protest, viz.—(*a*)

That man is an embryo saint to begin with. A germ of all goodness is folded up within us waiting only favouring circumstances to bloom into a godly life. (*b*) That religious life depends on education. There is in us all a capacity of becoming good, and the business of education is to cultivate that: the fruit-bearing tree may never produce fruit, but that is an accident; so a man may be virtually good, but never actually from defective training. (2) But these theories deal with ideal human nature and not with human nature as it is. (*a*) So far from having the germ of a holy nature, the Scriptures declare that we are born in sin, a declaration corroborated by consciousness. Any growth, therefore, is a growth in evil. Under the most benign parental influences this noxious weed has sprung up as if native to the soil. (*b*) Education is a grand power, but it cannot correlate with the forces of Onmipotence. All mere unfolding of latent faculties deals with the animal and the intellectual only; it creates neither faculty nor disposition. 2. Its various methods. The Lord "opened" the heart of Lydia. The work was done silently as the young spring bud is opened by the morning sun. In the case of the jailer the same work is done in tumult. To have dealt with his petrified sensibilities as with the sweet serenities of Lydia's womanly nature would have been to try at chiselling the marble with sunbeams. To the masculine mind the gospel will appeal successfully chiefly as it appeals to the intellect, and so works out its results through the logic. To the feminine and finer mind it will appeal successfully chiefly as it appeals to the sympathies, the moral susceptibilities, the delicate æsthetics of human nature. 3. Its immediate fruits. Lydia—(1) "Attended," &c. If listless, or only curious before, she is awake now. (2) Took upon herself and her home the profession of the Christian faith. A waste of power meets us here. Not a few estimable people decline to embody their belief in Christian fellowship. If Lydia had gone back to Thyatira resolved to keep the matter secret, trusting to the loyalty of conscience, and the integrity of her feelings, the chances are that she would have failed. We cannot stand alone in the perilous struggle of a religious career; and if we could, we cannot honour Christ if we decline to take up the Cross. And least of all can we help to sustain the burden God has laid on our fellow-men as trustees for the world's salvation, if we withhold from them the sympathy and patronage of our professional support. The Church faints, not because bankrupt in her resources, but because men refuse to consecrate to her service that which is already her own. (*J. Burton.*) *The ideal reformation*:—I. This is a reformation effected in the CENTRE OF EXISTENCE. This was not a reformation on parchment, but a reformation of the springs of activity. If the heart is changed all the emotions, purposes, and activities of life will be changed. II. This is a reformation that ORIGINATED IN DIVINE AGENCY. "The Lord opened." III. This is a reformation that brought the SOUL INTO THE HIGHEST DISCIPLESHIP. "She attended unto the things that were spoken of Paul." She became a pupil in the school of Christ. (*Homilist.*) *Gradual conversion*:—Suppose it now midnight, and the sun with the antipodes: he doth not presently mount up to the height of our heaven, and make it noon-day; but first it is twilight, then the day dawns, and the sun rises, and yet looks with weaker eyes before he shines out in his full glory. We do not sweat with summer to-day, and be shaken with the fury of the winter to-morrow; but it comes on with soft paces. Now, it is most true that Christ is able, in a moment, of sinners on earth to make men saints in heaven, as He wrought upon the dying malefactor. Some may make sudden leaps, and of furious sinners become zealous professors in a trice. Of such we may be charitably jealous; holiness shoots not up, like Jonah's gourd, in a night. God is the God of order, not of confusion; and nature is not suffered to run out of one extreme into another but by a medium. That ordinary way whereby men walk from the state of sin to the state of glory is the state of grace. So our conversion is by soft and scarcely sensible beginnings, albeit no part after part, degree by degree in every part, by gentle soakings in of goodness in every degree, by growing up to maturity and ripeness. (*T. Adams.*) *The imperceptible operations of grace*:—The grandest operations both in nature and in grace are the most silent and imperceptible. The shallow brook babbles in its passage and is heard by every one, but the coming on of the seasons is silent and unseen. The storm rages and alarms, but its fury is soon exhausted and its effects are partial and soon remedied; but the dew, though gentle and unheard, is immense in quantity and the very life of large portions of the earth. And these are pictures of the operations of grace in the Church and in the soul. (*R. Cecil.*) *Lydia's heart opened*:—It was opened like the gates of a canal-lock. It is by water coming in secretly below, and gradually swelling up within, that at length the folding doors allow themselves to be opened; as

long as the water presses from above and without, the pressure tends to shut the gates more firmly, rather than to open them. The lock keeps itself empty, and resists the offer of the water to come in. But when by secret channels the interior is nearly filled, then the resistance ceases, and the gates are thrown wide. Ah, many an empty heart resists the offer of mercy from God; the offer of that mercy rather shuts the gate more firmly! But when, secretly, some grace finds its way in and more follows, and the empty space gradually fills, then the enmity disappears, and the whole soul opens out to Christ. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *Lydia's heart opened:*—I. OPEN HEART. The Lord opened her heart in the ordinary way, no doubt, by the unseen work of the Holy Spirit. He had been opening it all along, while she had been serving Him by keeping close up to the light as fast as it was revealed to her. The Holy Ghost is always in advance of us when we are trying to find our way out into clear duty. II. Open heart invariably brings OPEN MIND. The entrance of the Divine Word gives light. So Lydia "attended unto" what the apostle told her. The Holy Spirit continued His work. Lydia appears to have surrendered her convictions instantly without cavil. III. Open mind brought OPEN MOUTH. Out of the abundance of her heart her mouth spoke. Lydia unhesitatingly made public acknowledgment of the faith she now accepted. She lost no time in foolish self-searching after what some call special evidences. She knew she believed in Jesus Christ, and she was ready to say so. IV. OPEN HAND BROUGHT OPEN HOUSE. The "Daughter of Tyre" was there "with her gift." Hospitality was the form of immediate usefulness Lydia chose. It was not within her reach perhaps to do magnificent things, but she did "what she could." Conclusion: 1. These, then, were the evidences of grace which the Holy Spirit gave instantly to this Thyatiran woman. There was nothing subtle or mysterious in them; anybody could have them; anybody could know them if he had them. 2. And, with these before us, it is easy to learn what growth in grace is—it is increase in openness of heart, mind, mouth, hand, and house—growth in the same simple life which is begun. And more grace is just glory; and more glory is heaven. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The heart opened:*—Though labouring from his childhood under extreme shortsightedness, Ampère, the celebrated French philosopher, was unconscious of this defect till awakened to a sense of it by the following circumstance. When travelling, at the age of eighteen, in one of the most beautiful parts of France, he chanced to take up the eyeglass of a fellow traveller, and he burst into tears of wonder and delight at the first discovery thus suddenly made to him of the beauty and magnificence of nature. Before, when he heard others speak with enthusiasm of the loveliness of some particular scenery, he could not understand what they meant, and thought they must be under some strange delusion. But now he felt as if he had suddenly been endowed with a new sense, and could say, like the blind man in the gospel narrative after he had been restored to sight, "One thing I know: that whereas I was blind, now I see." This incident affords a striking illustration of the brief but emphatic description given of the conversion of Lydia, "whose heart the Lord opened." *The great preliminary:*—I. LYDIA'S HEART WAS CLOSED, which means that there is a natural indisposition to the things of God. 1. An indisposition not incompatible with much that is lovely and of good report. Not implying, as a matter of course, habits of sin or a spirit of frivolity. These things may be or may not be. Inclinations vary: what is one man's pleasure would be another's pain. Under the moral man's respectability, under the amiable man's affection, under the outwardly religious man's worship, there may lurk a repugnance to God; a fixed determination not to come to close quarters with that sword of the Spirit which must pierce and wound before it can be safe to heal. Christ knocks at the door, but they will not rise for Him, nor let Him in. They do not open to Him because they are enlightened enough to know His terms, and honest enough with themselves to decide against them. 2. And without this definite reason for disliking Christ, there are other influences at work in keeping the door of the heart closed against Him. (1) In one there is a spirit of levity which makes all serious reflection irksome: he would fain enjoy himself while he can: "when I have a convenient season," in other words, when sorrow comes, or sickness, or the near prospect of death, then I will call for Thee. (2) And without any resolution of this kind, there is in the heart a strength of practical procrastination which is enough of itself to keep the heart closed against Christ: the very absence of resolution against Him assists the practical exclusion. A man is so nearly a Christian that he writes himself not far from the kingdom, able at any moment by a single step to cross into it. Thus he too has a closed

heart: a heart closed by the very idea of its openness. (3) Then there is the case of those who are "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." There are some who, with a real desire to be saved, can never grasp the simplicity of Christ's salvation. By a medley of things true and false, an inversion of important truths, a mixture of conditions with the gospel of free grace, they have been so perplexed that the work of faith has been impossible: they stand afar off, wishing and waiting, instead of taking the kingdom of God, as our Lord says, by force, and pressing into it with a resolute conviction. Oh for a voice to sound in the depths of that soul—The gospel is this: not that if you will do something God will do the rest; but that, even as you are, God loves you, and that the work of your salvation is already done for you in Christ. Take God at His word: believe Him when He says that He has laid all your sins upon Christ: try the experiment of coming to Him on that basis; and to you the promise shall be fulfilled in the very act of stretching out the hand, the strength will be given: in the reception of the glad tidings the stony heart will be taken away, and a heart of flesh shall replace it: out of the gospel, not before it, will spring repentance and reconciliation: and the heart closed against all else will yield to the inward summons of an atonement already made and a peace already purchased. II. LYDIA'S HEART WAS OPENED. This opening is ascribed to the Lord, acting through the instrumentality of Him whom He promised to send from the Father. The methods of this opening are various as God's agencies and God's attributes. In the case before us, the first hearing sufficed. And it has been so with others. More often, perhaps, the opening is gradual. These hearts are very obstinate. If God gave but one chance who could be saved? But He who will do anything for our salvation, except that one thing which would vitiate it altogether, namely, a compulsion of conversion; that God is patient with us, and tries many means: sometimes a sudden influx of blessing has brought with it a softening of the heart and a turning of the whole man to give thanks and to glorify his Benefactor: sometimes the discipline of life in its sterner aspect has wrought reflection, and sorrow for sin, and earnest calling upon God. These things are all various. But, amidst them all, one thing varies not. There is a Divine Spirit who works the great change wherever it is wrought; who alone touches the very spring of being, and quickens the dead soul into newness of life. (*Dean Vaughan.*) **That she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul.**—*The attention demanded by the gospel:*—It must be—I. CANDID. The preacher of the gospel should not be prejudged. Let him be fairly heard, and let his doctrine be impartially weighed in the balance of the sanctuary. The people of Berea are commended on this account. II. SERIOUS. The word presents to our minds the most serious subjects in the world. Death and judgment, heaven and hell, are serious things. III. DEVOUT. Too many persons in hearing look no farther than to men, and to the words of men; and if they are pleased, it is with the sentiments, the voice, or the manner of the preacher; but we should hear the Word of God as the Word of God, and if we do so it will be with reverence of soul. IV. DILIGENT. It is not a trifling matter which it represents to us; it is for our life, and therefore should be regarded with the utmost vigour and energy of our souls. V. BELIEVING. It is the testimony of Jehovah and demands the fullest credit. The Word cannot profit our souls unless it be "mixed with faith" (Heb. iv. 2). It is proposed "for the obedience of faith" (Rom. xvi. 26), and, when it is obeyed, it becomes the power of God to our salvation. VI. JOYFUL. The gospel is glad tidings; it proclaims pardon; and if this be really believed, it must excite joy. It did so in all the first converts to Christianity (chap. viii. 5–8, xvi. 34; 1 Thess. i. 6). VII. PRACTICAL. And where it is truly received it cannot fail of working by love. A true believer is a doer of the Word (James i. 22). (*G. Burder.*)

Ver. 15. **She was baptized, and her household.**—*Infant baptism:*—I. Although from the earliest days infant baptism has been practised, THERE ARE SOME WHO DENY ITS SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY. 1. At first sight their position seems to be a strong one, when they say, "Where is there any command for it?" In reply to this it is only necessary to say that Christians consider many things as most important for the support of which no such authority can be claimed. Where is it written, "Thus saith the Lord, Christians must observe the day of the Saviour's resurrection"? or, "Thus saith the Lord, Women must receive the Communion"? or, "Thus saith the Lord, Christian people must have family prayer, and establish Sunday Schools, and support missionary societies"? 2. It is also urged that no one ought to be baptized who does not believe, and that as infants are incapable

of believing, so also they are improper subjects of baptism (Mark xvi. 16). The unfairness of such a conclusion may be shown in various ways. (1) Take the apostle's injunction, "If any will not work, neither shall he eat" (2 Thess. iii. 10). Does St. Paul mean to extend this to infants, or the sick or the aged? Plainly not. He is only speaking of those who are capable of working. And so, too, our Saviour's language in regard to the subjects of baptism should be applied to none but those who can exercise faith, and who enjoy the privilege of being taught their duty. The case of infants is in no way connected with these passages. (2) Again, if this verse proves that infants ought not to be baptized, it proves also that they cannot be saved. I need hardly say that the plain and undoubted sense of the passage ropels so monstrous a conclusion. Our Lord was announcing that the door of entrance to His kingdom was now thrown open to all who chose to come in; and He sets forth belief and baptism as two distinct conditions of salvation. Adults, who are capable of belief, are expected to bring this qualification; but it is not looked for in infants, who cannot exercise faith. Baptism is a solemn form of adoption into God's family—the Church. So much for the popular objections against the practice of infant baptism. II. LET US SEE, NOW, WHAT CAN BE SAID FOR IT. 1. We claim that it is right and proper to baptize infants, because they are naturally included in the broad commission which our blessed Lord gave to His apostles (Matt. xxviii. 19). Suppose the proper authorities in this country should issue a command that a census be made: who would be included in it? Would it merely embrace the adults, or would it give an account of the number of children also? And so, when our Saviour sends forth His servants to bring all nations into covenant with their Creator and Redeemer, the most natural construction of the commission makes it include both old and young. To expect that in promulgating His covenant He would make mention of infancy or adult years would be an absurdity. The physical and the personal has nothing at all to do with the spiritual covenant. 2. That our Lord regards with favour the bringing of little children into covenant with Him is seen from the fact that He showed such kindness towards them during His sojourn upon earth (Matt. xix. 13; Luke xviii. 15; Mark x. 13–16). The phrase, "Kingdom of God," means the Church. And does not every word in the passage just quoted go to prove that our Saviour regarded little children as fit subjects for His kingdom? Hermas, who wrote during the apostolic age, remarks: "All infants are valued by the Lord, and esteemed first of all." 3. We are obliged to believe that children are entitled to the privilege of holy baptism, because they are distinctly included in the promises (chap. ii. 38, 39). The Jews who heard these words of St. Peter's had always been accustomed to have their children enjoy the privileges of Church membership; and if it had been his purpose to tell them that this rule must now be changed, this was a very curious way of doing it! And slow progress Christianity would have made had it closed its doors more completely than Judaism had done! 4. The apostles baptized whole households. Not long after the baptism of Lydia's household, that of the jailor was baptized (vers. 31, 32). Here is an item from St. Paul's own journal—"I baptized the household of Stephanas" (1 Cor. i. 16). The Syriac version of the New Testament, which was completed early in the second century, renders the verse concerning Lydia and her household as the baptism of Lydia and her children. And so, too, in the case of the jailor and his household, and the household of Stephanas. 5. Even those most opposed to infant baptism agree that when these little innocents die they are fit to be received into heaven. And if fit for the Church triumphant, why not for the Church militant? 6. Note the resemblance which infant baptism bears to circumcision. By this rite, children, when eight days old, all unconscious of what was done for them, were brought into covenant with God. When, in the course of Divine Providence, the seal of circumcision was changed to that of baptism, the Christian sacrament sanctioned all that the Jewish rite would have secured, had it continued to be observed. The conclusion follows, therefore, most naturally, that as children were made members of God's Church under the old dispensation, they are entitled to the same privilege under the new. 7. We enter our protest against those who oppose infant baptism, and we insist that it is a practice in accordance with God's will, because it is nowhere forbidden. Does the Word of God command that children shall be shut out from His kingdom? And when we remember that nineteen-twentieths of the Christian world practise infant baptism, is it likely that the one-twentieth can be right? 8. It was practised in the Church from the days of the apostles, for a period of nearly fifteen hundred years, without a

dissenting voice. The only question in regard to infant baptism which ever arose in the early ages of Christianity was whether, as baptism had taken the place of circumcision, it should be put off to the eighth day. (*J. N. Norton, D.D.*) *Family religion*:—The gospel fulfils its noblest mission in hallowing the general relations of family life. On the first introduction of Christianity to Europe, whole families are gathered into the fold. Lydia and her household, the jailer and all belonging to him, are baptized into Christ. Henceforth the worship of households plays an important part in the Divine economy of the Church. As in primeval days the patriarch was the recognised priest of his clan, so in the Christian Church the father of the house is the Divinely appointed centre of religious life to his own family. The family religion is the true starting-point, the surest foundation, of the religion of cities, nations, and empires. The Church in the house of Philemon grows into the Church of Colossæ (Philemon 2); the Church in the house of Nymphas becomes the Church of Laodicea (Col. iv. 15); the Church in the house of Aquila and Priscilla loses itself in the Churches of Ephesus and Rome (1 Cor. xvi. 19; Rom. xvi. 5). (*Bp. Lightfoot.*) **Come into my house and abide there.**—*The origin of Christian hospitality*:—We have here the first example of that Christian hospitality which was so emphatically enjoined and so lovingly practised in the apostolic Church (Heb. xiii. 2; 1 Tim. v. 10). The frequent mention of the "hosts" who gave shelter to the apostles (Rom. xvi. 23, &c.) reminds us that they led a life of hardship and poverty, and were the followers of Him for whom there was "no room in the inn." The Lord had said to His apostles that when they entered into a city, they were to seek out "those who were worthy," and with them to abide. The search at Philippi was not difficult. Lydia invited them, and admitted of no refusal, and their "peace was on that house." Thus the gospel obtained a home in Europe. (*Dean Howson.*)

Vers. 16–25. **A certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination.**—*The Pythoness*:—The words, literally, are as in the margin, a spirit of Python, or, as some MSS. give it, a Python spirit. The Python was the serpent worshipped at Delphi, as the symbol of wisdom, from which the Pythian priestesses and Apollo, as succeeding to the oracular power of the serpent, took their distinguishing appellative. The fact that St. Luke, who in his Gospel describes like phenomena as coming from *dæmonia*, "evil spirits," "unclean spirits," should here use this exceptional description, seems to imply either that this was the way in which the people of Philippi spoke of the maiden, or else that he recognised in her state phenomena identical with those of the priestesses of Delphi, the wild distortions, the shrill cries, the madness of an evil inspiration. After the manner of sibyls, and sorceresses, and clairvoyantes of other times, the girl, whom Augustine describes as a *fœmina ventriloqua*—the phrase probably expressing the peculiar tones characteristic of hysteria—was looked on as having power to divine and predict ("soothsaying," as distinct from "prophesying," exactly expresses the force of the Greek verb), and her wild cries were caught up and received as oracles. Plutarch ("de Defect. Orac.," p. 737) speaks of the name Python as being applied commonly, in his time, to "ventriloquists" of this type. As she was a slave, her masters traded on her supposed inspiration, and made the girl, whom prayer and quiet might have restored to sanity, give answers to those who sought for oracular guidance in the perplexities of their lives. (*Dean Plumptre.*) *Paul and the damsel of Philippi*:—1. None can bear such testimony to the real nature of goodness as bad spirits. How the fallen angels could preach! They could speak of goodness with all the vividness which comes of conscious contrast. Could not he say much of friendship who has lost it? Could not he speak tenderly of home who has abandoned it? So the spirit that has known God and wandered from Him could speak with soul-touching pathos—of salvation. But Christianity will not have such service. The poor damsel said truly, but her co-operation was declined. The devil can have no part or lot in Christian service. He is not in it! Though his word be true, his tone is wrong. What Paul could have done with this aid! How he could have turned upon all those who held in captivity the infatuated girl, and said to them, "She is our ally; she knows the truth, and is not afraid to proclaim it." These temptations are not without force; but the truth being devil-spoken, is not to be received upon such authority, because the authority would not stop there. Have nothing to do with him. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." We see from such incidents the pureness and nobility of the apostolic mind and the independence of truth. In the hands of the

apostles the truth did not go a-begging for patronage. When will the Church refuse the bad man's money? The same kind of aid was offered to Christ, but He would never accept it. 2. The girl had masters who made a profit out of her. It is possible that some of ourselves may be under the influence of evil "masters." It is in the nature of selfishness to make slaves. Older and craftier men may be making experiments upon your green youthfulness. Christ would have us all free. "If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." 3. "And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone——" The bad man has a larger sphere in which to make money than the good man has. Think what they were doing! Living upon this brain-bewildered damsel. Such men would sell the very Church of God and defile the dead for money. Do not imagine that this is an ancient instance; it is the work of to-day. There is no stopping-place in selfishness short of the very destruction of the universe. Begin, therefore, early to resist the devil. "It is not all gold that glitters." There are some coins that honest fingers dare not touch. Do not call yourself poor if you have to-day's honestly-gotten dinner waiting for you. That is a proof that you shall also dine to-morrow. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Crafty masters, dealers in superstition and quackery, may have their gain-bringing damsels taken away from them, but they who bank in heaven have effects inexhaustible. 4. Look at the spirit of the damsel's masters (ver. 19, &c.). What liars they were! Not a word did they say about the "gains." Here is the crime of to-day, of working from one motive and trying to get credit for another. Do we not sometimes hate a man, and do all manner of evil to him, and then say that we have no personal jealousy, but are concerned about some great question or public good? And yet there are persons who quite disdain the idea of original sin! The gospel will have no pretence, mental reservation, or moral obliquity. It will insist upon trying all our work by the square and plummet of heaven. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The soothsaying damsel at Philippi*:—I. TRUE TESTIMONY FROM A QUESTIONABLE QUARTER. This testimony was as true as if it had been spoken by an angel. But the testifier was under the influence of a devil, and God's servants need not his praise either in behalf of themselves or their work. But what could induce this woman to bear this true testimony? 1. Perhaps the hope of getting gain. She might think that Paul would reward her for her public proclamation. 2. A wish to conciliate. The evil spirit, fearing expulsion, might influence her to bear this testimony so as to gain favour. 3. A desire to heighten her authority and increase her success. She saw evident tokens of the Divinity of their cause; and by proclaiming this she may have hoped to acquire a higher reputation for being inspired. 4. The hope of bringing discredit on the cause of God. The stratagem might lead the people to conclude that Paul and Silas were in league with evil spirits. (1) That there is a way of salvation. Plain, safe, exclusive. (2) That there is need to show this way. (3) That the work of God's servants is to show it. II. EFFECTUAL EXORCISING BY AN INSPIRED APOSTLE. Paul was grieved—1. To see a human being the victim of demoniacal power. Many similar saddening sights are still to be seen. The demons avarice, ambition, pride, envy, and sensuality possess men's souls and rule in their hearts. Who can see them and not be grieved? 2. To see the malignant design with which the testimony was borne. The girl was only the instrument of the devil, whose design might be to bring discredit on Christianity; and who might also aim at exciting the self-complacency of Paul. 3. To see the sordid motives of the masters of this girl. They cared not how her nature was degraded, or how the people were imposed on, if only their mercenary ends were auswered. Many are still as unscrupulous. They will lie, and cheat, and sell both body and soul for gain. III. MALIGNANT PERSECUTION BY DISAPPOINTED MERCENARIES (ver. 20–22). If you would not enrage a selfish man, do not interfere with his gains, or he will persecute you. Your enterprise may be of God, and there may be evident tokens of this, yet it must not be allowed to live if it frustrates his selfish purposes. IV. ILLEGAL MEASURES BY CIVIL AUTHORITIES. V. MIDNIGHT MELODY BY INCARCERATED SUFFERERS (ver. 25). 1. "They prayed"—(1) for themselves, that they might be supported and delivered; (2) for their persecutors, that they might be forgiven and saved; and (3) for their new converts, that they might be strengthened and established. 2. "And sang praises unto God." A consciousness of having done right makes a man undaunted in danger, unswerving in suffering, and triumphant in tribulation. (*John Elstob.*) *The devil of avarice*:—I. IN THE PURSUANCE OF ITS PURPOSE. Mercenariness in truth was the demon which inspired her. In pursuing its sordid aim

we discover—1. The prostitution of mind. This young woman's sympathies and talents were consecrated to the greed of her masters. Mammon ever hires the genius of the world for its service. A more terrible sight than this can scarcely be witnessed. 2. The practice of falsehood. This woman pretended to withdraw the veil of the future for money. Men build up their fortunes by falsehoods. Lies are considered the life of trade. 3. Religious profession. To impose upon the spectators, she professed almost a reverence for the apostles. Perhaps she had sufficient prescience to see that their mission would be successful, and that her declaration of their success would heighten her reputation and increase her authority. Alas! avarice uses religion for its own ends, puts on its garb, uses its vocabulary, and kneels to its heroes. II. IN THE FRUSTRATION OF ITS PURPOSE (ver. 18). Does this mean the exorcising of a personal spirit of evil who had taken possession of her? or does it mean the expulsion of the spirit of evil from her? I incline to the latter opinion, and regard Paul as effecting her conversion. This he did, as all conversions are accomplished, "in the name of Jesus Christ," and at once—"in the same hour." The change which Paul effected in her now interfered with the gains of her masters. Observe—1. The vindictiveness of this frustrated avarice (ver. 19). Selfish men will oppose any enterprise, however divine, that interferes with their gains. Vested interests are the great antagonists of truth everywhere. 2. Its hypocrisy. Did they say, these men have interfered with our traffic? This would have been truth. No; they prefer a false accusation. These wounded grubs would be thought patriotic heroes. 3. Its power. These rich men had sufficient power to move the multitude in their favour, and to command the magistrates to do their work (vers. 22, 23). Such was the power which avarice had in Philippi eighteen centuries ago, and such is the power, alas! which it has ever wielded, and still wields. It can move magistrates and monarchs. "Money answereth all things," "and the love of it is the root of all evil." (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The rescue of a slave*:—Some facts connected with—I. THE SLAVE. 1. The power by which she was swayed. 2. The profession she made. 3. The testimony she bore. II. THE APOSTLES. 1. Their tenderness of heart. 2. Their great power. 3. Their habitual prayerfulness. III. THE OWNERS. 1. The degradation of their nature. 2. The vengeance of their hearts. 3. The power of their hate. (*H. J. Martyn.*)

Ver. 17. **These men are servants of the Most High God and show to us the way of salvation.**—*The confession of the girl*:—What a strange thing have we here! the devil preaching the gospel; at least confirming the word of those who preached it. How was it that the prince of darkness could thus support the men who were labouring to destroy his kingdom? How could he give his testimony to the truth of that gospel by which his throne was to be subverted? Was not Satan here casting out Satan, and contributing to the overthrow of his own dominion? No: his speaking truth was a master-stroke of devilish policy. He spoke the truth to counteract it; to put Paul and Silas and the possessed woman on the same ground, as if they all agreed: and if Paul and Silas had been pleased with this testimony, and appealed to it, and observed to the people that she who had told them so correctly many things which they could not have found out, confessed them as the servants of God and the preachers of salvation, he would have gained a great point. Let the Pythoness once be identified with the Christian teachers and she might teach, under the name of Christianity, such things as the devil has since often taught, and called them the way of salvation. The devil confessing Christ is in fact more dangerous than the devil denying Christ: for he only confesses to oppose. He confesses, and misrepresents, so that he makes the doctrine of Christ sometimes one thing and sometimes another; and anything but what it really is. Sometimes it is salvation by man's merit, heaven purchased by the performance of outward works. Thus he builds up a fatal system of self-righteousness. Yet there is truth in what he teaches. The works are necessary; but he assigns to them a wrong office, puts them in the place of Christ, and thus leads men to reject that way of salvation, to which, by the mouth of the Pythoness, he bore witness. At other times he takes the direct contrary course; and with the show of honouring Christ teaches men to look for salvation by a faith which produces no works. Thus his doctrine is—what it were to be wished his kingdom was—divided against itself: sometimes it is Christ requiring what God has not commanded; sometimes it is Christ allowing what God has forbidden, or forbidden what God has allowed. Alas! this confession of the Pythoness, as it was not altogether the first instance of Satan's acknowledging

Christ, so neither was it the last by many, many examples. And Christian teachers have too often been ignorant of his devices, not having received the wisdom to detect him, when transformed into an angel of light. Paul had this wisdom. (*J. Fawcett, M.A.*) *Serving God:*—At the very end of the nave of Westminster Abbey there is a monument erected to a young philosopher and clergyman who in his short space of life, which lasted only twenty-one years, made discoveries in science of a most surprising kind. His name was Jeremiah Horrox. There was one thing which he felt ever had a higher claim upon him even than science. It was to do his duty in the humble sphere in which he found himself; and when he was on the eve of watching the transit of the planet Venus across the sun, and was waiting with the utmost keenness of observation for this phenomenon, he put even all these thoughts aside, and went, on the Sunday on which this sight was to be observed, to perform his humble parish duty in the church where he was pastor. He mentions it in his journal, in words which are now written over his monument: "Called aside to greater things, which ought not to be neglected for the sake of subordinate pursuits." Subordinate, secondary, in one sense, the pursuits could not be, for they were the discovery of the glory of God in the greatest of His works; but subordinate in another sense they were, for they came across, in that instance, the single-minded discharge of the task which he owed to his Divine Master. (*Dean Stanley.*) *The exactest way of salvation:*—Sir Thomas Smith, the eminent secretary of state to Queen Elizabeth, when on his death-bed, sent to his friends, the Bishops of Winchester and Worcester, and solemnly entreated them to draw from the Word of God the plainest and exactest way of salvation; adding, "It is a matter of lamentation that men know not to what end they are born into the world till they are ready to get out of it." *The confession of the slave:*—Truth is truth, by whomsoever confessed, for whatever motive, and in whatever way. Here it was confessed by a devil-possessed girl. Perhaps her better nature was in the ascendant at the time. As we know from the Gospels demoniacal possession was intermittent, and the poor creatures had their lucid intervals. So this damsel, conscious for the moment of her misery and degradation, may have meant this as a sort of appeal for help. Perhaps, however, it may have been in mockery. No doubt the apostles had asserted their authority as servants of the most high God, and certainly "the way of salvation" was their constant theme. And the girl gifted with powers of mimicry may have reproduced their peculiar accent for the purpose of creating amusement. On the former hypothesis Paul's pity was excited: on the latter his indignation and alarm lest the gospel should be brought into contempt. Anyhow the testimony is true as a description of:—I. THE CHARACTER OF GOSPEL MINISTERS. 1. They are men (1) Not angels; do not therefore expect angelic attributes of them. One of the greatest hindrances to the work of the Church is the extravagant demands which are made of the ministry. It discourages the men, and induces indolence in the people. (2) They are men having knowledge of human needs, invested with human sympathies, gifted with the faculty of communicating Divine thought in human language. 2. They are servants. (1) A humbling thought. All magisterial airs, all pomp and show, are utterly inconsistent with this character. A servant is a subordinate and has simply to do what he is told. (2) A suggestion of responsibility and labour. What is a servant for but for work? And for the efficient discharge of that work he is held responsible. 3. They are servants of the Most High God. (1) Their office therefore is invested with the loftiest dignity. What greater honour than to be the servant of a sovereign. Our Lord Himself gloried in this title. (2) Their persons are secure. God will protect His servants till they can say, "I have finished my course." (3) Their reward is great; as is to be expected from such a Master. "Be thou faithful," &c. II. THEIR WORK. "To show the way of salvation." 1. There is a way of salvation. (1) A way to it—*i.e.*, means whereby it may be secured. (*a*) Repentance—consciousness of being in the wrong way, regret for it, confession of it, and desire to get out of it. (*b*) Faith. Acceptance of the right way; of Him who is the Way; walking in that Way—*i.e.*, humble dependence on Christ. (2) Salvation itself is a way—a progress from darkness to light, from misery to blessedness, from sin to holiness, from uselessness or injuriousness to usefulness, from earth to heaven, from grace to glory. Salvation is a state, but it is an endlessly progressive state. No matter however high the attainment the saved one is to "forget the things that are behind," &c. So viewed salvation is the right way, the happy way. 2. This way has to be shown. (1) Hence the guide must know it, and not theoretically, from books or from what others have told him; but from being in it. Personal salvation is the essential

qualification for a minister, and a guarantee of his competency for his work. (2) Knowing it the guide must show it; by precept and example: simply, clearly, powerfully. (*J. W. Burn.*) *The nature of the Christian ministry*:—I. THE WORK OF ALL MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL. 1. They are to show the way of salvation. This is the great object they should ever have in view. 2. The way of salvation they are to show is, by faith in Christ. 3. They are to show the *way*, not the *ways* of salvation. There never was, and never will be, but one way. This their work implies—They ought to know it themselves. II. THE APPELLATION HERE GIVEN THEM; WITH THE REASONS OF THEIR BEING SELECTED AND EMPLOYED IN THIS SERVICE. "Servants of God." 1. It denotes that they are sent by Him to this work. 2. The dignity of their office—servants, not of men—of the highest men, but of God—of the most high God. They are employed as mortals; because this method is adapted to our receiving information on the subject with composure. Learn: 1. The guilt of those who neglect a gospel ministry. 2. Be helpers of ministers. (*The Evangelist.*)

Vers. 19–26. **And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone.**—*Apostolic duty and vicissitudes*:—I. CHRIST'S SERVANTS WILL USE WHATEVER POWER THEY POSSESS TO SET THE SLAVES OF SATAN FREE. Paul did not act from mere impulse, but upon the principle of compassion with which all true Christians are animated. He was miraculously endowed, it is true, while we have only the power of influence and persuasion. But when a country is invaded, what patriot will draw back because he has not a rifle of the most approved pattern? Let us then do what we can to exorcise the demons of intemperance, &c. II. CHRIST'S SERVANTS ARE NOT TO EXPECT THAT THEIR EFFORTS WILL WIN EARTHLY REWARDS. This ought to be the result; but connected with all evils are vested interests which resist all efforts to diminish their gains. The owners of this damsel looked not at her benefit, but at their loss. For the same reason all reformers have been hated; and they must not be surprised at it (John xv. 19–21). III. CHRIST SECURES FOR HIS SERVANTS NOT EXEMPTION FROM SORROW, BUT A SUSTAINING JOY. All power is given to Christ, and He sometimes uses it to disappoint the enemies of His servants; but more frequently He leaves them, as here, to suffer for His name's sake. But it is then that He gives them the sweetest assurances of His presence and love; and makes them more than conquerors (chap. v. 41). IV. BY THEIR CONDUCT TOWARDS THEIR PERSECUTORS CHRIST'S SERVANTS SHOW THAT THEY ARE HIS. That can be no merely human religion which enables men to conquer the natural desire for revenge, and to do good to those by whom they have been despitefully used. V. BY THEIR FIDELITY TO CONVICTION AND THE BEAUTY OF THEIR CHARACTER CHRIST'S SERVANTS WILL ULTIMATELY WIN THE RESPECT OF THOSE WHO HAVE WRONGED THEM. The behaviour of Paul and Silas impressed the jailer quite as much as the earthquake. That might have been a natural occurrence, but the cheerfulness and kindness of the missionaries under the circumstances were obviously supernatural. So it is that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." VI. TURNING TO THE JAILER, we learn—1. That the worst of men may become the servants of Christ. 2. That they may become so instantly. How long does it take to enlist a recruit? The resolve may be the fruit of long consideration, and it may take months of drill to make him an efficient soldier; but the act of enlistment is instantaneous. 3. The proof that men have become servants of Christ consists not in emotion but in conduct. (*R. A. Bertram.*) *Paul at Philippi*:—I. THE PREPARATION FOR GOD'S SPIRITUAL WORK. The rebuke of the evil spirit in the girl, the anger of the crowd, the imprisonment, seemed to form a series of events complete in itself and existing for itself, if we may say so. But these things were but the preparation for something more important. 1. The preparation for God's work was by affliction. The disciples found themselves cast down, but the sequel showed it was in order that they might be exalted, by being used as a means of glorying God. A man's best work comes sometimes after he has ceased to be able to work at all. God works through our afflictions even when we do not know it. Well may we then count it joy when we are honoured by falling upon them. 2. The affliction of the apostles was certain, sooner or later, because of the ever persisting antagonism between the gospel and the world. And is it not for ever so to the end of time? Must not the gospel always find opposition from the world? Surely this vile world is not a friend to grace to help us on to God. 3. Paul's understanding of this made him careless of being unpopular. He had counted the cost of his service and was willing to pay it. 4. The affliction of the apostles was relieved by faith. They trusted God to give them strength to endure

it, to lead them out of it into safety, and beyond these, to use the affliction itself as an instrument of his own purposes. 5. God is with His children in times of trial. 6. Such faith makes one thoughtful for others. Paul was not so absorbed in his own rapture as to forget the jailer. "Do thyself no harm; for we are all here." Forgetfulness of others is no part of the soul's deepest joy. 7. In Paul's joy in God there was involved forgiveness to those who injured him. II. THE WORK OF GOD. God by His permission of the apostles' affliction had made ready for the first soul-ingathering among the heathen of Europe. 1. The first element that appears in the experience of the Philippian jailer is fear. He was trembling when he sprang into the cell (ver. 29). John Bunyan had an awful experience of his own sinfulness before he was converted. If all have sinned, all are entitled to a guilty fearful conscience. 2. This dread of conscience was immediately accompanied by a consciousness of the supernatural. 3. With fear went desire. "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" What it was to be saved he knew in a most undefined way. Wants do not have to be defined in order to be genuine. A child knows that it feels bad but cannot always tell where or why, yet its suffering is most real. And to want the gospel comes with complete satisfaction. But it does not come except to the want. 4. The jailer was willing to do anything necessary for salvation. "Sirs, what must I do?" 5. The answer has well been called classic. It sums up once for all the ages everything that is required of man in order to be saved. (1) Do nothing. Salvation is not of works. (2) Believe. (3) Make Christ the object of faith. 6. This faith has its social bearing. It is recognised as an influential element in the family, which is here shown to be the God-constituted unit of human life. 7. True faith will not be ignorant. It recognises its imperfection and is ever seeking to learn more of the truth of God, that it may appropriate it by faith (ver. 32). 8. As soon as faith had entered the jailer's heart, it emerged again in a deed of kindness; he washed the apostles' wounds. So by a beautiful spiritual chemistry faith is ever transmuting the love of God as it comes into our upward-opened hearts into love for our fellow-men (1 John iv. 12). 9. Immediately there came an open recognition of Christian faith in the form of baptism. Wherever there is faith there should be frank, manly avowal of it. 10. No wonder the jailer when he had brought them into his house rejoiced (ver. 34). It was the happiest time he had ever known in his life. No wonder the jailer rejoiced. Blessed beyond words are all those who come to know Christ and His salvation. III. LESSONS ABOUT CONVERSION. 1. Providence often prepares for it, sometimes by suffering and sorrow. 2. There are many ways of being led to Christ, and all are valid. Lydia came one way, the jailer another. No one need try to force himself into another's experience. 3. Faith is the same for all. All are sinners. All need the atoning blood. All must trust without any merit of their own. 4. Salvation is free to all. What Paul said to the jailer he said to the whole world. Whosoever will may come. (*D. J. Burrell, D.D.*) *The consequences of doing good*:—1. If you destroy a man's hope of gain you are very apt to make him your enemy. 2. When you are hindering a man's business, he will charge you with precipitating a general business panic. 3. When you drive prosperity from a bad man's door, you may be inviting adversity to enter your own. 4. When you help some afflicted one, when you free some oppressed one, the affliction or the oppression may be transferred to yourself. 5. When you do a good deed, and are put in prison for it, wait for God's deliverance—it will come. 6. The night is not all dark, nor the stocks hard, nor the imprisonment bitter, to those who, in the consciousness that they are suffering for Christ, wait for the breaking fetters and the earthquake shock. (*S. S. Times.*) *Antagonism to religion: how aroused*:—So long as the preaching of the gospel does not interfere with bad men's money-making, bad men are disposed to let it alone, as "none of their business." But when the work of these temperance people interferes with liquor-selling; when the work of these law and order people stops the selling of vile books and pictures, and closes Sunday concert saloons; when the religious sentiment of the community rises up against lotteries and raffles; when the political reform movements propose to stop stealing in the city institutions—then it is evident to every servant of the devil whose supply of gain is thereby cut off, that "these men do exceedingly trouble our city," and the same feeling against the gospel is aroused in them as showed itself in the impoverished hog-raisers of the Gadarenes. This is one of the sure hindrances in the path of all zealous Christian workers. (*H. C. Trumbull, D.D.*) *The effects of Christianity on ancient superstitions*:—The priesthood in all its branches, Flamens, Augurs, Hornspices, contemplated the advance of Christianity with dismay. It emptied their temples, curtailed their

sacrifices, reduced their profits, exposed their frauds. (*J. J. Blunt, D.D.*)
And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison.—*The punishment of the missionaries*:—The words imply a punishment of more than usual severity, such as would leave their backs lacerated and bleeding. So in 1 Thess. ii. 2, St. Paul speaks of having been "shamefully entreated" at Philippi. Those who have seen anything of the prisons of the Roman empire, as *e.g.*, Mamertine dungeon at Rome itself, can picture to themselves the darkness and foulness of the den into which St. Paul and his friend were now thrust: the dark cavern-like cell, below the ground, the damp and reeking walls, the companionship of the vilest outcasts. And, as if this were not enough, they were fastened in the "stocks." St. Luke used the Greek term *xylon*, the same as is used sometimes for the cross (chaps. v. 30; xiii. 29). The technical Latin word was *nervus*. Like the English stocks, it was a wooden frame with five holes, into which head and feet and arms were thrust, and the prisoner left in an attitude of "little ease." Here, however, it would seem, the feet only were fastened, the rest of the body being left lying on the ground. If the received version of Job xiii. 37; xxxiii. 11, which follows the LXX. and the Vulgate, be correct, the punishment was common at a very early period in the East (compare. Jer. xxix. 26). (*Dean Plumptre.*)
Paul imprisoned at Philippi:—When Catherine Evans, a Quaker heroine of the seventeenth century, was imprisoned within the gloomy walls of the Inquisition, in the Island of Malta, for obeying what she regarded as a call from God to preach the gospel in the East, she was put into an inner room of the Inquisition, which had only two little holes in it for light and air, and which was so exceedingly hot that it seemed to be the intention to stifle her. On one occasion Friar Malachi told her unless she abandoned her religion she should never go out of that room alive. To this she fearlessly replied, "The Lord is sufficient to deliver me, but whether He will or no, I will not forsake the living fountain to drink at a broken cistern." In like manner Paul and Silas, when apprehended and thrust into the inner prison of Philippi, were not debarred thereby from praising and preaching Christ. To such men, indeed,

> Stone walls do not a prison make,
> Nor iron bars a cage.

Christian preachers in prison:—Some years ago three Primitive Methodist preachers went to mission a town in Worcestershire, and when they commenced the service, there was a magistrate, a clergyman, and a constable. The constable was ordered to take the preacher down, and he took him down and put him in prison; but there was immediately a second one up preaching away. The magistrate ordered the constable to take the second one, and then the third one was up preaching away. He had orders to take the third, and he put all three together into the prison and they made a noise there. The magistrate went to the constable, and he said, "What a noise those men are making; go and separate them, and do not let them make a noise like that." So the man went in and separated them, and he put two of them in a cell with a robber, and they preached the gospel to the robber. They preached to him, and they prayed with him, and he got converted. More noise than ever now. The magistrate said, "I told you to separate those men." "Well," he said, "I have separated them." "Separate them again, then." "Well," he said, "if I separate them again they will all get it. That robber is as bad as they are now."
And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God.—*Devotion under difficulties*:—I. THE MEN ENGAGED WERE EMINENTLY GOOD. "Paul and Silas." 1. They were employed in the highest service. 2. They were the truest benefactors of society. 3. They were successful opponents of evil. 4. They were martyrs to religious fidelity. II. THE PLACE WAS NOTORIOUSLY wicked. "Prison." 1. Circumstances are no criterion of character. 2. Doing good does not necessarily produce its equivalent. 3. The world is ignorant of the nature of true religion. 4. The good are non-resistant in their method of meeting persecution. 5. The ungodly are permitted great freedom. III. THE TIME was extremely unusual. "Midnight." It was neither of the usual "hours" of devotion. The heart of man on earth and the ear of God in heaven are not regulated by our chronometers. Midnight, as well as mid-day, is the "accepted" time. 1. It was singular time. The world asleep. 2. It was sacred time. David and other eminent servants of God often worshipped them. 3. It was suitable time. Silence reigned. Quietness favourable to devotion. IV. THE SERVICE WAS MARVELLOUS IN ITS NATURE. They had been stopped serving God by preaching. In the circumstances they did what they could. 1. There was suppli-

cation. (1) Probably for pardon of enemies. (2) Probably for success of mission. (3) Probably for guidance in difficulties. (4) Probably for preservation of converts. 2. There was song. (1) Consciousness of Divine favour. (2) Acknowledgment of Divine favour. (3) Enjoyment of Divine favour. 3. There was sublimity. Such conduct in such a place was unique—marvellous. V. THE RESULTS WERE EXTRAORDINARILY GREAT. 1. Shaking of the prison. (1) Proof of the Divine presence. (2) Illustration of the Divine power. (3) Sign of the Divine indignation. (4) Symbol of the Divine goodness. Open doors and broken chains. Moral freedom. 2. Conversion of the prison-keeper. (1) Fear. (2) Inquiry. (3) Instruction. (4) Faith. (5) Obedience. (6) Courtesy. (7) Joy. 3. Liberation of the prisoners. (1) Infringement of rights. (2) Assertion of claims. (3) Acknowledgment of wrong. (4) Freedom. Conclusion: 1. God cares for the good. 2. Fidelity to God rewarded. 3. Ultimate triumph of the gospel. 4. Worship God. (*B. D. Johns.*) *Paul and Silas sing praises at midnight*:—Like the nightingale, which warbles forth its beautiful notes in the night-time, and when other birds are quietly asleep, so these two apostles sang praises to God at unconventional hours, for they were in unusual circumstances, and in an unconventional place. Many people will go some distance to hear the nightingale, and do not soon forget its notes; so all the prisoners in the jail at Philippi heard the apostles sing that night, and, it is hoped, they never forgot it. The other day, when the wind was furiously swaying the trees, when the heavy hailstones rattled against the window-panes, and the darkened skies poured down the rain in torrents amid lightning flashes, until our hearts were quaking with fear, a beautiful little bird sat upon one of our sheltered rose-bushes and sang its clear and beautiful notes, as though it knew God would not suffer the storm to hurt it. So, when the storm of persecution burst over the apostles at Philippi, though the excitement of their situation and the soreness of their stripes kept them awake, as some think, yet they sang praises to God, believing not only that their situation would be a furtherance to the gospel, but that God would not suffer them to be hurt. *A wonderful nocturnal service*:—I. THE UNUSUAL HOUR OF PRAYER—midnight. II. THE SINGULAR TEMPLE—a prison. III. The remarkable conductors of THE SERVICE—Paul and Silas in the stocks. IV. THE STRANGE CONGREGATION—the prisoners in their cells. (*K. Gerok.*) *The prayer-meeting in the Philippian jail*:—It is always easy to have an excellent prayer-meeting when the heart is right. There were three persons attending this one there in the jail. The ancient Jews had a saying, "Where two persons meet, there is ever a third." Paul and Silas and Jesus Christ spent the night together (Matt. xviii. 19, 20). It was a most unusual—I. TIME—"midnight." The Jews were strict as to their stated seasons of supplication; but this was the hour of neither the evening nor the morning oblation. But God never slumbers, He is alive to His children's wants even in "the dead of night." II. PLACE. This was the first time the voice of Christian devotion was heard in those precincts—the earliest dungeon in Europe which held a mercy-seat, although it has had many successors. III. POSTURE. It was neither standing, nor kneeling, nor lying on one's face. What a poor time they would have had, if they had been compelled to use a formula or work themselves into an attitude. God does not care for attitudes when only the heart is right, and the spirit true, and the want pressing. IV. KIND OF PRAYER—"Praying, they sang." They set their petitions to music. True prayer is praise, and genuine praise is prayer. V. EXPRESSION OF PRAYER—by tones of old Hebrew melodies such as one hears now in the synagogue: wild, pathetic, plaintive, and fascinating. Match one of David's psalms or Isaiah's anthems to it, and it will move one's heart like a strain from the sky. He who has at command psalm after psalm has wonderful resources of comfort in his times of trouble. VI. REACH OF PRAYER. No doubt God heard it, but "the prisoners" also heard it. These were the "songs in the night" that Elihu told Job about; perhaps the psalm was that where David told of the good his singing did him (Psa. xlii. 8). And we can have no sort of doubt that the jailer heard everything that was going on. VII. FORCE OF PRAYER. The Lord sent the earthquake in answer, and converted the jailer. VIII. DIRECTION OF PRAYER. Imagine a triangle. The perpendicular line represents the direction of a Christian man's petition: it goes up straight towards God. The horizontal line represents the level pressure of the same force, going out towards those within range. That jailer, no doubt, heard the singing and the praying; it was not addressed to him, but it swept out toward him with lateral force. It is not safe to calculate deliberately upon affecting a bystander by our supplication; preaching in prayers is never to be commended; but a life of prayer, and an unconscious fervour

of prayer in an individual instance, may be useful to one who watches it. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The power of song*:—Wondrous power of music! When prayers give out, when all is dark, the mystic waves of sweet melody have still force to lift us out of ourselves, and upon their golden tides our souls seem to float away and leave far behind them the sad life of tears and strife. I note that Jesus is recorded as singing but once. It was when His soul was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death—when the gloom and foreboding was deepest—when His disciples could not speak or pray, and hardly dared to think. Then, after supper, when they had *sung a hymn*, they went out into Gethsemane. In our own homes, in times of deep trouble—after the death or burial of a beloved one—in the midst of some great pain or loss—when the children look blankly at each other, and sit talking in whispers, and father and mother scarce know how to speak without weeping—a sister or friend will go to the piano or harmonium, and presently there shall arise such a sweet hymn as shall draw the voices of the sorrowing little company together, and the cloud will be lifted, something like a tender serenity and peace coming over the oppressed and darkened hearts as the pulses of the music rise and fall. Indeed there have been times in the history of the Church when music, hymn singing, chanting, have done duty for almost the whole of religion. What a part did hymn singing play in the life of Luther—in the Lollard movement—in Wesleyan prayer-meetings—in the Salvation Armies—past and present. (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) *Sorrow producing song*:—The agonies of Germany in the Thirty Years' War and other conflicts was productive of a vast number of patriotic and Christian songs. At the end of the seventeenth century, Councillor Faankenau made a collection of 32,712, which he presented in three hundred volumes to the University library at Copenhagen; while in 1718 another collector, Wetzel, reckoned 55,000 printed German hymns. (*J. F. B. Tinling, B.A.*) *Joy in trouble, its influence upon others*:—A lamp, when lighted, may burn by day, but it is only at night that it is seen by the neighbourhood. The darkness does not kindle or cause the light, but the darkness reveals it and spreads it around. It is thus that consistent joy in the Lord, when believers attain it, in a time of trouble becomes an effective testimony for Christ. Not a few owe their conversion instrumentally to the light that streamed from a saint in the hour of his departure—to the song that rose from the pilgrim when he was traversing the valley of the shadow of death. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *Paul and Silas in prison*:—No man has more religion than he can show in time of adversity. The jail was a test of the Christian character of Paul and Silas. The way they stood the test, not only exalts them as Christian heroes, but also shows what power there is in the religion of Jesus. I. A GREAT EARTHQUAKE. 1. The prisoners rejoicing (ver. 25). They were praying—for they needed comfort. They sang praises—for comfort was given. Their hymns were unto God alone; but "the prisoners were listening unto them." The Christian often exerts an influence of which he is unaware. What must have been the feelings of the listeners? Probably—(1) Wonder. Songs from that inner prison was an unheard-of thing. From there usually came groans, curses, wails of despair. (2) A conviction that the two men were sustained by the God whom they were praising. (3) A desire to partake of the same peace and joy. When a disciple has sunshine in trial, then men say, "If religion can do that for us, then we want it." Songs in the night are better than sermons in the daytime. 2. The prisoners loosed. God now endorses the singers. The earthquake was natural in its character; but it happened at a time that shows that God was in it, using it, as He can use any force of nature, to accomplish His will. II. A GREAT CHANGE. 1. The keeper despairing (ver. 27). His life depended upon the keeping of the prisoners. Awakened by the shock his first thought was of fidelity to his office, and, when he beheld the open doors, his instant conclusion was that the prisoners had escaped. 2. The keeper saved. (1) From self-destruction (ver. 28). There are two interesting questions in connection with this. (*a*) How did Paul know that the keeper was intending suicide? He was in the "inner" prison, where he could have seen nothing. (*b*) Why did none of the prisoners attempt to escape? It would seem as if the songs of the two missionaries, and the marvel which followed, had held them spellbound. (2) From eternal destruction. Why did the keeper tremble? He was in no danger; for not a prisoner had escaped. He had rightly connected the earthquake with God and the presence of the servants of God. His fear was of Him who is the Judge of all. How was he saved? "Believe," &c. Note how much larger the promise was than the question—"thou and thy house." He had asked for himself only, but he obtained assurance for those whose salvation was of as much consequence as his

own. 3. The keeper changed. How was the change shown? (1) In washing their stripes. His occupation had made him indifferent to the sufferings of others. But now that he had learned to love the Saviour his heart was touched with pity. (2) "Was baptized, he and all his immediately." Thus he and they expressed at once their faith in Christ. (3) "Set meat before them." He did not forget any of their physical wants in his own great joy. Those who have been fed with the Bread of Life should not be oblivious to the fact that the minister by whom they are fed has a body that needs to be fed also. (4) "Rejoiced greatly," &c. Now he was the possessor of the same joy that had caused those songs in the night. III. A GREAT HUMILIATION. 1. The magistrate's permission to depart. (1) Given (ver. 35). They realised that they had acted hastily, and without warrant, and desired to get rid of the men as quietly as possible. (2) Refused. Paul did not stand upon a point of order as a matter of pride. If they departed without vindication, their influence as preachers of the gospel would be gone. For the honour of the Master, they refused to go. 2. The magistrates' humiliation (ver. 37). And the magistrates were made to come. They did not feel safe until they had gone where they would not again hear from them. The missionaries went out of prison with their innocence as publicly declared as their punishment. And thus they strengthened the hold of the gospel in Philippi. 3. The missionaries' departure (ver. 40). Having suffered so much, one would think that they needed comforting by the brethren instead. But God had comforted them with so great a comfort, that they still were the richer, and could afford to give. They went away, but they left brethren behind them. The Church was established at Philippi, and that could not be driven out. (*M. C. Hazard.*) *Paul and Silas in prison*:—The Christian looks beyond this world for complete happiness. Yet while here on earth he has something which the world can neither give nor take away. Deprive him of all that which ministers to the happiness of worldly men, and still he is happy. We have a striking example of this in the text. What then can make us happy in any condition, or under any circumstances? We answer—that which made Paul and Silas so happy in the prison at Philippi. The same sources of support and joy are open to every real Christian. Let us, then, examine them. I. THEIR COMPARATIVE ESTIMATE OF WHAT THEY GAINED, WITH WHAT THEY LOST. It is by such comparisons that we form our estimate of almost every condition in human life. In this world, that is reasonably esteemed an eligible condition in which the good to be enjoyed far outweighs the evil to be endured. What then was the case of these prisoners? Were they in prison—it was not the prison of death. Were they in chains—they still possessed the liberty of the sons of God. Did they endure the pains of the lash—they had peace which passeth all understanding. Had they no hopes from the world—they had the hope of eternal glory. Who that possessed millions would grieve at the loss of a penny? When, therefore, we hear them say, "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as having nothing, yet possessing all things," their language is intelligible. II. THE ASSURANCE THAT THEIR SUFERINGS WERE THE MEANS OF GREAT GOOD. They regarded suffering not only as inseparably connected with the crown of glory, but as the appointed means of the preparation to wear it. They, therefore, "gloried in tribulation because tribulation worketh patience," &c. They rejoiced in the darkness of the dungeon, because there every Christian grace shone purer and brighter. III. LOVE TO HIM FOR WHOM THEY SUFFERED. Love is the strongest passion of the human heart. It is delight in the object loved. With what cheerfulness and pleasure does it lead us to act or suffer! As intimately connected with their love to Christ, I ought to mention the great object of these men—the honour of Christ. Ease, pleasure, honour, interest, life were nothing in their view, and Christ was all in all. Conclusion: 1. Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is. Real religion in its nature is a rich source of support and joy in every condition. 2. Religion is as good a thing now as in the days of the apostles. The same sources of enjoyment are open to us as to them. Why then should not religion bless the Christian under the little crosses of this tranquil age, as well as under the terrors which the annals of persecution record? Alas! here is the defect. They have not as much religion as they ought to have and might have. (*N. W. Taylor, D.D.*) *The supreme power of true piety*:—We gather from this narrative—1. That good men are persecuted notwithstanding the most evident signs that they are the servants of God. The presumption of evildoers. 2. That the beneficent ministries of good men incur the hatred of unrighteous traffickers. 3. That religious persecutions are generally promoted by men who have the least regard for religion. 4. That religion often has to endure the blame of tumults raised by evildoers. I. THE

POWER OF TRUE PIETY TO GIVE MEN JOY AMIDST CIRCUMSTANCES OF SORROW. Paul and Silas—1. Their patient endurance. 2. Their fervent devotion. (1) Devotion superior to physical pain. They had been beaten. Song stronger than sorrow. (2) Devotion superior to the suggestion of mental association. Prison a suggestive place. (3) Devotion superior to the habitual needs of human life. Midnight—time of sleep. 3. Their unique conduct. The masters with gains lost were in despair; the jailer in earthquake was about to commit suicide. Paul and Silas worshipped. Piety is supreme judged by results. II. THE POWER OF TRUE PIETY TO GIVE MEN CALMNESS IN PHYSICAL DISTURBANCE. 1. God takes care of His persecuted servants. 2. The moral significance of the physical occurrences on the earth. Newspapers can only record the earthquake, not its hidden providences. III. THE POWER OF TRUE PIETY TO ENABLE MEN TO GIVE GUIDANCE AMIDST MORAL PERPLEXITY. See how the providence of God has in view the awakening of the souls of men. "Believe," &c. 1. This advice was willing. 2. Wise. 3. Practicable. 4. Inspiring. 5. Accepted. IV. THE POWER OF TRUE PIETY TO GIVE MEN DIGNITY IN THE HUMILIATING EMERGENCIES OF LIFE. "Let them come," &c. 1. Not the language of proud self-assertion. 2. The language of self-vindication. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*) *Preachers in prison*:—I. THE PREACHERS. 1. Their punishment. (1) "Many stripes." (2) "In the inner prison." (3) "Their feet fast in the stocks." Cell windowless and damp; stocks irritating and painful. 2. Their piety. "Prayed and sang." Only heroes of the highest type could have prayed in such a place. 3. Their noise. "The prisoners heard them." They will have all the more attentive audience by the place and time. Noise was no new thing in the old prison. Groans, curses, threats had often echoed through those gloomy corridors; but never until now prayer and praise. 4. Their deliverance. (1) It was supernatural. "A great earthquake." (2) It was instantaneous. "Immediately the doors were opened." (3) It was complete. "Every man's bands were loosed." II. THE PENITENT. The exciting scenes of the afternoon and evening had passed, and "at midnight" the jailer is fast asleep. 1. His surprise ("waking out of his sleep") at the swaying of the prison, the open doors, and the supernatural aspect of things generally. 2. His fear. "That the prisoners had fled." Nothing was more reasonable. Prisoners have not much conscience when the alternative of bondage or freedom is before them. 3. His desperation. "Would have killed himself." Believing his own life to be forfeited, his first thought was that of suicide. That was the highest point to which heathen culture could rise. The advice of Seneca was, "If life is pleasant, live; if not, you have a right to return whence you came." 4. His instructions. "Do thyself no harm." How did Paul know he was going to do himself harm? 5. His encouragement. "We are all here." How, then, could Paul vouch for this? 6. His penitence. "Came trembling." The marvels he had witnessed had aroused his conscience, and smitten him with an awful sense of guilt and alarm. 7. His humility. "Fell down before Paul." There are earthquake crises in life when God's despised people are appreciated—crises when they only can allay the troubled spirit, and answer the momentous questions which agitate and alarm the human heart. 8. His inquiry. "What must I do to be saved?" The danger implied in this question is not that which prompted him to suicide. The presence of all the prisoners saved him from that. The inquiry involves a conviction—(1) Of danger. "Saved." (2) Of the importance of action or effort. "Must." (3) Anxiety to do what may be required. "What must I do?" (4) Personal responsibility. "What must I do?" We lose ourselves in the crowd. True penitence individualises the man. III. THE PARDON. 1. Its condition—"Believe." 2. Its object—"Jesus Christ." 3. Its certainty—"Thou shalt be saved." 4. Its effects. (1) Sympathetic—"Washed their stripes." A man should doubt his conversion if he does not seek to undo the wrongs of yesterday. (2) Hospitality—"Into his house." (3) Liberality—"Set meat before them." (4) Public and prompt confession—"Baptised straightway." (5) Influence—"And all his." One saved man has a tendency to produce another. The jailer, though a heathen, had some manhood and character about him, or his family would not have been so ready to follow him with such confidence. (*T. Kelly.*) *Good men in prison*:—It is a great disgrace to humanity that its greatest benefactors have been ill-treated. Next to the Saviour, the world has known no truer benefactor than Paul. And yet he was cast into prison. We feel ashamed of our complaining as we think of this God's true hero singing songs of praise unto the Lord. I. A GOOD MAN RADIATES HIS INFLUENCE. He cannot help it. 1. Silas was benefited by his connection with Paul. Silas was a man of mark, but he became more remark

able from his identification with Paul. We may not get earthly greatness or riches, but we must be better in a moral sense by allowing ourselves to be touched by a good man's influence. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise." 2. Paul and Silas together exerted a good influence—(1) On the prisoners, who listened to the sweet singing. (2) On the jailer, whom they rescued from death. It has been so ever since. "The path of the just is as the shining light." A bird will sing in a cage; a preacher has spoken through the grating of his cell. II. A GOOD MAN'S CHARACTER IS NOT DAMAGED BY OUTWARD CONDITIONS. His reputation may be affected by them; for a man may have a good character and a bad reputation. Paul and Silas had a bad reputation. But a change is soon brought about. The very jailer acknowledges them as messengers of God. To-day the world delights to honour those men who sat in that cell. If we suffer as evil-doers, we have reason to be ashamed; but if we suffer as Christians, let us glorify God on this behalf. III. GOOD MEN ARE TRUE TO THEIR PRINCIPLES, THOUGH THEY HAVE BEEN THE CAUSES OF DISASTER. If the world were morally right, correct principles would never bring a man into trouble. If the apostles had been brought up in the school of worldly prudence, and had sat at the feet of Professors Pliable and Worldly Wiseman, they would not have had a sore back that night, though they might have had the worse evil of an uneasy conscience. But they were brought up in the school of Christ. The lesson impressed upon their mind was, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and its righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." It was theirs to dare to do the right, and leave consequences. Throw the mere professor into prison, and he soon recants. But when Paul and Silas are thrown into prison, they pray and sing praises unto God. They do not change their mode of procedure. IV. GOOD MEN ARE SUSTAINED AND ENCOURAGED IN THEIR SUFFERINGS. 1. The consciousness of having done right is a sustaining power. Paul and Silas had songs given to them in the night time of their confinement, while the poor jailer was in agonies, and the magistrates who condemned were sadly troubled. 2. The consciousness of a helper in heaven is a sustaining power. Paul without prayer would have been Paul without his lofty heroism. Prayer nerved his arm for the conflict, and brought down heavenly blessings. (*W. Burrows, B.A.*) *Good people in prison:*—John Bunyan, the immortal dreamer, speaking on one occasion of the cell on Bedford Bridge, where for twelve long years he was confined, said, "So, being again delivered up to the jailer's hands, I was had home to prison." When Madame Guyon was imprisoned in the Castle of Vincennes, in 1695, she not only sang, but wrote songs of praise to her God. "It sometimes seemed to me," she said, "as if I were a little bird whom the Lord had placed in a cage, and that I had nothing now to do but to sing. The joy of my heart gave a brightness to the objects around me. The stones of my prison looked in my eyes like rubies. I esteemed them more than all the gaudy brilliancies of a vain world. My heart was full of that joy which Thou givest to them that love Thee in the midst of their greatest crosses"—a sentiment which she embodied, during one of her imprisonments, in a touching little poem, which begins thus—

"A little bird I am,
Shut from the fields of air;
And in my songs I sit and sing
To Him who placed me there:
Well pleased a prisoner to be,
Because, my God, it pleaseth Thee."

Bass Rock, a lonely island cliff in the Firth of Forth, off Haddingtonshire, two miles from land, was once used by the English Government as a fortress and State prison. Here, in the seventeenth century, many good ministers, persecuted for conscience' sake, suffered confinement; and one of their number, Mr. Fraser, of Brea, wrote an account of their prison hardships. They were alternately chilled through with cold and half suffocated with smoke, fed with unwholesome food, and scarcely fed at all. "Many contracted diseases there which embittered and shortened their lives. But from within those walls the voice of praise and prayer might be often heard, mingled with the laughter, oaths, and songs of the reckless sentinels; and the souls of the captives were borne, on the wings of holy meditation, far aloft and away from the dreary rock within which their bodies were pent." "Every day," continues Fraser, "I read the Scriptures, exhorted and taught therefrom, did sing psalms and prayed with such of our society as our masters did per-

mit to worship together, and this two times a day. I studied Hebrew and Greek, and I likewise read some divinity, and wrote a Treatise on Faith." *The miracle in the prison*:—1. THE PRAYER (ver. 25). It is night. All are buried in slumber. A dark building—a lodging for the night, a prison. But light is in one of the cells—internal light, the light of faith. Therefore prayer and praise. II. THE SHOCK (vers. 26–28). Not only were the walls shaken, but the jailer's heart. Certainly at first a shock of anguish and despair. But eternal love watches and prevails. The comforting word. "We are all here." Hope returns; but he wishes to see his fortune and to grasp it with his hands (ver. 29). III. THE GREAT QUESTION (vers. 30–32). It is not entirely unpremeditated. Already the praying apostles have caused the presentiment of something higher to rise in him. Perhaps also earlier experiences in his dismal employment. The earthquake has ripened the slumbering seed. The apostles have not fled. How secure and happy they must be! What must I do that I may be the same? The great life question finds also a great life answer. There is one answer. Without Christ no one is saved; through Him all may be saved. IV. THE FIRST LOVE (vers. 33, 34). What is it? The attempt to make a return for what has been received—to do good to Christ in His servants. (*Lisco.*) *What the Lord can make of a prison*:—I. A QUIET CHAPEL OF PRAYER (ver. 25). II. AN ALARMING PLACE OF JUDGMENT (vers. 26–29). III. A WHOLESOME SCHOOL OF REPENTANCE (vers. 30, 31). IV. A BROTHERLY HOUSE OF CHRISTIAN LOVE AND COMPASSION (vers. 32, 33). V. A BLESSED BIRTHPLACE OF THE NEW LIFE (ver. 34). (*K. Gerok.*) *Disadvantages made useful*:—I. STRANGE PLACES MAY BE CHANGED INTO CHURCHES. If in many cases desecration has taken place, many surprising instances of consecration have also occurred. We might turn every place into a praying-ground. The teaching of this immediate lesson is that distressing, harmful, and threatening circumstances may be turned into ladders up to heaven. What are you doing in your unusual circumstances—moaning, groaning, complaining? Paul and Silas "sang praises." Such men, therefore, never could be in prison. Christians ought never to be in any circumstances which they cannot turn into sacramental occasions. II. CHRISTIAN WORKERS AND WORSHIPPERS MAY HAVE UNEXPECTED OBSERVERS AND LISTENERS. It is always exactly so. 1. You do not speak without being listened to; you do not go to church without being observed. The preacher speaks to his immediate congregation, but he knows not who is listening in the vestibule. "And the prisoners were listening." They never heard such music before! They had been accustomed to profane language; to violent and complaining exclamations; but here is a new spirit in the house. It is so at home. Passing the room door, we pause a moment to hear some sweet voice in prayer or praise, and it follows the life like a pleading angel. 2. What is true on the one side is true on the other. The unjust judgment you passed was listened to by your children, and they will grow up to repeat your cynicism. III. IT IS POSSIBLE QUIETLY, AND EVEN THANKFULLY, TO ACCEPT ALL THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF LIFE. Nothing must interfere with the religious sacrifice. Are we in prison? We may have to alter the hour of worship, but not the worship itself. Are we in an uncongenial atmosphere? We may have to wait until the company has broken up before communion with the Father; but it is only waiting. Show me a Christian who does not complain. Where is the ancient joy? May the old days come again! When they come Christians will accept poverty or wealth, life or death, bleak March or warm June, with thankfulness, saying, "This is the best for me; I live not in circumstance, but in faith." IV. THIS IS A FULL RELIGIOUS SERVICE. "But there was no preaching," you say. Yes, there was; for we may preach by singing. But, even in a more direct and literal sense, preaching was added to prayer and praise. The earthquake took place, and the jailer, with his house, became a congregation to which Paul and Silas did, in the literal sense of the term, preach. So that night they had a full service—prayer, praise, preaching, and conversion. V. Look at THIS CONVERSION OF THE JAILER. 1. It took place under circumstances which may well be described as "exciting." Have we not been unjust to what is called "religious excitement"? But are the circumstances to blame, or ourselves? We like quietness—deadness; we do not like to be "excited," because the devil has chloroformed us into a state of insensibility. Jesus Christ did not rebuke the excitement which followed His ministry; when others would have had Him rebuke them, He said, "I tell you that if these held their peace, the very stones would cry out." 2. Happily the incident does not end here. To excitement was added the necessary element of instruction (ver. 32). Tears in the eyes that are not followed by activities in the hand harden the very heart which for the moment they softened. We shall be the worse for every

revival that ends in itself. Times of revival must be followed by times of study. We might get up such services as these almost every day in the week. If we prayed and praised in every prison into which our life is thrust, we should be heard by strange listeners, we should be interrogated by strange inquirers, and doors of usefulness would be opened in the very granite which apparently shuts us in. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The surpassing power of personal Christianity* :—Here we see it—I. ELEVATING THE SPIRIT ABOVE THE GREATEST TRIALS (ver. 25). What gives religion this power. 1. Faith in the Divine superintendence. The apostles knew that they were not here by accident or chance, but that the whole was under the wise and kind control of the Eternal Father. This is consoling. Job felt this. "He knoweth the way that I take," &c. 2. Consciousness of God's approval. The "well done" of Heaven echoed within, and set all to music. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God," &c. 3. The thought of Christ's trials in comparison with their own. 4. Assurance of a glorious deliverance. "Our light afflictions, which are but for a moment," &c. "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared," &c. He who has this religion can find a paradise in a dungeon. II. ENSURING THE INTERPOSITION OF GOD (ver. 26). While caring for all God takes special care of the good. 1. Reason would suggest this, viz., that the Eternal Spirit would feel a greater interest in mind than in matter; that the Eternal Father in His offspring than in His mere workmanship; that the Source of love and holiness in those who participate in His own moral attributes than in those who do not. 2. The Bible teaches this. (1) In explicit declarations. "To that man will I look," &c. "As a father pitieth his children," &c. "Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field," &c. (2) In the biography of the good. Did He not specially interpose on behalf of the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles? If necessary He will make the heavens rain bread, and the rock out-pour refreshing streams. He will divide the sea, and stop the mouth of lions. III. CAPACITATING THE SOUL FOR THE HIGHEST USEFULNESS. The Philippian jailer—1. Was prevented from self-destruction. The voice of Christianity to man is, "Do thyself no harm" of any kind. The good are ever useful in preventing evil. 2. Was directed to true safety. His question indicates a complex state of mind. He had regard not only to material and civil deliverance, but to spiritual and eternal. The question implies a sense of peril, and a sense of the necessity of individual effort. Something must be done. Paul, without circumlocution and delay, answers, "Believe," &c. Believe on Him as the Representative of God's love for the sinner, as the Atoner to God's character, as the Guide to God's heaven. 3. Experienced a delightful change (vers. 33, 34). The ruffian who "thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks," now tenderly washes their "stripes," and entertains them with pious hospitality. The terror-struck soul who sprang in, in utmost horror, is now full of joy and faith (ver. 34). IV. INVESTING THE SOUL WITH THE TRUEST INDEPENDENCY (ver. 35, &c.). This is seen—1. In their superiority to the fear of man. As soon as they were miraculously delivered from prison, they might have hurried away from such a scene of enemies; but they remained, although the magistrates gave them liberty to depart. They were not afraid. They could chant the 46th psalm. 2. In refusing great benefits, because offered on improper grounds. We will not accept as a favour what we demand as a right. A good man will refuse liberty, social influence, wealth, unless they can be honourably and righteously obtained. 3. In triumphing over their enemies. The tyrants became fawning suppliants at the feet of their prisoners. Such is Christian piety at first displayed in Europe, and in a prison. Piety is not that weak, simpering thing which often passes for it. It is the mightiest force on earth. True Christians have not received "the spirit of fear, but of love, power, and of a sound mind." (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *God's heroes and man's* :—On losing a battle in that neighbourhood, Cassius, "the last of the Romans," hid himself in his tent, and bade his freedmen strike, while Brutus, in his sullen desperation, fell upon his sword. But, so far from drooping and murmuring, and calling God to account, who had beckoned them to Europe, and yet had permitted them to be so "shamefully entreated"; so far from resolving to desert a Master who had not protected them, or deeming the vision at Troas a lure to draw them on to stripes and a dungeon, "Paul and Silas" prayed, and not only poured out their hearts in supplication, but "sang praises unto God," and that in no whispered melody, for "the prisoners heard them." (*Prof. Eadie.*) **And the prisoners heard them.**—*Indirect means of doing good* :—Though the speakers were bound, the Word was free; not only the Word that went upward to the throne

of God, but also the echo of the Word, that pierced the gloomy partition walls and sank into the startled ears of wretched prisoners. It seemed a roundabout road that the gospel took to reach these Gentiles; but it did not miss its way. There was a dead wall between the apostles and their audience, and therefore they did not preach that night. But there was no wall between them and the Father of their spirits: praying they hymned God, and the prayer sent upward fell down again on the other side of the partition, falling there on listening ears. In this circuitous method the gospel reached some needy souls. It is thus that in modern warfare they often overcome a fortress which is too strong to be taken by direct assault. The wall frowns thick and high between the defenders and the assailants. No missile sent in a direct line can touch the protected garrison. The beseigers in such a case throw their balls high into the heavens; these fall within the enclosure and do their work. When a good soldier of Jesus Christ cannot by direct preaching reach men, he may by prayer and praise. Christians travelling in Romish or otherwise darkened districts, might in this way scatter blessings in their track. And so might those who live in benighted neighbourhoods. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*)

Ver. 26. **And suddenly there was a great earthquake.**—*The earthquake at Philippi*:—A miraculous act of the breaker of all bonds. I. HE BREAKS THE BONDS OF TRIBULATION, when His elect call to Him day and night (Paul and Silas). II. HE TEARS ASUNDER THE FETTERS OF SIN, when bound souls sigh after Him (the jailer). III. HE MAKES A PATH FOR HIS WORD AND KINGDOM EVEN WHEN THE WORLD PUTS FETTERS ON THEM. "The Word of God is not bound." IV. HE BURSTS OPEN THE PRISON OF THE GRAVE, when the hour of eternal redemption strikes. That hour is said to be midnight. (*K. Gerok.*) *Earthquakes*:—We have all read of the earthquake in Lisbon, in Lima, in Aleppo, and in Caraccas; but we live in a latitude where in all our memory there has not been one severe volcanic disturbance. And yet we have seen fifty earthquakes. Here is a man who has been building up a large fortune. His bid on the money market was felt in all the cities. He thinks he has got beyond all annoying rivalries in trade, and he says to himself, "Now I am free and safe from all possible perturbation." But in 1837, or in 1857, or in 1873 a national panic strikes the foundations of the commercial world, and crash! goes all that magnificent business establishment. Here is a man who has built up a very beautiful home. His daughters have just come home from the seminary with diplomas of graduation. His sons have started in life, honest, temperate, and pure. When the evening lights are struck, there is a happy,and unbroken family circle. But there has been an accident down at Long Branch. The young man ventured too far out in the surf. The telegraph hurled the terror up to the city. An earthquake struck under the foundations of that beautiful home. The piano closed; the curtains dropped; the laughter hushed. Crash! go all those domestic hopes, and prospects, and expectations. So, my friends, we have all felt the shaking down of some great trouble, and there was a time when we were as much excited as this man of the text, and we cried out as he did: "What shall I do?" *The midnight hour in the prison of Philippi, an image of the great hour of the Lord*:—1. The world sleeps, but believers wait for it with watchfulness and prayer. 2. The earth quakes, but the Lord is near. 3. The servants of sin tremble before judgment. 4. The children of the kingdom lift up their heads with joy, because their redemption draweth nigh. (*K. Gerok.*) *God a powerful Ally*:—When John G. Paton, upon his little island of Anyeitum, was almost giving up hope of life, though still trying to pacify the bloodthirsty natives, it happened that upon the far horizon line a ship's sails were seen and a line of smoke going up into the sky. "The fire steamer comes," cried the natives in wild terror, and ran to hide themselves in the bush. The chief, who had been so cruel, came to beg Paton for his life. It seemed like the last judgment to these poor ignorant subjects. But what was it to the missionary? To him the connecting link with his own country, the help and strength of new life. When the ship came it proved to be one of Her Majesty's men-of-war, and the sight of the power of Paton's Queen so struck the native imagination that they decided to leave the man who had such powerful friends to do his work unharmed. So behind the Christian there is the Christian's God, all-powerful, all-willing.

Vers. 27, 28. **And the keeper of the prison . . . would have killed himself.**—*Suicide*:—Suicide is not to fear death, but yet to be afraid of life. It is a brave act of valour to contemn death; but where life is more terrible than death, it is

then the truest valour to dare to live; and herein religion has taught us a noble example; for all the valiant acts of Cartius, Scœvola, or Codrus do not parallel or match that of Job. (*Sir Thomas Browne.*) *Suicide at Philippi*:—Philippi is famous in the annals of suicide. Here Cassius, unable to survive defeat, covered his face in the empty tent, and ordered his freedmen to strike the blow. His messenger, Titinius, held it to be "a Roman's part," to follow the stern example. Here Brutus bade adieu to his friends, exclaiming, "Certainly we must fly, yet not with the feet, but with the hands"; and many whose names have never reached us, ended their last struggle for the republic by self-inflicted death. Here, too, another despairing man would have committed the same crime, had not his hand been arrested by an apostle's voice. Instead of a sudden and hopeless death, the jailer received at the hands of his prisoner the gift both of temporal and spiritual life. (*J. S. Howson, D.D.*) **Do thyself no harm.**—*Religion a safeguard*:—I. THE ALARM OF THE KEEPER OF THE PRISON. The tokens of the Divine presence were earthquakes, the opening of doors, and the loosing of bonds. In this manner God bore a testimony to His faithful servants, and prepared the way for the jailer's conversion. But the moral terror was the most memorable thing in his history. God used terrific means with a view to a peaceful and merciful end. He was first reduced to despair of himself, and next led to hope in Christ. The degrees of terror are different in different minds. Lydia was brought by calm and peaceful means; the jailer by solemn and arousing ones. Some doubt whether they are converted, because they have not passed through strong convictions, agonies of terror. Let them look at Lydia. That man has had terror enough, be it much or little, if he has been brought to Christ. Our state is to be determined, not by our former emotions, but by our present conduct. II. THE LANGUAGE OF ST. PAUL TO HIM: "Do thyself no harm." The text suggests three great truths—1. That it is the tendency of sin to harm the sinner. He does not think so in the outset of his career; but he finds it out very soon. We follow evil under the forms of good. The enemy of souls first allures, and then destroys. Sin wounds the conscience; blights the reputation; injures the sinner in his worldly circumstances; destroys the happiness of his family; shortens his days; ruins his soul. As the shadow follows the body, so do plagues follow sin. 2. That it is the design of religion to be a moral safeguard and blessing. It is favourable to a peaceful conscience; to a good name; to worldly prosperity; to family comfort; to length of days; to a peaceful death; and joyful eternity. The gospel is a preservative as well as a restorative system. 3. That it is the office of the ministry to interfere, by its counsels and warnings, between man and misery. Paul cried with a loud voice. III. THE IMPROVEMENT IT SUGGESTS TO OURSELVES. Believe and obey the gospel. It is a remedy suited to all times and persons. 1. By way of inquiry. Have we taken the first step in the road to heaven? 2. By way of caution. Guard against the beginning of sin. 3. By way of invitation to penitents. "Turn to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope." 4. Encouragement to Christians derived from the ascertained connection between faith and salvation. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." (*The Evangelist.*) *Self-preservation*:—Do thyself no harm. I. PHYSICALLY. The body is God's handiwork, "fearfully and wonderfully made." It has been redeemed by Christ, and is a temple of the Holy Ghost. Do not harm it therefore—1. By overwork. 2. By excessive exercise. 3. By undue exposure. 4. By enervating indolence or pleasure. 5. By neglecting the means of its support in health or its recovery in sickness. We shall have to give an account for deeds done in the body in more senses than one. II. MENTALLY. How august the gift of intellect with its faculties of memory, reason, imagination, &c., and how delicate and susceptible of injury. There are laws of mind as well of matter which cannot be disobeyed without severe retribution. Do thy mind no harm—1. By overstrain. Some of the highest in examination lists have done poorly in life, because their academic honours represent not so much useful and healthy knowledge, but so much cram. 2. By neglect. The mind gets into an otiose and diseased state for want of exercise. III. EMOTIONALLY. How rich a gift is feeling, and how soon and easily is the heart injured or broken! Do thyself no harm—1. By over-sensitiveness. 2. By deliberate petrifaction. 3. By anxiety. Guard love against unworthy objects; hope against unreasonable expectations; joy against exhaustible sources. Cultivate the best friendships; "Be content with such things as ye have"; never despair. IV. SPIRITUALLY. Here the greatest harm can be done. Here injury may be irreparable. 1. Communion with God, who is the soul's life, may be broken off. 2. The soul may

die to its richest inheritance in time and eternity. Do it no harm, therefore, by neglecting the means of grace, prayer, Bible study, Christian fellowship, &c., nor by the allowance of any known sin. V. SOCIALLY. Under this head may be grouped a variety of interests in which great damage may be done. A man may harm himself—1. Commercially, by unwise speculations, wrong methods, indolence, &c. 2. In his friendships by bad associations, want of thought, forbearance, &c. 3. Politically. The Christian and unfailing rule of self-preservation is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God . . . and thy neighbour as thyself." (*J. W. Burn.*) *Providential deliverance* :—A young gentleman spent his fortune in riotous living and was reduced to poverty. For a time his friends supported him; but at last they all forsook him. Wandering about as a vagabond, and having no prospect of a further supply, he resolved to drown himself. Being then in a strange place, he went to the river-side; but waiting till it was dark, he saw a light in a house and went to it. The people there were singing; he listened, and after hearing a chapter from the Bible and a prayer, he knocked at the door and was admitted. In the astonishing kindness of Providence the passage for consideration was the one before us. After several members had made their remarks they concluded, as usual, with prayer, after which the stranger asked how they came to know his thoughts, for he had not mentioned his purpose to any person on earth. This equally surprised the audience, for they had not seen or heard of him till now. Upon which the young gentleman told them his design and how it had been prevented. This remarkable providence struck him to such a degree that, by the Divine blessing, it was made the means of his conversion. He became an eminent Christian, regained the favour of his friends, and lived a useful and godly life. *Timely advice* :—When Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo, about seven o'clock in the evening, he exclaimed, "*Sauve qui peut*," and rode off the field to Charleroi. But that was after his campaigns had stained his sword with the blood and tears of millions, and when the three preceding days had been marked by the fall of 40,000 French, 16,000 Prussians, and 13,000 British and Germans. Paul's advice, "Do thyself no harm," was given in time to prevent mischief, and this is the timely and standing counsel of the gospel to the men of all nationalities in all ages. (*H. Peach, LL.D.*)

Vers. 29–34. **Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling.**—*The Philippian jailer* :—I. THE STATE OF HIS MIND BEFORE CONVERSION. 1. He was a careless sinner. This appears not so much from his official acts; for the guilt of persecution rested on the people and magistrates: but from his conduct as depicted in ver. 26, in which we have the picture of a worldly, careless, godless man, driven to desperation by an unexpected temporal calamity. He had no fear of God, since he was more afraid of "them that could kill the body," &c.; he had no care for his soul, since he was ready to peril its salvation; he was utterly reckless about eternity, since to escape present misery he was about to rush unsummoned into the presence of his Judge. The idea of suicide could not have occurred to any man unless he were utterly careless alike to God and His everlasting prospects. 2. But a change was wrought before conversion; from being a careless he becomes a convinced sinner. This preliminary change consisted in strong convictions of conscience and lively apprehensions of danger; and these, although suddenly produced, were profound and sincere (ver. 29). Here is a great change from apathy to concern, from recklessness to anxious inquiry. This conviction may be accounted for by what he had seen and heard; the confession of the slave girl; the conduct of the apostles; the earthquake; Paul's exhortation. 3. But while a marked change had been wrought, it was not conversion. Conviction, while it precedes conversion, is not always followed by it. He had remorse, but remorse is not repentance; he had fear, but fear is not faith; he had an apprehension of danger, but danger may be apprehended while the method of deliverance is unknown. These convictions were useful as preparatory means; they were hopeful symptoms; but they may be, and often are, stifled, resisted, and overcome. That he was not converted is evident from his question, which implies that as yet he was ignorant of the ground of a sinner's hope, and that he was disposed to look to something that he might himself do, rather than what might be Divinely done for him. II. THE MEANS BY WHICH HIS CONVERSION WAS EFFECTED. It matters little by what circumstances a sinner is first awakened to inquire; whether by the earthquake, or the still small voice. But while the circumstances are various the means are the same in all—the truth as it is in Jesus, the full and free gospel of the grace of God. The

jailer was not converted by the earthquake, on the contrary, the effect of that was suicidal terror; but what the miraculous event could not do was done by the gospel. He was directed to look out of himself to Christ, to relinquish all hope of salvation by works, and to work it by faith. The exhortation implies—1. That he should believe the truth concerning Christ—which is involved in the names given him. (1) Jesus—*i.e.*, Saviour. (2) Christ, the Lord's anointed. (3) Lord. 2. That believing the truth concerning Christ, he should place his own personal trust and reliance in Christ alone as One able to save to the uttermost. The gospel thus proposed was—(1) A suitable means, as prescribing a remedy in all respects adapted to the evils he felt or feared. (2) Sufficient, as containing everything to instruct, encourage, or persuade. III. THE NATURE OF THE CHANGE. His conversion properly consisted in believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. Until he believed he was unconverted; but as soon as he believed he became a converted man. The production of pure faith is not a mere change of opinion, but a radical and thorough renovation attested by certain fruits. 1. He thirsted for more instruction (ver. 32). 2. He was concerned for the souls of his family. 3. His faith wrought by love. 4. He had peace and joy in believing. 5. He made an open profession of his faith. Conclusion: Learn—1. That men in their unconverted state are often careless, and destitute of all fear of God and concern for their souls. 2. While they are thus careless God is often pleased to make use of some solemn and awakening dispensation to arouse and alarm them. 3. Sometimes the trials and disappointments of sinners only serve to exasperate their natural enmity, as was the case with the jailer, or attempted suicide. 4. Convictions are only useful when they produce an earnest spirit of thoughtfulness and inquiry. 5. Conviction only ends in conversion when a true sense of sin is combined with an apprehension of God's mercy in Christ. (*J. Buchanan, D.D.*) *The Philippian jailer*:—I. THE AWAKENING OF THE JAILER. The first circumstance that appears powerfully to have affected his mind was, great temporal calamity threatening his immediate ruin and death. Great and sudden and heavy afflictions are often sent by the providence of God that He may bring men to recollection and prayer. There were many things here, all concurring, which powerfully affected the jailer's mind. But these were only outward circumstances; and it was only by the special grace of God that they were made serviceable to his soul. Many people suffer huge afflictions, but never think of God in them; and so their afflictions come to no blessed issue. It was not, indeed, till after the jailer had come to himself that he thinks about his soul, and sees the hand of God in the surrounding circumstances. In the day of God's conviction men are thankful for help from those whom they had reviled: and in the great day of all, when the door of repentance shall be for ever closed, the persecutors of the true Church of Jesus shall fall down before them, and be as ashes under the soles of their feet. II. THE CONSEQUENCES OF HIS AWAKENING, in his earnest inquiry. Let me point out to you what it is to be saved. 1. To be delivered from all our sins. 2. To be delivered from all the penalty of all these evil acts. 3. To be placed in a capacity to overcome them. 4. To be saved from the practice of sin, as well as from the condemnation of it. 5. To be delivered from the devil. 6. To be delivered from the world. 7. To be saved from the curse of the Almighty. 8. To be delivered from hell. But to be saved is far more than this: it is to be brought from sin to holiness, from the curse to the blessing, from death to life, from unquietness to peace, from Satan to God. III. THE ANSWER GIVEN TO THIS INQUIRING, AWAKENING MAN. They call away his attention at once from himself to Christ, to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. He entered into a new life from that very hour. And now, observe, the jailer has found Jesus; and his terror is turned into joy. As the blessed fruits of his believing, his heart is filled with joy and love to the brethren; and he attended, with swift obedience, to the Lord's laws, and entered, by baptism, upon his Christian course. Conclusion: In the narrative observe—1. A remarkable instance of free and rich mercy to a desperate sinner reduced to the last extremity. 2. An instructive instance of the mysteriousness of God's ways in the accomplishment of His purposes of mercy. 3. That the salvation of God is as free as it is vast. 4. The simplicity of the gospel. 5. That all the children of God are not awakened in the same way. 6. A picture of the world. This earth is a prison; the persons in it are condemned to die—yea, a thousand are led forth to execution daily. And though the unconverted man may not draw a sword to plunge it into his own heart, the sword of Divine vengeance is unsheathed against him, and may pierce him at any moment. And whereas, while Paul and Silas were praising God for redemption, the earthquake shook the prison, and the fetters fell off the

prisoners, we see, as it were, a picture of the blessings of the gospel, whereby "the prisoner leaps to loose his chains," and those who are enabled to believe are emancipated from the bondage of sin, and brought to the glorious liberty of the children of God. (*T. Snow, A.M.*) *The conversion of the jailer*:—I. THE INITIATIVE STAGES TO CONVERSION. 1. A terrible sense of danger. The earthquake, and the strange, sublime conduct of the prisoners, roused his guilty conscience. 2. An earnest spirit of inquiry. "What must I do," &c. 3. A readiness to do whatever is required. II. THE EXCLUSIVE MEANS OF CONVERSION. Faith in Christ is indispensable to produce this moral change. 1. A change of character requires a change in beliefs. We are controlled and moulded by motives: motives are beliefs. 2. The new beliefs necessary to produce this change must be directed to Christ. Christ alone gives us—(1) The true ideal of character. (2) The true way of reaching it. (3) The true aids to enable us to do so. III. THE GLORIOUS ISSUE OF CONVERSION. "Thou shalt be saved." What is salvation? It is not in any sense a physical change, nor merely an intellectual change, nor necessarily a local change. It is a moral revolution. It is the soul rising from sensualism to spirituality, from selfishness to benevolence, from the world to God. This conversion—1. Will ensure the salvation of our own souls. "*Thou* shalt," &c. 2. Will lead to the salvation of others. "And thy house"—not, of course, that his belief would save his family independently of theirs; but that it would prompt him to use such efforts as would, under God, lead his family to a saving faith. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *A man in two conditions*:—I. WHAT KIND OF MAN BEFORE CONVERSION? The jailer a remarkable instance of the power of God's grace. He was a stern Roman disciplinarian. He respected authority. He was probably an old soldier, who for good service in the past was rewarded with this post. This was creditable to him. We must be faithful in our daily work. I grant there is a little harshness in the execution of his orders; he was not commanded to thrust, but to keep them safely, and he tried his best to do so. He goes to bed. He is asleep. An earthquake comes. Not alarmed about his wife and family. His one business was, under the seal of the Roman Emperor, to look after the prison doors. Would that all Christians were as faithful to their office as this unenlightened man. He finds the door open. He fears disgrace. He cannot combat the charge of neglected duty. He would have killed himself. He was a man sternly upright. I am always glad when such men are saved. They are not always saved. They stand high in public esteem, and are apt to forget their Master in heaven. The jailer was a man of few words. "What must I do to be saved?" Men of this kind are often cold. It is hard to warm their hearts. He was a man of action and decision. He says to this man, "Go, and he goeth"; he is prompt himself. II. WHAT OCCASIONED HIS CONVERSION? He had received some instruction before. He had heard the testimony of the girl, and possibly the words of Paul. They did not impress him. He slept afterwards. He was not made to tremble because the prisoners had escaped; this fear had been banished by Paul. What then, the miracle, that the doors were opened, and yet that none had escaped! What gladness filled his soul! No blame possible. He was brought near to the unseen world by the danger he had escaped; and as the light shone around he saw his past life, and the Eternal Spirit unveiled that life and made him to see the evil of it. Then his conversion grew out of the further instruction of the apostle. Plain teaching and a simple heart to receive it make quick work of the matter. Let us thank God for any circumstances which secure the conversion of a soul. Do not complain because the earthquake is not in the conversion; no matter how accomplished, or through whom. III. WHAT SORT OF A CONVERT HE MADE. 1. He was a believing convert. He believed without delay or doubt. He was told to believe, and he did. Who will not believe what the experience of thousands promises to be true? 2. He was an humble convert. He fell down at the feet of the apostle. He waited upon them in his house. A convinced soul does not want the highest seat in the synagogue. If good people dispute at all, let it be for a place at the feet of Christ. 3. He was a ready convert. Hearing—believing—fellowship—all in the midnight hour. When we know what Christ would have us do, any moment of delay is sin. 4. He was a practical convert. He washed their stripes. He set food before them. Not easy to get up a feast in the middle of the night. He fetched them the best. He is the right sort of a convert who wants to be doing something for Christ; he can soon find something to do. 5. He was a joyful convert. 6. He was an influential convert. All in his house were converted. 7. He was a sensible convert. He still kept on in his position. He did not give up keeping the gaol. Who so fit to be a jailer as a man who knows the Lord and will be humane? We

like those who are converted to keep to their business and to make money for the cause of Christ. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 30, 31. **What must I do to be saved? . . . Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.**—*The great question and the plain answer:*—The keeper of a Macedonian gaol was not likely to be a very nervous or susceptible person. And so the extraordinary state of agitation and panic into which this rough jailer was cast needs some kind of explanation. Now do you think that the jailer's question was a piece of foolish superstition? I daresay some of you do, or some of you may suppose, too, that it was one very unnecessary for him or anybody to ask. So I want, in a very few words, to deal with these three things—the question that we should all ask, the answer that we may all take, the blessing that we may all have. I. THE QUESTION THAT WE SHOULD ALL ASK. I know that it is very unfashionable nowadays to talk about "salvation" as man's need. What is it to be saved? Two things; to be healed and to be safe. With both aspects the expression is employed over and over again in Scripture. It means either restoration from sickness or deliverance from peril. I venture to press upon every one here these two considerations—we all need healing from sickness; we all need safety from peril. Mind, I am not talking about vices. I have no doubt you are a perfectly respectable man, in all the ordinary relations of life. Be honest with yourselves in asking and answering the question whether or no *you* have this sickness of sin, its paralysis towards good or its fevered inclination to evil. If salvation means being healed of a disease we have all got the disease; and whether we wish it or no, we want the healing. And what of the other meaning of the word? Salvation means being safe? Are you safe? Is anybody safe standing in front of that awful law that rules the whole universe, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap"? Somewhere and somehow, men will have to lie on the beds that they have made; to drink as they have brewed. If sin means separation from God, and separation from God means, as it assuredly does, death, then I ask you, and there is no need for any exaggerated words about it, Are we not in danger? and if salvation be a state of deliverance from sickness, and a state of deliverance from peril, do we not need it? Ah, I venture to say we need it more than anything else. You will not misunderstand me as expressing the slightest depreciation of other remedies that are being offered extensively now for the various evils under which society and individuals groan. We are wrong in our relation to God, and that has to be set right before we are fundamentally and thoroughly right. That is to say, salvation is our deepest need. Then how does it come that men go on, as so many of my friends here this evening have gone on, all their days paying no attention to that need? Is their any folly, amidst all the irrationalities of that irrational creature man, to be matched with the folly of steadily refusing to look forward and settle for ourselves the prime element in our condition—viz., our relation to God? A man is never so wise as when he says to himself, "Let me fairly know the whole facts of my relation to the unseen world in so far as they can be known here, and if they are wrong, let me set about rectifying them, if it be possible." II. That brings me to the next point here—viz., THE BLESSED, CLEAR ANSWER THAT WE MAY ALL TAKE. Paul and Silas were not nonplussed by this question, nor did they reply to it in the fashion in which many men would have answered it. Take a specimen. If anybody were to go with this question to some of our modern wise men and teachers, they would say, "Saved? My good fellow, there is nothing to be saved from. Get rid of delusions, and clear your mind of cant and superstition." Or they would say, "Saved? Well, if you have gone wrong, do the best you can in the time to come." Or if you went to some of our friends they would say, "Come and be baptized, and receive the grace of regeneration in holy baptism; and then come to the sacraments, and be faithful and loyal members of the Church which has apostolic succession in it." And some would say, "Set yourselves to work and toil and labour." And some would say, "Don't trouble yourselves about such whims. A short life and a merry one; make the best of it, and jump the life to come." Neither cold morality nor godless philosophy nor wild dissipation nor narrow ecclesiasticism prompted Paul's answer. He said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." What did that poor heathen man know about the Lord Jesus Christ? Next to nothing. How could he believe upon Him if he knew so little about Him? Well, you hear in the context that this summary answer to the question was the beginning and not the end of a conversation, which conversa-

tion, no doubt, consisted largely in extending and explaining the brief formulary with which it had commenced. But it is a grand thing that we can put the all-essential truth into half a dozen simple words, and then expound and explain them as may be necessary. Mark, first, whom it is that we are to believe on. "The Lord," that is the Divine Name; "Jesus," that is the name of a man; "Christ," that is the name of an office. And if you put them all together, it is this, He on whom we sinful men may put our sole trust, and hope for our healing and our safety, is the Son of God, who came down upon earth to live our life and to die our death that He might bear on Himself our sins, and fulfil all that ancient prophecy and symbol had proclaimed as needful, and therefore certain to be done, for men. It is not a starved half-Saviour whose name is only Jesus, and neither Lord nor Christ, faith in whom will save you. You must grasp the whole revelation of His nature and His power if from Him there is to flow the life that you need. And note what it is that we are to do with Jesus Christ. To "believe on Him" is a very different thing from believing Him. III. Lastly, consider THE BLESSING WE MAY ALL RECEIVE. This jailer about whom we have been speaking was a heathen when the sun set and a Christian when it rose. A sudden conversion, you say, and sudden conversions are always suspicious. I am not so sure about that; they may be or they may not be, according to circumstances. There are a great many things in this world that have to be done suddenly if they are ever to be done at all. And I, for my part, would have far more faith in a man who, in one leap, sprung from the depth of the degradation of that coarse jailer into the light and joy of the Christian life, than in a man who tried to get to it by slow steps. You have to do everything in this world worth doing by a sudden resolution, however long the preparation may have been which led up to the resolution. The act of resolving is always the act of an instant. And there is an immense danger that with some of you, if that change does not begin in a moment's resolve to-night, you will be further away from it than ever you were. The outcast jailer changed nationalities in a moment. You who have dwelt in the suburbs of Christ's kingdom all your lives—why cannot you go inside the gate as quickly? For many of us the gradual "growing up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" has been the appointed way. For some of us I verily believe the sudden change is the best. Some of us have a sunrise like the tropics, where the one moment is grey and cold, and next moment the seas are lit with the glory. Others of us have a sunrise like the poles, where a long, slow-growing light precedes the rising, and the rising itself is scarce observable. But it matters little as to how we get to Christ, if we are there. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The jailer's question*:—I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH THE QUESTION WAS ASKED. 1. Not in response to any direct teaching. Paul and Silas had not been preaching to him, so far as we know. The pulpit is a great but not the only instrument for good. Where the prophet has preached in vain, God may reserve many to Himself. There is a still small voice that does a work which the pulpit may fail to do. 2. But after a time of trouble. It is quite common to see religious interest awakened in a time of trouble. But it is not, alas! so common, that the interest continues after the trouble is past. The jailer had been assured of the safety of his prisoners before he asked this question. 3. After observation of the power of Christianity on others' lives. He had seen Paul and Silas scourged, and had, notwithstanding, heard them singing praises. He had seen that, when they had opportunity, they made no attempt to escape. Their preaching he might have scoffed at, but their lives carried with them a power beyond that of words. II. THE QUESTION ITSELF. What is it to be saved? 1. To be delivered from sin's punishment. 2. To be delivered from sin's power. It was "from their sins" that Christ came to save His people. III. THE ANSWER. The question is: "What shall I do?" as though anticipating some great requirement. The answer, perplexing many by its simplicity, is, "Believe." And what is it to believe? Well, that depends on what is to be believed. "Jesus Christ died to save you." Do I believe that? Then emotion and action are both called forth, I sorrow for sin, and flee from sin; His love calls forth my love, and my faith works by love. Let the object of faith be a person, and trust is its essential element. To the banker whom I trust I give up my gold. To the physician whom I trust I commit the care of my diseased body, and I take his medicines, though they be poisonous. To the Saviour whom I trust I commit my all. I lay my sins upon Him, and He bears them; I forsake sin, for He commands it; I lay cheerfully hold on His promises and He fulfils them. 1. Gospel faith is trustful, because its object is a

Person. 2. It is fruitful in good works, because that Person calls to action. (*Study and Pulpit.*) *The great question*:—There are many questions of great importance, but there is one question that comes before all others, and that is—"What must I do to be saved?" When Esther stood before Ahasuerus, her request was, "Let my life be given to me at my petition, and my people at my request." Had she asked anything else than this she might as well not have asked at all. It is even so with the human soul. There are many blessings to be enjoyed, and acquisitions to be made, but these are only possible when this great question has been set at rest. I. THE QUESTION. It suggests the thought of present danger. If I were to exclaim with apparent solicitude, "My friend, allow me to save you!" would you not look astonished, and reply, "My dear sir, what do you mean? I am in no danger." But suppose I were to offer the same proposal when you were in peril of drowning, you would understand the proposal. The danger from which Christ proposes to save the soul is threefold. 1. There is a moral danger. Sin is to the soul what disease is to the body. We value our natural life sufficiently to take measures to counteract disease when we recognise its presence. Oh, that men were equally wise about the soul! But it is not always the most startling form of disease that is the most fatal. There is a disease that sweeps off its victims by hundreds, where small-pox slays its tens—consumption. Some forms of sin are loathsome. It is not to be wondered at that the drunkard should be described as in danger, but all seems a contrast between his life and the very respectable life you live. Yet though your sins excite no fears, remember they are sins, and a disease of the soul all the more perilous because they excite so little apprehension. 2. There is a spiritual danger. There are certain mysterious intelligences of evil who waylay us, with the object of compassing our ruin. We pity the man whose footsteps are dogged by the assassin. Have we no commiseration for those who are exposed to a more murderous foe? You would tremble if you woke up to find your greatest enemy standing over your bed, dagger in hand; but a more terrible than any human enemy has you at present in his power. 3. Judicial danger. Here is a man in the condemned cell: no man will say that he is not in terrible danger. Why? Because he is condemned already. Even so judgment has been already pronounced upon every sinner. It used to be fabled of the ostrich that when pressed hard by the pursuer, it buried its head in the sand, and endeavoured to persuade itself that it was safe because it ceased to see the danger. But the bird of the desert is too wise to do anything of the kind; yet sinners are not. Whether, however, they forget it or not, it is there. "He that believeth not is condemned already." Now with these thoughts before us we shall be better able to understand the story from which our text is taken. Why did the jailer tremble? He was no coward, nor were earthquakes unusual in that part of the world. He had shown a moment before how little he feared death. Paul and Silas had created no small stir in that town, and the damsel had borne witness to them as "servants of the most high God," &c. The jailer must have known all about this, and now when he awakes in the darkness of night and hears their singing amid the terrible rumble of the earthquake shock, and sees them full of solicitude for the man that had so cruelly wronged them, the thought rushes into his mind, "They are what they profess to be; and have come to show us the way of salvation." Another moment and this mighty God, whose majesty I have defied in the persons of His servants, may hurl me to the flames of Tartarus. "Sirs, what shall I do to be saved?" Now we understand what the inquiry meant. The man felt what it was to be in the hands of a justly indignant God. It is this that brings a similar inquiry to our lips, and until you reach this point nothing is gained. II. THE ANSWER—"Believe," &c. It does not sound so very much, does it? It sets forth salvation as centred in a Person. That Person then is represented as in a position to deliver us from the forms of danger to which we are exposed. 1. The last danger is the greatest of all; for what can be more terrible than to have God against us? Here most of all, I find myself in need of a Saviour; for in this respect more than any other my case is hopeless. When I contemplate sin as a moral disease, I may flatter myself with the hope that I may get the better of it; or I may flatter myself that I may escape the malignant influence of the intelligences of darkness by care, and watchfulness, and determined resistance. But how shall I escape from the sentence of the righteous Judge? I am directed to raise my eyes to the Cross, and there I see One who has vindicated His Father's law in His own person by suffering such a penalty as sin has merited, and by doing so has rendered it no longer necessary that God's judgment should be

vindicated by my doom. 2. Being thus saved from the judgment of God, I am also saved from the power of Satan. St. Paul was sent to the Gentiles "to turn them from the power of Satan unto God." In forsaking God man turned his back on the only power sufficiently strong to enable him to rise above the tyranny of the destroyer; and thus we came under the yoke of Apollyon. But "the Son of God has been manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil." He rescues us from Satan by bringing us back to God. The Son has made us free, and now are we free indeed. 3. From sin, as a fatal moral disease, Jesus proves Himself our Saviour. In curing bodily diseases He illustrated to us His willingness and His ability to cure our spiritual diseases. There is a balm in Gilead, there is a Physician there, and your "hurt" may yet be recovered. "Wilt thou be made whole?" Surely Jesus is passing through this our Bethsaida to-night with this question on His lips. Which of us shall be the first to claim His healing touch? III. THE SUBJECTIVE CONDITION UPON WHICH THE ENJOYMENT OF THESE BENEFITS DEPENDS. What is it to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? In endeavouring to understand these words, we have to guard against the danger of making them mean too little, or too much. Those who fall into the first error would represent faith as the mere mental acceptance of a certain number of facts or doctrines, and those who fall into the latter would represent it as something so mysterious and unintelligible that none can be assured that they really possess it. This faith is—1. An intellectual conviction or apprehension by which I take in the object proposed to me, assuring myself of its character and trustworthiness. Many fail here, because they do not even intellectually apprehend the true character of the provision made in Christ to meet their case. 2. Next comes the decision of the will—the moral act by which I repose my simple confidence upon the object so apprehended. Now it is here that most people are found wanting. The child that you set on a table and bid spring into your arms is as apt an illustration as you could wish. There it stands hesitating, not because it has any real doubt in its mind of its parent's ability to catch it, but rather because it allows its will to be influenced by its feelings instead of being affected by its reasonable conviction. Now you believe with your mind that Jesus is the sinner's Saviour, and therefore yours. Why allow any feeling of misgiving to prevent you from committing yourself with a distinct and decisive act of will into His arms, trusting Him to save you now? 3. But next, when the mind has apprehended the object, and the will decides to trust itself to it, there will naturally follow a rest of the soul, in the assurance that all is well, and this may be described as the emotional element in a true faith, the presence of which crowns and completes the whole, and brings the inward uneasiness and disquiet to an end. One of you is drowning. I swim out to save you. As I approach you know and believe that I have the power and the will to save you. Then comes the act of will as you trust yourself to me. But still, there is only one arm between you and destruction. Yet you reflect, "What have I to fear? he is able and willing to save me, and I am trusted into his hands." At once the inward tumult begins to subside, and a wonderful reaction of relief and even of calm happiness sets in, although you have not yet reached the shore. (*W. Hay-Aitken, M.A.*) *Method of dealing with inquirers:*—Every Christian, especially every minister, will have this responsible and difficult work to do. I. GENERAL PRINCIPLE SUITED TO ALL CASES. The directions given will be determined by the views we entertain of the nature of religion. 1. Rationalists endeavour to suppress all concern. 2. Romanists teach men to submit to the Church, and practise religious duties and penance. 3. Protestants direct inquirers to come directly to God in the way appointed in the gospel. But this general direction is modified by the peculiar views of those who give it. (1) Some place the essence of religion in submission to God, and hence the general directions to submit. (2) Others in the choice of God as a source of happiness, hence the direction "Choose God as your portion." (3) Others in a volition to make the happiness of the universe the aim of our being. (4) Others in the return of the soul to God through Christ, and by faith in Him. Hence the general direction to "believe." This is the proper direction, because—(*a*) Faith is declared to be the condition of salvation. Believers are saved: unbelievers are lost. (*b*) This is the apostolic direction. (*c*) Neither pardon nor sanctification is otherwise to be obtained. (*d*) Christ is the Alpha and Omega of the gospel. But what is faith? What is the precise thing to be done? The exercise of this involves immediate conviction of sin. II. SPECIAL DIRECTIONS. 1. As to sceptical doubts. (1) Do not rely on speculative arguments mainly. Their true place is to remove difficulties, to show that the truth is not

inconsistent with reason or fact. But they are not to be used to prove the truth —*i.e.*, to afford its positive evidence. (2) Rely upon the exhibition of the truth, and upon pressing it on the conscience, because—(*a*) The ground of faith is the witness of the Spirit with the truth. (*b*) The truth is self-evidencing. (*c*) Arguments are human, while truth is Divine. 2. As to fatalists, who say nothing can be done. They plead the doctrine of election. (1) Here again moral considerations should direct our effort. The intellectual difficulty is not first to be removed. (2) The sinner should be urged to act as he does in other cases. 3. As to have those who rely on the excuse of inability, or feel they can do nothing. The true method is to admit the fact and fall as the leper at the feet of Jesus. 4. As to those who plead hardness of heart, want of conviction of sin. Show the true place of conviction. (*C. Hodge, D.D.*) *Sin and salvation:*—I. TO EVERY MAN IN HIS SERIOUS MOODS THE SENSE OF SIN IS A GENUINE HUMAN EXPERIENCE which no reasoning can reason away. 1. It is not a remnant of savagery, but the sign of a spiritual nature; growing with our growing power of moral sympathy and insight. 2. The Christian revelation quickens and deepens the consciousness of sin. In the presence of Jesus Christ all our self-complacencies vanish. 3. The reality of sin is increasingly felt as we realise its consequences; how it darkens and disorders human life and human society. The sense of sin is a pain, but in such pain there is hope; it is the beginning of all redemption and all progress. II. THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF SALVATION IS A VERY COMPREHENSIVE ONE. 1. It is a certain severance from the shame and guilt of transgression. The sense of dissatisfaction with sin is not healthy in its influence unless it receives a hopeful interpretation and leads to hopeful endeavour. It may also, according to our training, assume the form of a fear of God and the hereafter. But the removal of our distress concerning ourselves, and our ignorant and guilty dread of God and fate, is only clearing the ground for Christ's great salvation. 2. There is evil working within, and from its presence and dominion in the heart and life we need to be delivered. "What must I do to be saved?" is but a poor and petty cry when it only means "What must I do to escape from the discomfort, the fear, the natural penalty of sin?" That is the cry of a man who cares more for his ease and happiness than for eternal truth and good. We are not to speak of being saved if we are not being saved from the sins we are tempted to commit daily. 3. Salvation is character and the perfection of character, the realisation of the ideal life for which we were created. The obligation is laid upon every one to come to his best, and we are called not to repress but to cultivate all our human faculties. The saved man is the whole man, the full-grown, healthily and harmoniously developed man. 4. Salvation means a life lived not for self but for God. Religious selfishness is just as bad as any other kind of selfishness. Man's chief end is to save himself that he might glorify God, live for Divine ends, and give himself as the Lord did for the redemption of mankind. III. HOW BELIEVING IN JESUS CHRIST ENABLES A MAN TO REALISE THIS IDEAL OF SALVATION. Christ saves not by any single method, but by whatever He was and is, did and does, by all the influences of His life and Cross, truth, and spirit; saves not by any arbitrary and magical efficacy, but precisely to the extent in which He is known and understood, loved and obeyed; saves by inspiring right thoughts, right feelings, right motives; saves by giving new trusts, new hopes, new sympathies, new affections; saves by His revelation of the Divine mercy and by bringing men into direct communion with the eternal grace and power. 1. To believe in Christ as the revelation of God to man is to believe in redeeming mercy and grace, and to be delivered thereby from the fear which weakens and the despair which kills. 2. To believe in Christ is to have evil affections conquered and displaced by the growth of a new and holier and more masterful love. 3. In our Christian believing and loyalty are all the elements required for the development of the most complete and finished type of human excellence. To believe in Christ is to believe in ourselves, and to see in Him the man we are each called to be, ought to be, and can be; His righteousness is, indeed, our righteousness—ours to love and live. Faith in Christ is not a substitute for personal obedience, but it is vital with quickening power to make us obey as He obeyed. He changes character by imparting His own character sympathetically to all who enter into real sympathy with Him. 4. To believe in Christ is to be brought out of the circle of our selfish affections, aims, and interests into communion with mankind. His spirit is a social spirit, drawing and binding men together in mutual love and helpfulness, and, through individual influence, producing its effect on the families and generations of men, making possible and

actual, as the text suggested, a Christian heredity. It is in the way of the spread and triumph of the Christian spirit we are to look for the coming of the Christian order of society, which is the second coming of Jesus Christ. (*John Hunter.*) *Anxiety for salvation:*—The reasons that justify this anxiety are—I. THE VALUE OF THAT OBJECT ON WHICH IT IS BESTOWED. We look around upon the solicitude which men feel in reference to earthly objects; and we justify that solicitude up to a certain point. What then should be the solicitude which should be cherished with reference to the immortal soul? Oh, that I had ability to describe the madness a thousand times multiplied of that man who professes to believe that he is immortal, and who can find anything on earth more important to him as a subject of attention than the salvation of his soul! II. THE CONCERN WHICH OTHERS HAVE MANIFESTED ABOUT OUR SOULS. The whole moral universe has been drawn into concern for the immortal soul of man. What was it brought the Son of God from the throne of heaven to the Cross? For what are all the miraculous agencies of the Holy Spirit granted? For what purpose did the finger of inspiration write the Bible, and the arm of Providence defend it? Why did patriarchs live, and priests minister, and prophets predict, and apostles preach? For the salvation of man. III. CONSIDER WHAT THE SALVATION OR THE DAMNATION OF THE SOUL INCLUDES. I dwell for a moment on that vast word—"salvation." The pardon of all your sins; the justification of your person; your adoption into the family of Jehovah, and a spirit of sonship connected with it; the renovation of your fallen nature; consolation in affliction; assurance that all things work together for good; hope in death; the resurrection of the just; life everlasting; a blissful heaven made up of the presence of God in Christ. Turn to the opposite of this. What is hell? The loss of all happiness; but it is a state of conscious existence; it is a state of prolonged death. Hell means banishment from the presence of God, consignment to the dark world where hope never enters and mercy is never seen. This is the question, What shall we do to be saved, so as to gain heaven and to escape hell? IV. THE SOUL OF EVERY MAN, UNTIL HE REPENTS AND BELIEVES IN CHRIST, IS ACTUALLY IN A LOST STATE, ALTHOUGH NOT IRRECOVERABLY LOST. You have no need to ask what will bring the soul into a state of death and condemnation: it is done already. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." You are under the terrors of the law and exposed to the wrath of God. How shall I be delivered from the guilt which sin has brought on my conscience so as to avoid the dominion of sin here and the punishment of sin in the world that is to come? V. THE MULTITUDE OF SOULS THAT ARE IRRECOVERABLY LOST. Such is the loss of the soul, that if it occurred but once in a century it is so tremendous a catastrophe, that it should awaken the solicitude of the whole world. And that man must be guilty of the greatest folly who can go on in reckless security even under the very possibility that he may be that one in a century who might thus perish eternally. VI. THE LOSS OF THE SOUL MAY YET BE AVERTED AND THIS SALVATION SECURED. It were perfectly useless to talk to men of miseries which cannot be remedied, or excite them to the pursuit of benefits which never can be obtained. But this is not your case; you are in that world where mercy reigns; where all the opportunities of salvation and the means of grace are continued. You ask the question, "What shall I do to be saved?" And I am commissioned to reply, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." (*J. Angell James.*) *The way of salvation:*—I. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE QUESTION. And yet it is lamentable how few ask it! Many who have been driven up to it like this jailer would never have thought it unless God had sent some distress to rouse them. This man was asleep till the earthquake happened, and then his mind was suddenly filled with a subject which he had never thought of before. If men were quite left to themselves the generality would never concern themselves with this subject. What is the reason men do not ask the question? Because they do not like the answer. And yet the same persons who are so slack about their great concern are found to be very careful in lesser things. What must I do to be rich? What must I do to be in the fashion? Here daily labours and nightly watchings are sustained without reluctance. And is it consistent with common sense to toil for the sake of things which are perishing, and neglect the only object that is of any real value? People take much more pains to go on in the broad way of destruction than would be requisite to carry them to heaven. Our danger will be more manifest if it be considered that under these circumstances there is one who is as careful as we are careless about ourselves. While we sleep Satan is awake. II. THE ANSWER. This is short and to the purpose. Salvation is what all men are

equally interested in; and thence it stands to reason that the way of salvation should be so plain that all may understand it. But lest they should think that they believe when they do not, it will be necessary to show—1. That belief necessarily implies a knowledge of the object in which we believe. This object is our Lord Jesus Christ, whose person, character, and offices must be made known to us before we can believe Him to be what He is. (1) He is the Lord; and this word is expressed by two words, one of which is Jehovah, and denotes His eternal existence; the other is a term of authority and dominion, which bespeaks Him the Ruler of all things in heaven and earth. As such He is to be worshipped by us; and we find, in fact, that He was frequently worshipped upon earth. (2) He is Jesus. This name expresses that office which He took upon Him for our salvation, and proposes His as the only name given under heaven whereby we may be saved. And if it is His office to deliver us from sin, then we are all under the dominion of sin till He redeems us from the power of Satan unto God. (3) He is Christ, the anointed of God; that Person who, by the power of the Divine Spirit, is ordained to be our Prophet, Priest, and King. 2. Our belief implies an obedience to the commandments of this Divine Person; and this obedience is the evidence He expects of our faith. If we call Him Lord, Lord, we are to do the things which He saith. And therefore—3. The belief of a Christian implies a conformity of character between the believer and the person in whom he believes. The likeness between the Master and the disciple is universal in all professions. If Jesus had been a great warrior then certainly His followers would have excelled in the military art. If He had been a master of worldly forms, then we should have been all for elegance and niceness of outward appearance. But as He was none of these, but a preacher of righteousness, a physician of souls, a guide of the blind, and a comforter of the afflicted, and a sufferer upon earth for the glory of God and the salvation of men; the qualifications which show us to be believers must be of the same sort. (*W. Jones, M.A.*) *Conditions of being saved*:—I. WHAT SINNERS MUST DO TO BE SAVED. 1. They must not imagine that they have nothing to do. 2. Not mistake what they have to do. 3. Not say or imagine that they cannot do what God requires. 4. Not procrastinate. 5. Not wait for God to do what He commands them to do. 6. Not wait for God to do anything whatever. God has either done all on His part already, or if anything more remains, He is ready and waiting this moment for you to do your duty that He may impart all needful grace. 7. Not flee to any refuge of lies. 8. Not seek for any self-indulgent method of salvation. 9. Not imagine you will ever have a more favourable time. 10. Not suppose that you will find another time as good, and one in which you can just as well repent as now. 11. Not wait to see what others will do or say. 12. Not indulge prejudices against God, His ministers, Christians, or anything religious. II. WHAT SINNERS MUST DO TO BE SAVED. You must—1. Understand what you have to do. 2. Return and confess your sins to God. 3. Renounce yourself. In this is implied that you renounce—(1) Your own righteousness, for ever discarding the very idea of having any righteousness in yourself. (2) The idea of having done any good which ought to commend you to God, or be ever thought of as a ground of your justification. (3) Your own will, and be ever ready to say not in word only, but in heart—"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." (4) Your own way and let God have His own way in everything. 4. Come to Christ. You must accept of Christ really and fully as your Saviour. 5. Seek supremely to please Christ, and not yourself. 6. Forsake all that you have, or you cannot be Christ's disciple. There must be absolute and total self-denial. 7. Believe the record God hath given of His Son. "This is the record that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." (*C. G. Finney, D.D.*) *God's method of saving men*:—Consider the question in relation—I. To HUMAN THOUGHT. 1. The history of human thought is to a great extent a history of the manifold forms in which this question has betrayed itself, and of the costly expedients to which man has had recourse in his attempts to answer it. (1) Four thousand years ago confused and anxious whispers of this question meet us in the inquiry of the patriarch—"How shall a man be just with God?" They come up in the later question of the prophet, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?" &c. If we consult the dusky records of paganism we encounter everywhere, in its temples and altars, the dark eclipse of sin and the uneasy suspicions it has cast over the race. If we listen to the creeds and litanies of the best of its teachers we hear everywhere the cry of fugitives from a justice they have provoked, but which they know not how to appease. (2) In our own age the question thrusts itself up in quarters where we least expect to find it. Thinkers, statesmen, scientists, cannot

avoid drifting into the mystery that belongs to the religious question. The mind grown weary of abstract speculations hungers for rest. The conscience, chafed and outraged by unclean proclivities, asks for peace. The heart of the man most engrossed in worldly pursuits will have its hours of awakening, of aching dread in which the questions—What am I, and whither am I going? will make themselves heard. 2. As Christian students we have but one answer to give, and that is the one of the text. When from surging to and fro in all kinds of dreary speculation a man drifts, and turns away to the gospel, the gospel meets him with an answer direct and full in the Person of Christ. It says for a man to be saved is for him to be reconditioned in his moral relations with the Infinite Father, to "be reconciled," to "be at peace." Sin is disharmony. It puts man out of his normal orbit. To be saved is just to enter that orbit. The antecedents to this state are, first, the intelligent conviction that we need it, which is a wise self knowledge, begotten of the truth; and secondly, an ingenuous sorrow for sin, expressed in an amended life. The conditions on which its attainment hinges are belief in the promise, and trust in the Person of Christ. The consequence instantly following is a new life-state—salvation is its initial act. II. To MAN'S DESTINY. 1. Man is "a yonder-minded being, an embodied hereafter." Every man in the present life is building out of himself and for himself a character which belongs to the future. This little everyday life is but the prologue of a mighty drama, the sad plot out of which the harvest of the future is to be reaped. The great assize simply catalogues results. Men are, now and here, what the Judgment Day will show them to be. The supposition of a change induced by death in the character and condition of man must be dismissed. Death does not change, it only fixes. It puts a finality on the book of life, and hands it on to be opened at "the judgment of the Great Day." It sums up two columns—for and against the man—of right and wrong, good and evil, and registers the result. 2. What then? What in view of his eternal existence must a man do to be saved? If there were no dangers to be encountered this question would be useless and impertinent. Or if all souls are sure to enter heaven, the question, how, is a matter of comparative indifference. On the other hand, if there is a risk, and if to make the chance of escape sure to all who are earnest about it, a revelation has been vouchsafed, then we are infinitely concerned to know how that revelation speaks; and we hazard eternal consequences if we fail to listen to, and instantly obey it. First, then, let us say that there is a beginning of the religious life in man which puts the soul and God into a fellowship of peace. When such a man, delivered from his old bondage to evil, yields himself to God, and when amidst the perils of the world he maintains the sanctities of conscience, he has reached a second stage. When at the end of life, the man conquers gloriously in death and then stands faultless in the presence of His glory—this is the end of his salvation: that man is saved—saved because he is safe. The everlasting gates close him in. III. To CHRISTIAN TEACHING. Two things are noteworthy in Paul's answer—first its simplicity, and secondly its immediateness. And were we now dealing with this question within the same limits we should need only to reproduce the same answer. But we are dealing with the question in its broader and more exhaustive signification; and the answer must take in forgiveness, sanctification, and heaven. What then must be done? 1. The wrong doing, on which the necessity of salvation is founded, must be got rid of. We must "cease to do evil" before we can become good. "Let the wicked forsake his way," &c. There can be no compromise between the two terms which enter into this agreement. We must give up sinning, if God is to forgive us for having sinned. 2. The remedy which God has provided must not only be accepted as theoretically true, but must be personally applied. And this shuts out all the pretentious rights of human reason to determine in what method God should deal with the sinner. It brings us squarely up with the one method in which God will deal with us. God's plan does not alternate between open courses—two or more. 3. The one thing that a man must do is distinctly put. He must "believe on," &c. The apostles had nothing more simple to set before this rude pagan. And they had no figurative, fabulous, or doctrinal Christ, but the Christ of Bethlehem and Calvary. And the act on which salvation hinges is as straightforward as its object is definite. You are not to think about Christ, or say grand nothings about Him: you are to believe on Him, to submit to, to trust in Him that He may forgive and heal you. And this act of the soul putting itself out in an intelligent surrender of the whole personality of its being—mind, heart, will—to Christ is the man's trust for salvation. IV. To THE INDIVIDUAL MAN. 1. The importance of this question is obvious. It is the one question that silences every other.

It is the most stupendous question that man in his agony can ask, or that God in His mercy can answer. And it is none the less impressive in that nowhere outside this Book is an answer to be found. The universe has not a whisper of it. Those calm, grand laws, know nothing of mercy. Our schools of philosophy know nothing of salvation. Science has not a word of pity for guilty man. 2. We are not saying that this is the only important question, but that all others are insignificant in comparison. One hundred years hence and what shall I know or care about my banking account, or who is the premier of the country? But one hundred years hence what and where shall I myself be? 3. This question must be answered by each one for himself, and at once. It admits of no postponement. "To-day if ye will hear His voice," &c. Time is on the rush, and we are rushing with it into a timeless future. (*John Burton.*) *Believe, and be saved*:—I. WHAT IS IT TO BELIEVE? Believing in this case involved—1. The assent of the mind to the testimony that Paul gave to our Lord. Now all that is necessary in the case of the testimony that the worlds were framed by the word of God is that we should mentally assent to it. When we have intellectually apprehended it, we have perhaps done all that we can do with it. 2. But there is other testimony which requires the consent of the heart: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." Our conviction is that in this case God testified that He would provide an atonement, and that blood should be shed as a symbol of that atonement, and in acknowledgment of the fact that a personal application of that atonement was required. Now Cain, although he evidently understood this testimony mentally, rejected it in his heart. He thought it sufficient to acknowledge God as a Creator: and therefore simply brought to God of the fruit of the ground, in acknowledgment of God's relation to him as a Creator, and in recognition of the bountifulness of Divine Providence. But Abel received the testimony, adopted the symbol, offered the sacrifice, and therefore by faith offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. 3. There is testimony which requires not merely the assent of the mind, and the consent of the heart, but the response of the will—testimony which, if a man receive, puts him immediately upon a certain course of conduct: and we have two illustrations in the cases of Noah and Abraham. You will see by these illustrations what the apostle means by "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." The first thing is, of course, to understand the meaning of the words, the next to receive them to the heart (Rom. x. 9), and the next to take personal advantage of them. For this message is sent by God to us personally. II. THE OBJECT OF THIS BELIEF. 1. Not God, *as* God, for the devils believe in God. They go further—as the effect of their faith they tremble. They do more than some of you have done. 2. Neither did Paul exhibit the providence of God: far less the law of God. Of what advantage would it be to preach the law of God to a transgressor except with the object of convincing him of sin? If I were to see a fellow-man drowning, should I help him by pointing him to the stream? If he was not conscious of his danger, I should, but it would be useless otherwise. Just so with the law of God. If I find that you do not feel that you are sinners, I teach you the law of God. But if I find you asking, "What must I do to be saved?" if I were to preach God's law to you I should be cruelly mocking you. I then say, not "The law is holy, and just, and good"; but "Jesus came into the world to save sinners." 3. Paul presented not a mere doctrine: there is no mere doctrine that will save any man. If I were to give you a letter of introduction to some physician notable for the cure of particular bodily ailments, could you be cured by that letter? Unless you took the letter to the physician, and saw him, and received his remedies, and applied them, would the letter benefit you? Just so doctrines are intended to introduce you to Christ. 4. And Paul was justified in doing this, for the followiug reasons. In the first place, the object is adapted, and able to save. Salvation is now Christ's one work. And the act of believing is appointed to save. There is nothing in it of efficacy, as there is in the object. It is efficacious simply because of God's arrangement: and therefore no merit can be attached to faith. Faith is a simple receptive faculty. Nothing more now is required. By and by you will have to let that faith work; but just now, for your introduction into salvation, nothing more is required. But then, mark, nothing else will suffice. You must believe. Shall I remind you why this is so difficult? Because it is so simple. You are just like that proud Syrian Naaman. If I were to say to you that in order to be saved, you must visit the Holy Sepulchre, there are some of you who would sell everything to get to the Holy Sepulchre; and you would start immediately. But instead of that we say, Trust. This is God's first and last provision; so that if you do not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you never can be saved. III. THE RESULT.

"Saved!" 1. The body saved—from fresh inroads by sin; from its members being instruments of unrighteousness; from the sting of death; from the victory of the grave. 2. The soul saved—from unholy affection; from raging fear; from guilt; from despondency and despair; from the discord of the passions; from ungodly impulses; from evil influence. 3. The spirit saved—from fatal ignorance; from damnable folly; from vain and evil imaginations; from ruinous error. Body, soul, and spirit, all saved! Saved from all evil now in part, and hereafter saved in absolute and everlasting perfection. (*S. Martin.*) *Saving faith*:—I. WHAT IT PRESUPPOSES. As distinguished from faith in Christ historically, and from what Scripture affirms of Him doctrinally (James ii. 17-20), it presupposes a certain belief with respect to ourselves—viz., that we are sinners, and with a sincere sorrow because of it, and a sincere desire to forsake sin. II. IN WHAT IT CONSISTS. 1. Intellectual assent to the fact that Christ is the Saviour of men. Thus far saving faith is the same as that by which we buy, sell, eat, drink, and travel. Faith is not a new element in the soul life of man, superadded by God, upon an after thought to the moral constitution at the time of conversion. What is then given is grace to see—(1) Self undone. (2) Christ sufficient. 2. Trustfulness superadded to intellectual assent. Heart belief must accompany head belief. A drowning man cannot be saved by a lifeboat simply by believing in its life-saving capabilities; he must trust himself to it. So self is given to Christ in every case of saving faith. 3. Faith in a person. Some people trust in a creed or a ritual; because trust in them flatters rather than interferes with self-love. My creed is orthodox, my service ornate is the expression of some men's faith. Further, it is faith in a Divine person. It is not necessary that we should be able to theorise about the Incarnation or philosophise about the Atonement; but our trust must be in the Son of God, in opposition to being in human priests, whatever their claims. But remember that we are not saved by our faith as something meritorious, but by Christ; yet we cannot be saved without faith, because remaining in unbelief—(1) We make God a liar, and fail to comply with His law of love. (2) We cannot secure and develop the character necessary to fit us for heaven, nor the capacity for its enjoyments. III. THE EXTENT OF THE SALVATION WHICH FAITH SECURES. 1. Salvation from the punishment due to past transgressions. 2. Deliverance from the power and principle of sin. (*J. S. Swan.*) *Salvation through faith in Christ*:—I. WHO IS THIS CHRIST? 1. God; 2. Man; 3. God and Man in one Person. II. WHAT IS IT TO BELIEVE IN THIS CHRIST? 1. To know Him (1 Cor. ii. 2; John xvii. 3). 2. Assent to Him (John xi. 27). 3. Rely upon Him (Eph. i. 12). (1) For the pardon of your sins. (2) The acceptance of your persons. (3) The salvation of your souls. III. HOW SHALL THEY THAT BELIEVE IN CHRIST BE SAVED? 1. From what? (1) The guilt of sin (Gal. iii. 13). (2) The strength of sin (Acts iii. 26; Matt. i. 21). (3) The prevalency of Satan (Heb. ii. 14). (4) The wrath of God (Eph. ii. 3; Rom. v. 9). 2. To what? (1) Justification (Rom. v. 1). (2) Regeneration (2 Cor. v. 17). (3) Spiritual consolation (2 Cor. i. 5). (4) Everlasting salvation (John iii. 16). Consisting in—(*a*) Our freedom from all evil. (*b*) Our enjoyment of all good—as appears from the promises (John i. 12, iii. 15; Acts xiii. 39); from the end of Christ's coming (John iii. 16); from the nature of faith (Heb. xi 1). IV. USES FOR—1. Instruction. Unbelievers will be damned. 2. Conviction. (1) You do not know Him; for then you could not choose but—(*a*) Admire Him (1 Tim. iii. 16). (*b*) Love Him (Eph. vi. 24). (*c*) Think frequently of Him. (*d*) Make it your business to interest yourselves in Him. (2) If you do know, you do not assent to Him; for did you believe that He died for sin—(*a*) Would you live in it? (*b*) Would you not repent of it? (3) You do not rely on Christ; for—(*a*) What was it thou tookest most comfort from upon thy last sick bed? (*b*) What is it that thou now delightest thyself with in trouble? How seldom dost thou think of Christ. (*c*) How comest thou to live in sin without mourning for and turning from it (2 Cor. v. 17)? 3. Examination. Test thy faith in Christ by—(1) Thy knowledge of Him. (2) Thy love to Him. (3) Thy longing after Him. (4) Thy obedience to His command. (5) Thy acting for Him (James ii. 18). 4. Exhortation. Believe in Christ; for consider—(1) How miserable thou wilt be without Him. Satan always domineering over, sin always raging in, and God always frowning upon thee to all eternity (Psa. vii. 11). (2) How happy thou wilt be with Him. (*a*) Thy sins pardoned. (*b*) Satan subdued. (*c*) Corruptions mortified. (*d*) The heart sanctified (1 Cor. i. 2). (*e*) God pleased (Heb. xi. 5). (*f*) The soul saved (Rom. viii. 1). V. MEANS—1. Prayer; 2. Reading; 3. Hearing (Rom. x. 17). 4. Meditation. (1) The insufficiency of all things else. (2) The sufficiency of Christ. (3) Its end in

coming into the world. (*Bp. Beveridge.*) *The great question answered*:—I. What are the ANTECEDENTS of saving faith, that is, what precedes the act of faith in the experience of the sinner? I do not doubt that there was, previous to this jailer's faith and essential to it, a conviction first of his guilt, secondly of his danger, and therefore, thirdly, of his need of salvation, and of a Saviour. It is on the ground of these facts that the gospel comes to men with offers of pardon and grace; and he who does not realise them as facts in his personal history cannot receive the gospel, for he does not feel his need of the gospel. II. Let us look at the OBJECT of faith. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." This which you are ready to rely on is nothing within you—no change wrought there, either by your own efforts or by any other agency, human or Divine. Cease, then, to explore the recesses of your spirits in search of something there which will constitute a ground of hope. You may search there for ever and find no Saviour there, and nothing that will make you more worthy to come to Christ. III. Let us consider the ACT of faith. What does the sinner do when he believes in Christ? It is worthy of notice that the Bible, while saying much of the necessity, the object, and the effects of faith, says very little of its nature. The reason may be because the act itself is so simple, so easily understood. IV. Let us look at the RESULTS of faith. In the text these results are all summed up in the one word saved. We find, by searching the Scriptures, that these results, thus summed up, are resolved into two classes, one of which takes place in the mind and purposes of God, and the other in the mind and destiny of the sinner. On the side of God is His justification of the sinner. It is a judicial act, the act of God as a judge, freeing the sinner from the penalty of the law which he has incurred, and placing him in the position, in regard to the condemning sentence, of one who has never incurred the penalty. On the side of God also is His acceptance of believing sinners, and His adoption of them into His family. "He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." On the side of God is also His bestowment of His Spirit on the believing sinner. "Because ye are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts." But let us look at the results of this faith in the mind and destiny of the believer. In his heart, one of the first results of believing is peace or joy. Another result of faith is obedience. All acts of holy obedience spring from true faith. It brings the believer within the sphere of new motives. It fills his heart with ardent love. It secures for him the influences of the Divine Spirit. So in proportion to his faith will be his faithfulness. The final result of faith is eternal life. Who can tell its value? Who can show us the everlasting difference between a soul lost and a soul saved? In conclusion, I remark—1. The terms of salvation are easy and simple. They could not be more so. They are also exactly adapted to our necessities. 2. The time for the exercise of this faith is now. Is not Christ now able and willing to save you? Is He not as worthy of trust now as He ever will be? 3. Finally, the results of faith are most urgent motives to its immediate exercise. Do you wish to be free from condemnation, and stand justified before God? Then believe. Do you wish to be adopted into the family of God, and so become an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ? Then believe. Do you wish for peace with God? Then believe. Do you wish for God's Spirit as a comforter, a guide, a strengthener, a sanctifier? Then believe. (*W. W. Woodworth.*) *Believing on Jesus*:—I know of a man who, being obliged to sleep in the upper story of a lofty building, keeps a fire-escape in his room in the shape of a stout rope-ladder. He believes *in* that ladder. That is, he has perfect confidence in the stoutness of the hemp, the strength of the wooden "rounds," and the ability of that ladder to bear his weight. But on some dark night let the cry of "fire" ring through that edifice, and let him put the grappling-irons fast to the window casement, and swing himself out into the air, and he will believe *on* that rope-ladder. He will trust himself to it. When he has done that, he will have exercised saving faith in his fire-escape. Not before. Thousands keep gospel truth coiled up in their memories as my friend kept that rope-ladder coiled up in one corner of his room. They have heard and read of Jesus, the Atoner for sin; they admire Him, they believe in His Divine qualities, love, &c., and vaguely expect, at some future day, to get to heaven by Him. But they have never for one moment trusted their souls to Jesus. They never have even attempted to escape out of their guilt and danger, by resting their whole weight on what Jesus has done for the sinner, or on His omnipotent grace. Perish they must, if they remain where they are. The act of resting on the crucified Jesus saves. *Saving faith*:—This answer has three or four properties. 1. It was immediate,

and without delay. There was no time required, as in the case of Nebuchadnezzar's wise men, when they had to interpret the king's dream. The apostles were well versed in such matters. 2. It was full and comprehensive. It meets the point at once, and contains an epitome of the whole gospel. 3. It is highly satisfactory, affording direct relief in the moment of distress, and giving peace. 4. It is the same answer as all God's ministers return to inquiring souls, whatever be their previous state or character. I. THE EXHORTATION The Scriptures speak of various kinds and degrees of faith, but of one only that accompanies salvation. 1. The original source of all true believing is the free grace of God in Christ Jesus. It is His gift, and the effect of His good pleasure. 2. The means of producing faith is the Divine testimony. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. 3. The immediate object of faith is Christ, as revealed in the gospel. 4. The ultimate end of faith is our happiness, and the glory of God. "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." It disclaims all merit and sufficiency of its own, and excludes all boasting, only in the Lord. II. THE PROMISE. Salvation comprehends a final and complete deliverance from all evil, natural and moral, and the enjoyment of perfect bliss. It includes, especially, the pardon of sin, the sanctification of our nature, a victory over all our enemies, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. The connection which this has with believing, will be seen in the following particulars. 1. Though salvation is promised to them that believe, it is neither provided nor bestowed in the foresight of their believing nor had faith any influence on the Divine determination. The ground of all spiritual blessings is the free and unmerited favour of God (2 Tim. i. 9). 2. Though salvation is promised to them that believe, it is not promised as a reward for their believing, but for His sake in whom they believe. It receives a title to eternal life, but does not give one. Faith is like the eye beholding, and the hand receiving a gift; but however necessary to its enjoyment, the gift itself is free and undeserved. 3. As faith receives a title to eternal life, founded upon the promises of the gospel, so it is that which gives us the actual enjoyment of it. By faith we receive the atonement, and are led to acquiesce in the way of acceptance with God, as full of wisdom, and suited to our sinful and helpless condition. It is not a medicine prepared, but applied, that effects a cure. 4. Faith produces those holy dispositions which form our meetness for heaven, though not our title to it. There can be no enjoyment where there is no congeniality. But true faith purifies the heart, and imbues it with every principle of piety and goodness. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) *How to be saved:*—The sinner's prescription. It points out—I. A FACT—"salvation." II. A CERTAIN FACT—"shalt." III. A PERSONAL FACT—"Thou." IV. THE CAUSE OF SALVATION—"Christ," "Jesus," "Lord." V. THE INSTRUMENT OF SALVATION—"Believe." (*W. W. Wythe.*) *The all-decisive step:*—There are some documents of so little importance that you do not care to put any more than your last name under them, or even your initials; but there are some documents of so great importance that you write out your full name. So the Saviour in some parts of the Bible is called "Lord," and in others "Jesus," and in others "Christ"; but that there might be no mistake about this passage, all three names come in together. I. WHO IS THIS BEING THAT YOU WANT ME TO BELIEVE IN? Men sometimes come to me with certificates of good character, but I cannot trust them. There is some dishonesty in their looks. You cannot put your heart's confidence in a man until you know what stuff he is made of. No man would think of venturing his life on a vessel going out to sea that had never been inspected. And you cannot expect me to risk the cargo of my immortal interests on board any craft. Well—1. Christ was a very attractive person. Christ did not tell the children to come to Him. "Suffer little children to come unto Me" was not spoken to the children, but to the disciples. The children came without any invitation. Christ did not ask John to put his head down on His bosom; John could not help but put his head there. When people saw Christ coming they ran into their houses and brought their invalids out that He might look at them. They could not keep away from Him. 2. In addition to this softness of character, there was a fiery momentum. How the old hypocrites trembled before Him! How the kings of the earth turned pale! He was a loving Christ, but it was not effeminacy. Lest the world should not realise His earnestness, this Christ mounts the Cross. Oh, such a Christ as that—so loving, so self-sacrificing—can you not trust Him? II. MANY SAY, "I WILL TRUST HIM IF YOU WILL ONLY TELL ME HOW." Just as you trust any one. You trust your partner in business. If a commercial house give you a note payable three months hence, you expect the payment of that note. You go home and expect there will be food on the table. Have the same confidence

in Christ. He is only waiting to get from you what you give to scores of people every day. Confidence. If these people are more worthy, more faithful, if they have done more than Christ, then give them the preference; but if Christ is as trustworthy as they are, then deal with Him as fairly. "Oh," says some one, "I believe that Christ was born in Bethlehem, and that He died on the Cross." Do you believe it with your head or your heart? I will illustrate the difference. You read in a newspaper how Captain Braveheart on the sea risked his life for the salvation of his passengers. You say, "What a grand fellow he must have been!" You fold the paper and, perhaps, do not think of that incident again. That is historical faith. But now you are on the sea, and asleep, and are awakened by the shriek of "Fire!" You rush out on the deck. "Down with the lifeboats!" cries the captain. People rush into them. Room only for one more man. Who shall it be? You or the captain? The captain says, "You." You jump and are saved. He stands there and dies. Now, you believe that Captain Braveheart sacrificed himself for his passengers, but you believe it with grief at his loss, and with joy at your deliverance. That is saving faith. You often go across a bridge you know nothing about. You do not know who built the bridge, nor of what material it is made; but you walk over it, and ask no questions. And here is an arched bridge blasted from the "Rock of Ages," and built by the Architect of the universe, spanning the dark gulf between sin and righteousness, and all God asks you is to walk across it; and you start, and you come to it, and you stop, and you go a little way on and you stop, and you fall back and you experiment. You say, "How do I know that bridge will hold me?" instead of marching on with firm step, feeling that the strength of the eternal God is under you. III. WHAT IS IT TO BE SAVED? It means —1. A happy life. It is a grand thing to go to sleep at night, and to get up in the morning, and to do business all day feeling that all is right between my heart and God. 2. A peaceful death. Almost all the poets have said handsome things about death. There is nothing beautiful about it. Death is loathesomeness, and midnight, and the wringing of the heart until the tendrils snap and curl in the torture unless Christ be with us. Unless there be some supernatural illumination, I shudder back from it. But now this glorious lamp is lifted above the grave, and all the darkness is gone, and the way is clear. What power is there in anything to chill me in the last hour if Christ wraps around me the skirt of His own garment? What darkness can fall upon my eyelids then, amid the heavenly daybreak? 3. A blissful eternity. To be saved is to wake up in the presence of Christ. You know when Jesus was upon earth, how happy He made every house He went into. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*) *The king's highway opened and cleared*:—When the children of Israel were settled in Canaan, God ordained that they should set apart certain Cities of Refuge, that to these the man-slayer might flee for security. We are told by the rabbis that once in the year, or oftener, the magistrates of the district surveyed the roads which led to these cities: they carefully gathered up all the stones, and took the greatest possible precautions that there should be no stumbling-blocks in the way. We hear, moreover, that all along the road there were hand-posts with the word "Refuge" written legibly upon them. Now God has prepared a City of Refuge, and the way to it is by faith in Christ. I propose to go along it, and to remove any impediment which Satan may have laid. There is—I. THE RECOLLECTION OF THE PAST LIFE. But all thy sins, be they never so many, cannot destroy thee if thou dost believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." It is not the greatness of the sinner that is the difficulty; it is the hardness of the sinner's heart. Remember, too, that all the while thou dost not believe in Christ, thou art adding to thy sin. II. CONSCIOUSNESS OF HARDNESS OF HEART AND THE LACK OF WHAT IS THOUGHT TO BE TRUE PENITENCE. But dost thou read that those who have hard hearts are not commanded to believe? The Scripture says, "Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish," &c. Now, if thou believest, though thy heart be never so hard, thy believing saves thee; and what is more, thy believing shall yet soften thy heart. If thou canst not feel thy need of a Saviour as thou wouldst, remember that when thou hast a Saviour thou wilt soon find out how great was thy need of Him. Many persons find out their needs by receiving the supply. Have you never looked in at a shop window and seen an article, and said, "Why, that is just what I want"? III. CONSCIOUSNESS OF WEAK OR LITTLE FAITH. Ah, there you are again looking to yourself. It is not the strength of thy faith that saves thee, but its reality. What is more, it is not even the reality of thy faith that saves thee, it is the object of thy faith. A grain of mustard seed is the smallest of all seeds, and yet if thou hast but

that quantity of faith, thou art a saved man. Remember the poor woman who touched but the fringe of Christ's garment, and she was made whole. Remember a little child belongs to the human race as much as the greatest giant; and so a babe in grace is as truly a child of God as is Mr. Great-heart, who can fight all the giants on the road. IV. THE EXISTENCE OF MANY DOUBTS AND FEARS. My answer is, "He that believeth shall be saved," be that faith intermingled with multitudes of doubts and fears. You remember that story of our Saviour in the storm, and the poor disciples were full of fear—"Lord, save us or we perish." Here were doubts. Did Jesus say, O ye of *no* faith? No; "O ye of *little* faith." So there may be little faith where there are great doubts. At eventide, even though there is a great deal of darkness, yet there is light. And if thy faith should never come to noonday, if it do but come to twilight, nay, if thy faith is but starlight, nay, candlelight, nay, a spark—if it be but a glow-worm spark, thou art saved. Think of John Knox, on his dying bed, troubled about his interest in Christ. If such a man have doubts, dost thou expect to live without them? If Paul himself keeps under his body lest he should be a castaway, how canst thou expect to live without clouds? V. FEAR OF DEATH. There are many of God's blessed ones who, through fear of death, have been much of their lifetime subject to bondage. And this is accounted for, because God has stamped on nature that law, the love of life and self-preservation. And again, it is natural that you should scarce like to leave behind those that are so dear. But you are testing yourself by a condition in which you are not placed. You don't want dying grace in life, but you will have it when you want it. VI. THE ABSENCE OF JOY. But remember it is not "he that is joyful shall be saved," but "he that believeth shall be saved." Thy faith will make thee joyful by and by, but it is as powerful to save thee even when it does not make thee rejoice. VII. A GRIEVOUS SENSE OF IMPERFECTION. What, will you not believe in Christ until you are perfect? Then you will never believe in Him. You will not trust the precious Jesus till you have no sins to trust Him with? Then you will never trust Him at all. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 32–40. **And they spake unto him the Word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.**—*Household salvation*:—It sometimes happens that a good man has to go alone to heaven: God's election has separated him from the midst of an ungodly family. But though grace does not run in the blood, yet it frequently happens that God, by means of one of a household, draws the rest to Himself. Bunyan, in the first part of his "Pilgrim's Progress," describes Christian as a lonely traveller. The second part, however, exhibits family piety, and many a gentle spirit has found it sweeter than the former. It is most natural and proper that your desire for the salvation of others should, first of all, rest upon your own families. If charity begins at home, so, assuredly, piety will. Let Abraham's prayer be for Ishmael, let Hannah pray for Samuel, let Andrew first find his brother Simon, and Eunice train her Timothy. Observe—I. A WHOLE HOUSEHOLD HEARING THE WORD. If we are to have household conversion there must be a household hearing of the Word. 1. Now many fathers never hear the Word of God, because they regard the Sabbath as a day of laziness. 2. The mothers must hear the Word as well as the fathers. Many of them do, but many are detained at home with the children. Now it is the duty of every father, if he does not keep a servant, to take his turn with the wife and let her have her fair share of opportunity for hearing the gospel. 3. Then the children also must be thought of. We desire to see them converted as children. There is no need that they should wait until they are grown up, and have run into sin. Let the little ones be brought to hear the gospel. Let it be said of you, as of "Judah, who stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their children." 4. Then there are the servants. You cannot honestly pray God to save your household unless you give the whole household an opportunity of being saved. II. A WHOLE HOUSEHOLD BELIEVING (ver. 34). 1. They were new hearers, and yet they all believed. Is it not a sad fact that many of my old hearers have not believed? Oh! the responsibilities that are heaped up upon gospel-hardened sinners! 2. They were most unlikely hearers. In the society and associations of a jail there was very little that could be likely to improve the mother, to benefit the children, or elevate the servants. Yet how often are the most unlikely persons led to the Saviour. How true is it still of many who are outwardly religious, that "the publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven before them." This is an encouragement to you who work in the slums of this vast city. 3. Yet they were converted, there and then. I do not know how long Paul's

sermon was; he was a wise man, and I should not think he would preach a long sermon in the dead of the night, just after an earthquake. As the lightning flash can split the oak from its loftiest bough to the earth in a second, so the ever blessed lightning of God's Spirit can cleave the heart of man in a moment. 4. It is said particularly of them all that "they believed." Was that the only thing? Could it not be said that they all prayed? I daresay it could, and many other good things; but then faith was at the root of them all. 5. Though converted suddenly, all of them were, nevertheless, very hearty converts. They were quick to do all that in them lay for the apostle, and for the good cause. It is delightful to meet your hearty Christian, who, when he gave his heart to Jesus, meant it, and devoted his whole body, soul, and spirit to the good Lord who had bought him with His blood. III. A WHOLE HOUSEHOLD BAPTIZED. 1. "He" was baptized—the jailer. Then "all his" followed. 2. This was done straightway. There was not one who wished to have it put off till he had tried himself a little. In those days no one had any scruple or objection to obey. No minister has any right to refuse to baptize any person who professes faith in Jesus Christ, unless there be some glaring fact to cast doubt upon the candidate's sincerity. IV. A WHOLE HOUSEHOLD AT WORK FOR GOD. They all did something. The father called for a light, the servants bring the torches. Here is work for himself, and for gentle hands to do: to wash out the grit that had come there through their lying on their backs on the dungeon floor, and to mollify and bind up their wounds. There was suitable occupation for the mother and for the servants, for they set meat before the holy men. The kitchen was sanctified to supply the needs of the ministers of Christ. Even our children when they are saved can do something for the Master. The little hand that drops its halfpence into the offering-box, out of love to Jesus, is accepted of the Lord. The young child trying to tell its brother or sister of the dear Saviour who has loved it is a true missionary of the Cross. V. A FAMILY ALL REJOICING. 1. If the family had been left a fortune they would have rejoiced, but they had found more than all the world's wealth at once in finding a Saviour, therefore were they glad. 2. Though their joy sprang mainly from their believing, it also arose from their being baptized, for the Ethiopian, after he was baptized, "went on his way rejoicing." "In keeping His commandments there is great reward." 3. They rejoiced, no doubt, because they had an opportunity of serving the Church in waiting upon the apostle. They felt glad to think that Paul was at their table. And Christian people are never so happy as when they are busy for Jesus. 4. I have no doubt that their joy was permanent. There would not be any quarrelling in that house now, no disobedient children, no short-tempered father, no fretful mother, no purloining servants, no eye-servers. Conclusion: That household is now in glory. With some of you the father is in heaven, and the mother is on the road, but the children! With others, your little ones have gone before you, and your grandsire is also in glory; but, ah! husband and wife, your faces are turned towards the ways of sin. There will be broken households around the throne, and if it could mar their joy—if anything could—it would be the thought that a son or husband is absent while the wife and mother sing the endless song. This is the last question, "Will my family be there?" Will yours be there? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Belief, baptism, blessing:*—The gospel, attended by the Spirit of God, is always victorious; but it is very pleasant to make notes of its victories. The gospel came to Lydia, a devout woman, who worshipped God, although she did not know the Lord Jesus Christ. She was a woman of tender heart, and she was soon won. "Well," says one, "that is an instance of what the gospel does with delicate, tender, gentle natures." Now, here is an old soldier; he has been in the wars, he has earned distinction, and has been appointed to the office of jailer at Philippi, an office of some importance under the Roman Emperor. He is a man who knows the sight of blood; he is of a coarse, though apparently honest, disposition. He keeps prisoners, and that is not an office that brings much gentleness with it; and he is under very stern law. He is as hard as a bit of the lower millstone. What will the gospel do with him? It triumphed as much in the jailer at Philippi as it did in the lady from Thyatira. I want specially to call your attention to this point; the Philippian jailer stands before us as one who was converted and baptized, and who brought forth useful fruit all in the compass of an hour or so. "Straightway," says my text. It also says, "The same hour of the night." In a great many cases conversion may be said to be a slow work. I do not think that it really is so; but it appears to be so. There is the early training, there is the awakening of conscience, there is the seeking to find Christ. We have a great many people round us

who are very slow. Why it is, I do not know; for this is not a slow age. People are fast enough about the things of this world. We cannot travel fast enough. I have no doubt that the work of grace is very gradual in some people; it is like the sunrise in this country. I am sure that you cannot tell, on foggy mornings, when the sun does rise. A man cannot be somewhere between condemnation and justification; there is no land in between. The man is either condemned on account of sin, or he is justified through the righteousness of Christ; he cannot be between those two states; so that, after all, in its essence, salvation must be an instantaneous thing. I. In this Philippian jailer's case everything is sharp, clear, distinct. In considering it, I will first call your attention to the fact that HERE IS A PERSON CONVERTED AT ONCE. 1. There was no previous thought. There is nothing that I can imagine in his previous life that led up to it. He had not been plied with sermons, instructions, invitations, entreaties. Nothing could be a greater contrast than the ethics of Rome and the teachings of Christ. What do you think impressed this man? 2. I think, in part, it may have been the behaviour of Paul and Silas. They had no curses on their lips when he made their feet fast in the stocks. He went to bed that night with many thoughts of a new character. Who were these men? Who was this Jesus of whom they spoke? 3. Then, in the middle of the night, a singular miracle was wrought. The prison was shaken by an earthquake. The idea of being lost has come over him. It is not that he is afraid to die, for he is about to put himself to death; but he is afraid of what is to follow after death. He is a lost man, and therefore he asks, "What must I do to be saved?" 4. Now it is that he is plainly told the way of salvation. It was put with great brevity, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Probably he did not understand it when he heard it; and so "they spake unto him the Word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house." It is a happy circumstance that the gospel is so simple. There are certain preachers who seem as if they must mystify it, like the negro, who said, "Brethren, I have read you a chapter, and now I will confound it." No doubt there are many who are always making out the gospel to be a very difficult thing to understand; philosophical, deep, and so on; but it was meant for the common people, and the gospel is suitable to be preached to the poor. II. HERE IS A PERSON CONFESSING HIS FAITH AT ONCE. "He was baptized, he and all his, straightway." Should a person be baptized as soon as he believes? As a rule, yes; but there may be good reasons why he should not be. 1. There was no good reason for delay in this man's case, for, in the first place, his conversion was clear as noonday. 2. In his case, also, there was no other reason for delay. In the case of many young persons, there are reasons for delay. 3. In this man's case, note also, that he was not hindered by selfish considerations. Had the jailer been like some people that I know of, he would have found plenty of reasons for delaying his baptism. First, he would have said, "Well, it is the middle of the night. Would you have me be baptized at this hour?" He would have said that he did not know that there were conveniences for baptism, for it is so easy to find it inconvenient when you do not like it. He might also have said, "I do not know how the magistrates will like it." He did not care about the magistrates. Perhaps he would lose his situation. He did not take his situation into consideration. Then, what would the soldiers in the Philippian colony say when they heard that the jailer had been baptized into the name of Christ? Oh, the guffaws of the guard-room, the jokes that there would be all over Philippi! This brave man did not take those things into consideration; and if he did, he dismissed them in a moment. 4. The fact was, this man was in downright earnest, and therefore he would not delay his baptism. He had enlisted in the army of Christ, and he would wear Christ's regimentals straightway. III. Now, HERE IS A PERSON USEFUL AT ONCE. Useful? What could he do? Well, he did all he could. 1. He performed an act of mercy: "He took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes." Dear, good men, they were covered all over with the marks of the Roman rods. I do not know that he could have done anything better to show his sincere repentance. He washed their stripes; and when he had done that, and had been baptized, we read that he brought them into his house, and set meat before them. 2. Thus he exercised hospitality. He used his hands and his bath in washing the disciples; now he uses his table, his larder, and his dining-room to entertain them. What more could he do? Seeing that it was the middle of the night, I cannot think of anything more that he could do. So now, if you love the Lord, if you have only just believed in Him, begin to do something for Him at once. It is a pity that we have so many Christian people, so-

called, who do nothing for Christ, literally nothing. They have paid their pew-rent, perhaps; and that is all Christ is to have out of them! We want to have a Church in which all the members do something, in which all do all they can, in which all are always doing all they can, for this is what our Lord deserves to have from a living, loving people bought with His precious blood. IV. HERE IS A PERSON PERFECTLY HAPPY AT ONCE. When the jailer had brought Paul and Silas into his house, "he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." Oh, that was a happy, happy time! "He rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." 1. He rejoiced that he was saved. His heart kept beating, "Hallelujah! hallelujah! hallelujah!" As he sat at that table with his two strange guests, he had indeed cause for joy. His sin was forgiven; his nature was changed; he had found a Saviour. 2. And then he rejoiced that all his household were saved. What a delight it was to see all his household converted! There was his wife. If she had not been converted, it would have been a very awkward thing for him to have asked Paul and Silas in to that midnight meal. I do not like it when you count up your household and leave out Mary Ann, the little servant girl, the last you have had in. You treat her as a drudge; but if she has come into your family, reckon her to be a part of your household; and pray God that they may all be converted. 3. The jailer's rejoicing was also a seal of the Spirit upon his fidelity. (*Ibid.*) *Conversion—its means and tests*:—Looking now more especially at the human side of this instance of an immense moral and spiritual change in the Philippian jailer, let us think, under the guidance of this example, of conversion, its means and tests. Certainly here is an evident conversion. If ever man were squarely turned about, this jailer was. He is no spurious instance of conversion, like Mr. Facing-Both-Ways, in Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." I. Consider the MEANS of conversion. It seems to me we can divide these means into two sorts—subsidiary and essential. Means subsidiary. 1. The prayers and songs of Paul and Silas. What I mean is that I am sure the brave and beautiful carriage of themselves by Paul and Silas under all his unnecessarily harsh treatment of them—for he far exceeded his instructions—must have made some impression upon the jailer. And it seems to me that this must have been a kind of outlying and subsidiary cause of the jailer's conversion. It is a kind of gospel that even such stupid and cruel eyes as this jailer's must read. And something of blessing is bound to come of it. It is likely to make a path for somebody's conversion. Let us see to it that even amid the most painful circumstances we carry ourselves as Christians should. 2. The shock of the earthquake and the opened doors and the unloosed bonds of the prisoners, and Paul's beautiful calming of the jailer's fear when he would have killed himself, since, if the prisoners had escaped, according to the Roman law death must have been visited on him. This jailer was stirred through his whole nature. In the grip of the earthquake he was convinced of his own helplessness; in Paul's calm bravery he felt himself confronted by the presence of a strange moral power; in the apostle's service, in preventing the escape of the prisoners, to him who had been so needlessly cruel, who in harshness had so far exceeded his instructions, the jailer found himself smitten by a new sense of shame—shock, I think that is the word for it. The man was thrown out of his old bad routine into strange and other thoughts about his cruelty and his sin. Well, I do not think conversion possible unless it be preceded by something to which this shock is parallel. It may be an influence very steady and gentle. It may be the quiet result of the education of a Christian home; but somehow, in some way, the man must be, as this jailer was, actually and squarely confronted by the necessity of change in himself. Means essential—Faith. The Greek for "Sirs" in ver. 30, and "Lord" in ver. 31, is the same. He addresses them as "Sires" or "Lords"; they reply, "Trust in the one and only 'Sire' or 'Lord' Jesus Christ." Faith is the only and lonely Jesus Christ: this is the essential means of conversion. II. THE TESTS OF CONVERSION. 1. Rejoicing hearing of the Lord's word (ver. 32). A man really turned toward the Lord will want to know all he can about Him. 2. Immediate change of life (ver. 33). The cruel jailer becomes at once the merciful man. 3. Immediate confession of Christ (ver. 33). "And was baptized." A thoroughly converted man will not attempt to be a secret Christian. 4. Helpfulness (ver. 34). "And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them." That is to say, there is a quick instinct of ministry in him. 5. Joy in the new life (ver. 34). "And rejoiced." When a man turns towards God, God floods him, and that is utmost joy. 6. The man's home is changed (ver. 34). Believing in God with all his house. A conversion which does not

help a man's home amounts to little. Mark also that here is certainly a sudden conversion. The influences which lead up to it may be long, as they are in many cases may be quick, as in this case; but the conversion, the turning, is, in the nature of the case, sudden. Do not be afraid of sudden conversions. (*Homiletic Review.*)

And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes.—*Firstfruits of repentance*:—It was the jailer and his wife, as Chrysostom conceits it, whom by the name of Euodias and Syntiche St. Paul enrols in the book of life (Phil. iv. 2). See the meanest relief done to Christ and His members hath a patent of eternity. A little manna, but a vanishing meteor, lay it up in the ark, it never putrifies. The cheapest alms to Christ and His Church, the memory of it shall never be abolished. For the purpose of the words, conceive them to be an holy action of this convert, following upon and so manifesting and expressing the truth of his conversion. A few words, a small action in appearance, and yet a powerful evidence of his new birth. This small work, dipped and coloured in the blood of Paul, appears like that red thread on the hand of the new-born child, as a testimony of his birthright; and stands here upon record, and hangs, like Rahab's scarlet thread, fastened on his house as a pledge of his salvation. "Indeed," as Basil speaks, "'tis his first sacrifice of thanks he offers for his conversion; a sacrifice, an whole burnt-offering, and yet not by fire, but by water kindled and enflamed." First, conceive this action of his, in respect of his person, that doth exercise and perform it, as it arises from him and is his action. He washed them. Look first upon him as a man quickened and enlivened with a principle of faith, and then conceive this action of his, as 'tis a fruit of his faith. So soon as he believed, presently the same hour he washed their stripes. And the observation hence is briefly thus much: That a true believer is readily and presently a religious worker. Faith is not a frontlet to thine eyes only in illumination, but 'tis a tablet on thine hands for employment and action. The work of faith and labour of love, St. Paul unites them, and they are never asunder, and that upon a threefold ground. I. The very life and being of faith makes it naturally working. As at the beginning the Lord created trees with fruit on them, not a trunk or a stock, but flourishing and abundant, so in our new creation, the tree of faith, 'tis presently furnished with the fruit of piety. See how suddenly in this convert the seedtime, and the spring, and harvest do follow each other. A lively faith, it longs to be working, like St. John's converts, seeks employment presently. "What shall I do?" Deny it working, you deprive it of being; like the soul, it stays no longer in the body than it may act and quicken it; hinder the actions of life, it forsakes us presently. O let thine heart by faith be bathed and warmed in the blood of Christ, and thou mayest as well keep the fire from burning, and the sun from shining, and the heavens from moving, as true faith from working. II. Except thy faith be lively and working, 'tis an unuseful faith, altogether unprofitable. 1. That St. James assures thee (chap. ii. 14), "It cannot save him." The working faith, though it do not purchase heaven, yet it effectually procures it; it abhors works as merits, embraces them as means. 2. 'Tis not light, but heat, that purges and purifies; not a contemplative notion swimming in the brain, but a devoted affection seated in the heart. Nay—3. 'Tis only the working-faith that obtains thy pardon: in this case, though faith be actually destitute, yet 'tis such a faith as will be industrious. God gives grace unto it as to a poor beggar, but not as to a lazy one, and faith receives it with an empty hand, but not with an idle one. III. Except thy faith be active and operative 'tis no way acceptable. In this case, as thine outward services without inward faith, like the emperor's sacrifice that had no heart in it, are prodigious and loathsome, so the inwards of faith, without the body and substance of works, are offals and refuse. "God," saith Gregory, "requires not only the shake-breast of faith, but the heave-shoulder and arm of obedience. Before thou believest, God freely forgives thee even all thine evil works, but when thou believeth He strictly exacts the performance of good." Conceive this action of washing their stripes, secondly, as arising from a second seed of grace wrought in conversion, the principle of repentance. The observation from hence is thus much: Repentance, it makes us undo all that we did before. It enforces us to befool ourselves, look back upon all our actions with grief and sorrow; make us wish and desire we had never committed them. How did this jailer now smite on his thigh, as the prophet speaks? How did he question with himself and upbraid his folly—"What have I done?" Oh then! in the beginning of thy life, when thou first settest out, aim right and advisedly, lest at the long run thou befool thyself. Learn this lesson, ye wise fore-plotters of what

you undertake, that account it your wisdom in all other business not to be mistaken, that judge it a point of folly to excuse yourselves. Happy be you that have your action in your hand, and may take a true level. This is the fore-counsel of repentance to thee. It persuades and forewarns, as St. Paul did the mariners (chap. xxvii.): "Undertake not this desperate voyage, it will be much damage of your goods and lives." But if thou wilt on for all this warning, then comes repentance with an after-counsel, as the same St. Paul: "Sirs, you should have been advised by me, and so you should have gained this harm and loss." Consider this action of the jailer in washing their stripes as arising from, thirdly, a third principle of grace wrought in conversion, and that's as it springs from a seed and principle of renovation. And so 'tis an evidence and fruit of the changing and reforming his former life, and that in three several considerations. I. This washing and cherishing the apostles, it evidences the renewing and changing of his nature and former disposition. And from hence take notice of this observation: That grace and religion mollifies, changes, and sweetens the profanest natures and most barbarous dispositions. This jailer, before a savage persecutor, like the demoniac in the gospel, exceeding fierce, no man could tame him, now behold him dispossessed of his fury, he sits at Christ's feet peaceable and gentle. Religion, it persuades us and woos us, in St. Paul's language (Col. iii. 12). Education, laws, magistrates, may suppress for a time, but 'tis grace alone that can thoroughly and effectually transform us. Thus the primitive fathers undertook the performance of those desperate cures. 'Twas the voice of religion in their times, "Hast thou an unchaste wife? Bring her to religion, 'twill make her temperate. Hast thou an undutiful child? Bring him to religion, 'twill make him obedient. Hast thou an unfaithful servant? It will teach him fidelity." Monsters of sin by the power of this have been converted into miracles of virtue. II. It arises from the seed and principle of renovation in respect of his particular actual fault, of which he was now in present commission. He was even now exercising his barbarous cruelty towards the apostles; and in this sin the hand of God now finds him, and the guilt of this sin the mercy of God now pardons him; and therefore of all other sins, he will beware of this sin, presently puts himself into the practice of the contrary virtue. Observe, a true convert, though he resolves of a general reformation, yet, above all others, he will have a special eye at that sin which was the cause of his greatest ruin, and which God made the occasion of his rising and conversion. As a man recovered from a dangerous sickness, he carefully uses a general good diet, but especially desires preservatives and antidotes against the disease he was lately cured of. I surfeited of this meat; this proved my bane, and he knows relapses to be dangerous and deadly. A captain is careful to strengthen every corner of his castle, but that place where the enemy broke in before shall have a double watch, that's fortified especially. III. 'Tis a fruit arising from the seed of renovation in respect of his private calling and profession. He is a jailer, and they, you know, are usually merciless, hard-hearted men. Now he is converted he reforms the abuses of his calling, uses his prisoners mercifully and with much pity. He shows the truth and power of his conversion in his private personal calling and profession. He is not only a good Christian, but a good jailer, hath care of his prisoners; a good father and master, all his house must be taught and baptized. Observe, the truth of conversion will evidence itself in the ordering and reforming of our personal calling. Religion, 'tis not a matter merely of public and common profession, dwells not in churches and temples only, but it will enter into thine house, bids itself home to thee, as Christ to Zaccheus, "Come, I must lodge in thine house," have access and sway in all thine employments. Secondly, take notice of it, as it respects and passes upon these men to whom he performed it; he washed their stripes. And so the divers considerations of the object will specify the nature of the act and fruit of conversion. First, then generally and briefly conceive them as *proximi*, as men, brethren, and neighbours, in that common reference, so 'tis *actus charitatis*, an act of charity. And then observe, the truth of conversion will express itself in the works of love to our neighbours and brethren. This is the main evidence of our new birth. I. 'Tis the best sign and proof of our love if we love our brethren. Who doth not boast of his love to God? 'Tis every man's profession, and we cannot convert them. Bring them to this trial, "Dost thou love Him that is begotten of God; wheresoever thou seest His image and similitude?" "By this ye are known to be My disciples, if ye love one another." II. God sets over this love to our brethren that they might receive the fruit and improvement of it. The benefit of our love it cannot reach Him; His self-sufficiency

admits no addition from our poor charity; He makes our brethren the receivers of it. III. This love to our brethren multiplies and strengthens and increases our love to God. That's hearty love that rests not upon the party, whom we chiefly affect, but enlarges itself to His children and followers and all that belongs to Him. And that's the first consideration of it, as they are *proximi*, and so this washing, 'tis *opus charitatis*, he loves them as brethren. But, secondly, conceive them as they are *afflicti*, as Christians in misery and affliction, whipped and imprisoned; and then 'tis *actus misericordiæ*, an action of mercy. Before we considered them as members of Christ, and so He loved them; now behold them as the afflicted members of Christ, and so now He pities them. Observe, the naturalest motion of an heart converted is to commiserate the poor saints of God, and to show mercy towards them. The works of mercy are the most kindly returns of mercy received. Wert thou furnished with all other graces, yet thou fallest short if thou wantest this one. These fruits of piety and relief to the poor saints, Christ—1. Most strictly exacts. 2. Most graciously accepts. 3. Most bountifully rewards. Saith Basil, "Liberality to the poor saints, 'tis not liberality, but usury to God, and that of the highest increase." Thirdly, conceive them as they are men that were wronged and oppressed by him, and so 'tis an act of satisfaction. The truth of conversion as it shows itself in all duties of love and commiseration; so to those we have injured it will express itself in a due satisfaction. Without this, saith St. Augustine, all acts of repentance prove ineffectual. Nay, 'tis no true repentance, but a mere counterfeit. Fourthly, conceive them as they are the ministers and means of His calling; and so 'tis a testimony of thankfulness. These are the servants of the Most High God; these have brought the glad tidings of grace and salvation; not only their feet, but their wounds and stripes and sores are beautiful. He thankfully embraces, refreshes, and comforts them. And then give way to this observation: That the truth of this conversion will manifest itself in all fruit of thankfulness to the ministers of salvation. See now this jailer draws out the apostles, as Ebed-Melech did Jeremy, from the depth of the dungeon; makes his prison, like Obadiah's cave, to nourish these prophets; becomes a Lot and an Abraham to entertain these angels and messengers of heaven. (*Bp. Brownrigg.*) *Christianity self-illustrated*:—1. The old cause produces the old effect. Here is a man converted, and he instantly seeks to make up for the past. What did it all mean? Exactly what our own repentance must do. He tried to rub out yesterday's injury. Christianity always drives men back upon their yesterdays. The Christian says, "I must pay the money that I am owing. I know that the Statute of Limitations would excuse me, but there is no statute of limitations in the regenerated heart." The penitent says, "I must find out the life I once bruised, and if that life is no longer on the earth I must find some descendants, and for David's sake I will love Mephibosheth." The religion that does this proves its own inspiration. It does not need our eloquence, nor ask for our intellectual patronage. Any argument in words may provoke a retort in words; but a jailer washing stripes undeserved, feeding hunger unmerited, will carry the day. 2. The natural result of receiving Christ into the heart is joy (ver. 34). Christianity never brings gloom; it is a religion of light, morning, summer. There are three possible views of God. There is the view which afflicts the soul with a sense of terror. There is the view which elevates veneration without touching emotion. The third view is the Christian one, and that always brings with it joy. We ought to enter into joy now. 3. There are results of Christianity on the other side; hence we find that the magistrates were afraid; they sent to announce their willingness that Saul and Silas should leave the city. The bad man has a ghost on the right hand and on the left. There are "earthquakes" representing all kinds of physical difficulties, material alarms and afflictions. Following these came the discovery that the apostles claimed the protection of the Roman law. The bad man has no peace. The very law turned to a serpent in his grip and stung his arm. The bad man is always getting hold of the wrong end; always mistaking the case; always prosecuting the wrong party. Then add all the fears which come from spiritual doctrine, and the bad man has a poor time of it. There is no peace but in goodness; no rest but in righteousness. If thou hast turned away from thy Father in heaven, "acquaint now thyself with Him and be at peace." 4. This incident throws some light upon the character of Paul. He did not tell at first that he was a Roman citizen. He kept it back until he could use it with the happiest effect. Paul was probably the only Roman citizen in the little band, and was Paul a man to get off and let the others go to prison? Now that he could smite the magistrates as with a fist of

iron, he said, "They have beat us . . . being Romans," &c. He knew how that message would bite all the soul such men had left. This is the way we should stand by one another. Mark the dignity of his innocence. "As for your sergeants, we are much obliged to you for your civility, but let the gentlemen themselves put on their boots this cold morning and come down." So the magistrates, what with earthquakes, and Roman citizenships, and converted jailers, and one thing added to another, came down and said in effect, "If you will be so kind, gentlemen, as to go, we shall be deeply obliged to you." In former days they besought Christ Himself to depart out of their coasts; and the bad world is always asking Christianity if it will be so kind as to leave it. It will interfere with the world's weights and measures; with life at home and life in the market-place; with dress and speech, and with honesty of heart; so the wicked world says to it, "If you be so kind as to go away." Sooner would the rising sun go at the bidding of some poor insect, or the rising tide retire before the waving hand of some impotent Canute. 5. Being liberated, the apostles did not take the shortest way out of Philippi; "they entered into the house of Lydia"; they called the brethren together and "comforted them." The sufferer comforting those who have not suffered! Then they departed with the ineffable dignity of Christian uprightness. 6. So the Church of Christ was first established in Europe; see what a hold it has to-day. I am aware of the corruptions of Christianity, but underneath all the Christian idea has been the mightiest force in European civilisation and progress. Take out of European cities the buildings which Christianity has put up, and those cities would in many instances lose their only frame. What is Cologne but the foreground of its infinite cathedral? What would Milan be but for its august and overwhelming church? Take away St. Peter's from Rome and Notre Dame from Paris, &c., and see how frightful a mutilation would be made in the map of European grandeur. If you tell me that the great galleries of art would still be left, I would ask you to take every Christian picture and statue, and then call for your estimate of the boundless cavity. If you tell me that the great centres of music will still remain, I would ask you to take away the productions of the Christian poets and musicians; and after you have removed Beethoven and Handel, Mendelssohn and Haydn, I will ask you to state in figures the stupendous and irreparable loss. When you call these things to mind, and then remember that Paul planted the first Christian Church at Philippi, you will see how important are the incidents recorded in the chapter. We cannot tell what we are doing. He who plants a tree cannot forecast the issue of his planting. The penny you gave to the little poor boy may be the seed of great fortunes. The love grasp you gave the orphan's cold hand may be the beginning of an animation lasting as immortality. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) **They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans.**—*The assertion or vindication of rights*:—PAUL'S RIGHT AS A ROMAN CITIZEN. To Paul this was invaluable. It was in itself an honour, and would be everywhere so regarded. It gave to him who enjoyed it the protection of the best system of laws known among men. In any part of the world, moreover, where the Roman power extended, it conceded that right. A Roman citizen might not be crucified, nor scourged. The privilege of Roman citizenship also secured the right of a public trial. This tended, in an eminent degree, to maintain justice. II. THE MANNER IN WHICH THESE RIGHTS HAD BEEN VIOLATED. The wrong done was a palpable injustice, in all respects, at variance with the requirements of the Roman law. They were condemned unheard; and at the demand of a mob; they were publicly whipped; they were cast into prison. Every one of these things was contrary to Roman law. They suffered, moreover, further indignities at the hands of the jailer. III. THE PROPRIETY OF THE DEMAND THUS URGED. The principles of the gospel seem to require that we should bear injuries not only with no malice, but even with no resistance (Matt. v. 39–41; 1 Cor. vi. 6–8). But note—1. That the conduct of the Saviour interprets His own words. In the numerous injuries which He suffered at the hands of individuals, He offered no resistance. Yet, in entire consistency with all this, when He came in contact with the law, and when, under the forms of law, injustice was about to be done, He demanded that the provisions of the law should not be violated (John xviii. 23). 2. This leads us to notice, then, the value of law for the protection of rights. That value was recognised by Paul on other occasions (chap. xxiii. 2, 3; xxv. 11). The history of the world, in regard to law, has been a little more than a succession of struggles to secure the rights of individuals against arbitrary power; and the points gained in that respect have been the beginning of new eras in the history of the world, each of these epochs sending its influence far into the future.

Law itself, as we now have it, has been the slow growth of ages; and is the result of effort to save from arbitrary punishment. Under wise provisions, in favour of general liberty and individual rights, we are permitted to live; and the business of the world now is to protect and defend these principles as the ground of security in all time to come. They are of inestimable worth, and it is every man's privilege and duty to appeal to them and to demand that they shall be observed and enforced. Pym and Hampden are immortal as having defended the great principles of liberty; and Paul stands thus among the great benefactors of mankind for having asserted and maintained the right of an appeal to the law. 3. It remains only to remark, in the vindication of the conduct of Paul, that the character of a good man belongs to the public, to virtue, to truth, to religion. Paul had not only his own individual rights to maintain, but he was a representative man, entrusted with the rights pertaining to the Christian religion. All that he had endured in his imprisonment, he could privately and personally bear and forgive. But the public wrong which had been done was a wrong to justice; and not only so, but a wrong to religion; a wrong to him as the minister of religion; a wrong which, if acknowledged, might greatly hinder the success of his future labours. (*A. Barnes, D.D.*)

The selfish policy of magistrates:—There is a thing which passes for generosity which, when analysed, is found to be nothing but selfish policy. Sometimes a flint-hearted magistrate makes a great show of generous consideration for the condition of the prisoner, and pompously discharges him on that ground, as he says. Whereas it will often be found that the charge against the man was one of which the law could take no cognisance, or else which the magistrate felt himself unable to grapple with. He gets great credit for his clemency. His manœuvre, however, reminds those who see through it of the spider's tricks. We well know that the moment an ill-starred fly or other insect comes in contact with the net of the spider, it is sprung upon with the rapidity of lightning, and if the captured insect be of small size the spider conveys it at once to the place of slaughter, and having at its leisure sucked all its juice, throws out the carcase. If the insect be somewhat larger and struggles to escape, the spider envelops its prey in a mesh of thread passed round its body in various directions, and its wings and legs thus effectually secured, it is conveyed to the den and devoured. But when a bee or large fly, too powerful to be mastered by the spider, happens to get entangled in its toils, then the wary animal, conscious of its incapacity to contend against such fearful odds, makes no attempt to seize or embarrass the victim. On the contrary, it assists the entangled captive in its efforts to free itself, and often goes so far as to break off that part of the web from which it may be suspended. This act has upon it the colour of seeming generosity, but in reality it is nothing more than the performance of selfish cunning. The tyrant, feeling himself incapable of doing an injury, determines to have no molestation. To obtain this end he performs an act of manumission. In this policy he is not unlike the magistrate referred to. (*Scientific Illustrations.*)

Vindication of rights:—Thomas Maynard, English consul, was thrown into the prison of the Inquisition at Lisbon, under pretence that he had said or done something against the Roman religion. Mr. Meadows, who was then Resident, advised Cromwell of the affair, and being directed by him, demanded of the King of Portugal the liberation of Maynard. The king told him that he had no authority over the Inquisition. The Resident sent this answer to Cromwell, from whom he received instructions to tell the king that since he had no power over the Inquisition, he was commanded by Cromwell to declare war against the Inquisition itself. This so terrified the king and the Inquisition that they opened the prison doors and gave the consul liberty to go out. He, however, refused to go out privately, and required that he should be honourably brought forth by the Inquisition. (*W. Baxendale.*)

CHAPTER XVII.

VERS. 1-9. **And when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia.**—*From Amphipolis to Thessalonica*:—The beautiful town of Amphipolis lies to the south of a splendid lake under sheltering hills, three miles from the sea, and thirty-three from Philippi, and on the edge of a plain of boundless fertility.

The strength of its natural position, nearly encircled by a great bend of a river, the mines which were near it, and the neighbouring forests, made it a position of high importance. If St. Paul had ever read Herodotus, he may have thought with horror of the sacrifice of Xerxes—the burial alive at this place of nine youths and nine maidens; and if he had read Thucydides, he would have gazed with peculiar interest on the sepulchral mound of Brasidas, and the hollowing of the stones in the wayworn city street, which showed the feet of men and horses under the gate, and warned Kleon that a sally was intended. If he could read Livy, he would recall the fact that in this town Paulus Æmilius—one of the family from which his own may have derived its name—had here proclaimed that Macedonia should be free. But all this was little or nothing to the Jewish missionaries. At Amphipolis there was no synagogue, and therefore no means of addressing Jews or Gentiles. They therefore proceeded the next day thirty miles further, through scenery of surpassing loveliness, along the Strymonic Gulf, through the wooded pass of Aulon, when St. Paul may have looked at the tomb of Euripides, and along the shores of Lake Bolbe to Apollonia. From thence they proceeded forty miles further to the far-famed Thessalonica, the capital of all Macedonia, whose position on the Egnatian road, commanding the entrance to two great inland districts, and at the head of the Thermaic Gulf, made it an important seat of commerce. Since the days when Cassander had refounded it, and changed its name from Therma to Thessalonica, in honour of his wife, the sister of Alexander, it had always been a flourishing city, with many historic associations. Here Cicero had spent his days of melancholy exile. Here a triumphal arch, still standing, commemorates the victory of Octavianus and Antony at Philippi. From hence, as with the blast of a trumpet, not only in St. Paul's day (1 Thess. i. 8), but for centuries afterwards, the Word of God sounded forth among the neighbouring tribes. Here Theodosius was guilty of that cruel massacre for which Ambrose, with heroic faithfulness, kept him for eight months from the cathedral of Milan. Here its good and learned Bishop Eustathius wrote those scolia on Homer which place him in the front rank of ancient commentators. It received the title of "the orthodox city," because it was for centuries a bulwark of Christendom; but it was taken by Amurath II. in 1430. Saloniki is still a great commercial port of seventy thousand inhabitants, of whom nearly one-third are Jews. At this city, blighted now by the curse of Islam, but still beautiful on the slopes of its vine-clad hills, with Pelia and Olympus full in view, the missionaries rested; for here was the one Jewish synagogue which sufficed for the entire district. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *Paul's preaching at Thessalonica*:—His preaching—I. WAS EVANGELIC. 1. His grand theme was Christ. (1) He showed the necessity of His suffering and His resurrection. He exhibited the Cross of Christ in all its high aspects. (2) He showed that He was Messiah. "Is Christ." 2. His grand authority was the Scriptures. He did not attempt to derive his arguments and illustrations from general literature or philosophy. He would, perhaps, quote the old prophecies (Gen. xlix. 10; Isa. xl. 1–10; liii.; Dan. ix. 24–27; Micah v. 6, &c.), and show that in the life of Jesus those wonderful prophecies were fulfilled. Reasoning with the Jews, his authority was Scripture, and with the Gentiles, Nature, as at Athens. 3. His grand method was reasoning. He "reasoned with them." "Opening" means to explain, to unfold. "Alleging" means laying down the proposition. He laid down his propositions, and he argued their truth from the Scriptures. This is model preaching. Let ministers give to men now the Christ of the Scriptures, not the Christ of their theology. II. WON CONVERTS (ver. 4). The "devout Greeks" were those who had become proselytes to the Jewish religion, "proselytes of the gate." The "chief women" were members of families of high rank. The converts were—1. Numerous. "A great multitude." 2. Influential. "Chief women." Some of the leading women of the city. 3. Thoroughly united. They "consorted with Paul and Silas." Common beliefs awaken common sympathies. Christ gathers men of different types of character and grades of life together. III. AWOKE OPPOSITION (ver. 5). In this we see—1. The force of envy. This malignant passion of evil natures had been excited in the Jews by the moral conquest which the apostles had won in their synagogue. This passion has always been the inspiration of all persecutions. It shows itself now in a thousand forms. 2. The servility of mobs. These Jews took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, unprincipled idlers that are found lounging about places of public resort, the lazy rabble that fill workhouses with paupers and jails with prisoners, who are always ready instruments to the hands of evil men in power. The demagogue can

cajole them, and the rich can purchase their services with cash. 3. The revolutionising power of the gospel (ver. 6). These men spoke a truth, though unintentionally. The gospel does turn the world upside down, for the moral world is in the wrong position. 4. The falsehood of wickedness (ver. 4). The charge they brought against them was that of sedition and rebellion against the Roman emperor, high treason against the crown. These men covered their envy under the garb of patriotism. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Paul in Thessalonica:*—I. THE MANNER OF A PRIMITIVE PREACHER (ver. 2). What was the matter? On Sabbath days he entered the synagogue. In his last letter to these Thessalonians, he reminds them that he did not make himself chargeable to them (chap. ii. 9). So on week-days he was earning his living—improving, no doubt, every opportunity for conversation with such as came in his way; but the Sabbath brought him leisure, and gave him an audience. How did he use these Sabbath opportunities? He "reasoned" with the people. The Christian's faith should not be blind. It has its true home in both the intellect and the heart. The Church of to-day, and of all days, needs the help of thinking men, ready to give to every man that asketh a reason for the hope that is in them. Whence did Paul draw his arguments? "Out of the Scriptures"; because most of those he addressed were either Jews or proselytes, and accepted the Old Testament. It does not follow that in every case we should start just where he did. At Lystra and Athens he came in contact with heathen, who neither knew nor cared for the Jewish Scriptures. With them Paul himself began with the book of nature. Thus we learn how necessary it is to find some common ground on which we and those we would convince can stand together. II. A GOOD SIGN OF TRUE FAITH IN A CHRISTIAN CONVERT (ver. 4). Nothing could be more natural nor wise. Loving the same objects, cherishing the same hopes, why should they not delight in each other's company? Those who are of one heart and aim need no precept to bring them together. Each is to the other as a magnet and a support. A common religious faith may be expected to lift above minor differences, and draw men into a common fold. In many things the educated and unlearned, the rich and poor, greatly differ in their tastes. But when Christ enters the heart, you see them forgetting differences and becoming a single spiritual family. Michael Faraday came to be honoured as "a prince in the aristocracy of intellect." And yet he never lost his interest in a little group of obscure Christians. These believers at Thessalonica consorted with Paul and Silas also for spiritual support and safety. For both these reasons we expect to see modern converts seeking membership in the Church. This is a good sign, and a good rule. III. THE TOO COMMON SPIRIT AND ARTS OF OPPOSERS OF THE GOSPEL. The Jews saw that Paul's teaching and influence were undermining theirs. Whether the teaching was true and the influence good they did not consider. Very few keep in mind how malignant envy can be. It was for envy that the Jews delivered Jesus to be crucified, and that Joseph was sold into bondage. Then note the arts of these opposers of the apostle. They took to themselves "vile fellows of the rabble"—loungers, boys and men without occupation or sense of responsibility—and set them on. There are always ready tools of unscrupulous leaders. Just here is the greatest peril which now menaces society. Against them all good citizens should provide a safeguard, by pushing forward Christian work. In self-defence, if for no higher reason, we need to carry it to the homes and haunts and hearts of the lowest and worst. IV. A MARKED EFFECT ALWAYS TO BE EXPECTED FROM SUCCESSFUL GOSPEL WORK (ver. 6). The words were meant in a bad sense. But unwittingly they uttered a great truth; paid the very highest possible compliment to the gospel. The faithful utterance of the gospel does produce strife, and our Saviour predicted that it would; for the simple reason that men are neither willing to submit to its claims nor to suffer others to do it. The gospel was meant to turn the world upside down; for in the world there is much that needs to be overturned. It is to the praise of the gospel that it tends to effect this. Before it vice slinks away; virtue lifts up its head; joy supplants sorrow; society is purer and safer; heaven begins here and now. Old things pass away; more and more all things become new. (*Sermons by the Monday Club.*) *Paul at Thessalonica:*—1. Luke was evidently left at Philippi, where he might have a good deal of doctor's work to do. Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus moved on. We wonder whether Paul will fight any more, or whether he will spend the remainder of his days in pious reflections; for a period is occupied in passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, where nothing was attempted. The fight seems to be over, and the smitten warriors are going home to anoint their wounds and wash their stripes in secret. But they came to

Thessalonica, and, in the synagogue, Paul saw a battle-field, and instantly he stripped to the fight! We see now what he was looking for at the other places, and why he did not pause there. 2. "And Paul, as his manner was, went in." Paul was not an occasional attendant. Jesus Christ did not go now and then to the synagogue. It was a dull time to the early Christian when the Church was closed. Paul is here, as everywhere, the very model of a true Christian preacher. "He reasoned with them out of the Scriptures." He did not talk something which he had invented; he had a Book, an authority, and he believed that every word he said was written for him by the pen and ink of Heaven. Once let that thought go, and preaching becomes vain. A sermon is great only as it begins, continues, and ends in the Scriptures. Then he crowns his ministry by enforcing a distinct personal appeal. "This Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ." This was a sword with a point, a sermon with an accent. The preacher must have an object in view. Whatever Paul did was contributory to this great end. The difficulty with the Christian preacher is that nobody wants to hear his doctrine, but his particular way of putting it. I sat with reverence before the foremost judge of his day. His voice was feeble and indistinct; at times I had great difficulty in hearing him; but, oh, the anxiety not to miss one word! It was dry, it was argumentative, there was not a single flower of speech in the whole. Every one was there to hear what the judge would say, not how he said it. When a mumbling speaker reads a will, does any one say anything about his manner? Each wants to know what he in particular is to get. Oh, could I persuade my hearers that I am reading the will of God, and that men were wise, that they understood these things! 3. Note the opposition which Christianity awakens. You may form a tolerable judgment as to the merits of a controversy by observing the way in which it is conducted. However quiet the town when the apostles entered it, they left it in a serious uproar. They came not to send peace on the earth, but a sword. Look at the opposition. It was—(1) Little-minded. Where is the noble challenge to discuss a great question upon equal terms? How is Paul moved? By love. How is the opposition moved? By envy. (2) Unscrupulous. Any stick will do to beat a dog with. The Jews, who would not have spoken to those "lewd fellows," made use of them to put down this religion of the Cross. If they had not been "lewd fellows," &c., they would have seen that they were being made use of. How Envy can stoop to take up polluted weapons, and search in the mud for stones to throw at Goodness! There is nothing too despicable for it to use to express itself in denunciation and contempt and penalty. (3) Lawless. Never mind the dignity of the city, or the politarchs who reign over it. Magistrates cannot stand against an uprising city; they will either dismiss the case, or take bail, or do something to get out of it. So the opposition prosecutes its mission to the end. This is true of all opposition to the Christian cause. There may be an honest opposition to some special ways of representing it; but to its purity, its self-sacrifice, its nobleness, its purpose, there can be no honest opposition. Yet how the Lord makes the wrath of man to praise Him! What said the enemy? "These that have turned the world upside down." There! that is a tribute to their power. Even the Jews did not dare to call it "a flash in the pan," "a nine days' wonder." They saw in it a world-exciting force, and we who are Christians become fearful just in proportion as we lose our conception of the grandeur of the cause which we have to handle. Then they become themselves again, "saying that there is another king." That is a lie! The apostles never said so, in the sense now put upon that word by their accusers. You can use the right words with a wrong meaning. We must not only speak the words of the gospel, we must speak them in gospel tones. Then the accusers proceeded to say, "one Jesus." There they were right. The apostles, then, had left no false or vague impression. Amid all the tumult, and uproar, and opposition, they had got this word well into the public memory—"Jesus." 4. Is this the end? It is hardly the beginning. The very first letter that Paul wrote was 1 Thess. What does he say to them? "For our gospel came not unto you in word only," &c. Paul spent at least three weeks in Thessalonica; how did he live during that time? He had no money; how did he live? How we ought to live—by working! How are you to live—by writing begging letters? This is how Paul lived (1 Thess. ii. 9). These were not the men to be put down: they did not live on patronage. We now live on "subscribers," and therefore we do not live at all, and we breed a small race of men. Paul, Silvanus, Timotheus, fell to working, not eight hours a days and eight shillings for pay, but, according to the time-bill, "night and day." "Two hours longer, Silvanus," said Paul, "and this tent will be done. If we sit

up till three o'clock to-morrow morning, we shall just get bread enough to keep us going until the synagogue is open again." These were not the men to be put down! 5. When they said good-bye to Thessalonica, was it a final adieu? Read 1 Thess. ii. 17. They wanted to go back to the old battle-field. When anything occurs nowadays, we become suddenly "not very well, and must go down to the seaside over Sunday." We think it better to be out of the way. How did Paul view the people whom he had won there? Said he, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye," &c. These are the relations which Christianity would establish amongst us if we would allow it. Christianity would make a compact society of us—not living under formal rules, but under gracious inspiration. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The Thessalonians* are types of those—I. WHO REJECT TRUTHS BECAUSE THEY ARE NOVEL AND UNPALATABLE. The propositions that Paul laid down (ver. 2) were novel and unpalatable, and therefore the Jews rejected them. How many to-day consider it a sufficient reason for rejecting a doctrine (whether of religion, politics, science, &c.) because they have never heard of it before! How many reject truths because they do not like to believe them! But we cannot by unbelief make a truth vanish, any more than we can put out the sun by winking. II. WHO ENDEAVOUR TO SILENCE OPPONENTS BY FORCE. The Jews could not confute Paul by argument, and therefore they stirred up a riot against him. This is still a popular method, though the force employed may be the more refined method of ostracism. A brickbat is not the only method that will break a head. III. WHO STOOP TO BASE ALLIANCES TO ENSURE THEIR TRIUMPH. The Jews did not storm Jason's house, but "market loungers," whom they would not, on ordinary occasions, have touched with a stick, were enlisted. Not the only occasion on which professed defenders of religion have condescended to use dirty tools. IV. WHO ENDEAVOUR TO OVERTHROW OPPONENTS BY MISREPRESENTATION (vers. 6, 7). How clever was this misrepresentation, because there was so much truth in it. V. WHO PURSUE A CONTROVERSY WITH EMBITTERED MALIGNITY. (*R. A. Bertram.*) *The Thessalonians and the Bereans*:—I. REASONING FROM THE SCRIPTURES. From the change in the personal pronouns, and from 1 Thess. iii. 6, it is evident that Luke and Timothy remained at Philippi to comfort and strengthen the new converts in the faith. Let us look at—1. Paul's journey (ver. 1). Their road lay through a region rich in historic associations. The birthplace of Aristotle and the tomb of Euripides were close to their route. At one point, Xerxes had offered to the river Strymon a sacrifice of white horses, and had buried alive nine youths and maidens. At another they had in view the peaks of Ossa and Pelion, often pointed to with trembling superstition as the home of the gods. But the Christian heroism of Paul has done more to make the land live in the memory than all of its connection with famous classical names. 2. Paul's custom (ver. 2). At Thessalonica he acted as though at Philippi he had received no treatment except that which was kind and encouraging. Paul counted his converts more than he did his stripes. All the effect was to make him "wax bold" in his God. "This one thing I do," was Paul's motto. 3. Paul's reasoning (ver. 3). After the crucifixion, the Saviour showed from the Scriptures that His sufferings and death were just what had been foretold. How did Paul show that it behoved Christ to suffer? Some of the passages must have been Psa. xxii. and lxix. and Isa. liii. Possibly he may have used the argument to be found in Hebrews viii.–x. To a candid mind, the argument is convincing. 4. Paul's success. (1) With the Jews. Some became convinced that their conception of the Messiah had been wrong. They gave up their notion of a splendid temporal king to accept the lowly one of Nazareth and of Calvary. When any one becomes a follower of the Saviour, he immediately begins to "consort" with those who are of the same faith. He will be found with them in all Christian efforts. (2) With the Greeks. Those who had become worshippers of the true God were far more ready than the Jews. They did not have to give up the wrong conception of centuries. II. REJECTING THE SCRIPTURES. 1. The assault (ver. 5). (1) The cause. The Jews were jealous when they saw women of rank joining the new way. They saw their own influence being undermined. (2) The attack. Envy is a base passion, and does not hesitate to use base means. It was the same sort of crowd that now in a city can easily be gathered to smash in the windows of a mission church and maltreat its minister. (3) The arrest (ver. 6). If they could not have the principals, they would have their abettors. (4) The complaint. What a testimony they incidentally bore to the work of Paul and Silas! The world had been wrong side up since sin had entered the garden of Eden, and now they were engaged in turning it once more right side up. (5) The result (ver. 9).

Shadowy as was the support for the complaint, the accusers succeeded in troubling the multitude and the rulers. But, as at Philippi, the action came too late to be of any avail. The Church already was planted, and the Epistles to the Thessalonians show how deeply it had taken root. III. SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES. At first it seems hard that the missionaries so soon should have been driven away. But that was God's way for the wider and more expeditious spreading of the gospel. 1. Preaching the Word (ver. 10). Scourged in Philippi, and nearly mobbed in Thessalonica, but just as ready to preach the Word in Berœa. 2. Searching the Word (ver. 11). At Berœa the missionaries had a glimpse of sunshine. Here they found the Jews ready to receive the truth, but not without investigation. They took hold of the matter with zeal and thoroughness. The result was that many of them believed, not only Jews, but Greeks of rank and position. 3. Persecuted for the Word (ver. 13). We see in this illustrations of—(1) The intensity of the hatred of those who oppose the gospel. (2) The way in which God continually is using His enemies. They thought that they were stamping out the gospel, whereas they only were spreading it. (*M. C. Hazard.*) *A tale of two cities*:—Thessalonica was a large and powerful town; Berœa was a little village. The inhabitants of the one place were wealthy and educated; of the other, comparatively illiterate and poor. But the contrast is altogether to the advantage of the latter. I. THE CITY THAT WAS UPSET. Philip of Macedon won a magnificent victory in Thessaly on the day he heard of the birth of his daughter, and instantly sent word that the child was to be called "Thessalonica." By and by she was married to Cassandra, who rebuilt the old town Therma, and then named it after his bride. 1 (ver. 1). A new opportunity creates a fresh duty. Right through Amphipolis and Apollonia went these preachers, and not a sermon did they try to preach. Why? Because there was no synagogue; the synagogue of that region was at Thessalonica. When Paul reached so influential a centre, he seemed again to rouse himself to combat like an old soldier. 2 (ver. 2). Every man can do good best after his own "manner." What a fine thing it is to have a habit of teaching Christ so as to have a "manner." How foolish it is to reproduce the method of others. 3 (ver. 3). "Christ and His Cross is all our theme." Paul invariably showed that the Messiah must be born at a particular time, of the line of Judah, at a place predicted beforehand; that He must die and be buried, and must rise again from the dead. Then he set out to prove that Jesus had met all these requirements, and therefore must necessarily be the true Hope of the nation, and the only-begotten Son of God. This was his "manner" (2 Cor. ii. 1–5). 4 (ver. 4). Success in preaching must be estimated not by applause, but by conversions. On that day was founded the Church to which afterwards the two Epistles to the Thessalonians were written. Meantime Paul supported himself by working at his trade of tent-making, preaching days, toiling nights (1 Thess. ii. 9). 5 (ver. 5). The wrath of man is often forced to praise God. Opposition intensified the friendship of adherents. It was easy to get up the noisest crowd; but they only advertised them and strengthened their friends. 6 (ver. 6). A wicked man's lie frequently contains the Christian man's motto. When infidels exclaimed, "Yours is only a book-religion," the brave Chillingworth answered, "The Bible is the religion of Protestants—the Bible only!" Thessalonica was upset from turret to foundation-stone that day. II. THE CITY THAT WAS SET UP. Notice—1 (ver. 10). The indefatigable zeal of the early Christians. 2 (ver. 11). The promising character of the fresh friends Paul and Silas made. (1) These people listened to the Word attentively. (2) They studied the Word assiduously. (3) They accepted the Word intelligently. (4) They believed the Word implicitly. 3 (ver. 12). The excellent results of persistent study of the Scriptures. The word "therefore" is intensive; they were ennobled by their conversion, and they were converted because they studied and believed (John v. 39). 4 (ver. 13). Satan betrays the secret of his special hate. His friends journeyed all this tiresome distance merely because they knew the Word of God was going to be preached by those indefatigable apostles. The devil hates nothing so much in this world as the pure word of Divine truth in the Bible. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*)

Vers. 2–4. **And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them.**—*Paul's ministry*:—Notice—I. THE CHIEF OBJECT OF CHRISTIAN FAITH. "Jesus"—Saviour from sin, and fear, and hell, through the power of His sacrifice, and the prevalence of His intercession. "Christ," anointed by the Eternal Spirit, and set apart to kingly, prophetic, priestly office for ever. No redeemer for man can be imagined of a nobler type, of a fuller efficiency. Granted that redemption is necessary, then we

have no choice of persons. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." When the gospel began, Jesus Christ was the one object of faith, and He is so now. By no re-arrangement of the materials of revelation, can you have a system of Christianity without Him. The central attractive power gone, the forces will strive with each other, and the motions will be incalculable. There is a throne; some one must sit on it. There is a gate; some one must stand at it to keep it open into the way that leadeth unto life. There is a peril towering high above all other dangers; we need some one to break it and roll it away, and there is no one but Christ. Never was demand more reasonable than this, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." II. THE MEANS USED TO PRODUCE FAITH ARE NOW THE SAME. Our apostle met them on the Sabbath day—the day of rest, when they frequented the synagogue, and "he reasoned with them out of the Scriptures." We, too, open the Scriptures as our book of authority. It is the duty of those who set forth God's mind in the Scriptures, to "reason" with men. The Greek word originally means to carry on an argument by way of dialogue. That was the apostolic method of serving Christ; not at all like that of putting on and off clothes, turning the back to the people, going up and down altar-stairs. Different, too, from that of the strong doctrinal dogmatist, who asserts and does not "reason." To preach Christ is to "reason out of the Scriptures," and, in a secondary degree, out of the great book of human life and experience, and also out of the great book of material nature; but in any case it is to "reason," to lay out the matter as it seems to ourselves, to press it home upon all whom it concerns; to remonstrate, expostulate, entreat, and then to leave the issue with God. III. ALONG WHAT LINE THE REASONING USUALLY WENT towards proving that Jesus is Christ. Paul "opened" the Scriptures, that is, brought out the hidden yet real meanings concerning the promised Messiah, and then "alleged" that the real Messiah must be a sufferer, and not a splendid Monarch attended with all kinds of visible success. But also a risen Lord, having power over death and life; and from all this came the conclusion that Jesus of Nazareth is Christ. Each age has its own thoughts and doubts; and the real preachers for any age are those who deal with its thoughts fairly, and dispel its doubts by light of truth and breath of love—but all this with a view to the manifestation and exaltation of Him in whom God is "well pleased," and to whom, in His "lifting up," all men will at length be drawn. IV. THE FAITH IS THE SAME NOW AS THEN. The faith as a feeling, the conviction that is rooted in knowledge, and yet goes deeper than knowledge, that is founded on evidence, but which is itself evidence; for "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." "I know whom I have believed." Faith is produced by different means, but the precious result is the same faith—faith in Christ, the Sufferer, the Death-destroyer, the Life-giver, the Redeemer of all trusting men. The same feeling. Is this an objection or an offence? It is a great commendation of it. This common faith of the common heart is the historic something that continues through the ages. Systems of government and thought have been forming and vanishing away; civilisations have arisen and have perished; but here is a secret something which has been running along the ages, the line of which has been human hearts, the power of which has appeared resurgent, after all calamities, and which seems destined to run on to the end of time. "May *I* share in this feeling?" "Yes." "Then by God's grace I will!" V. THE OUTWARD RESULT OF THIS FAITH IS THE SAME. "They were persuaded, and consorted with Paul and Silas," and with the other Christian people who were all drawn together by their common faith. Yet now there is rather a large escape from this. The fish are in the net and held securely there, but somehow they do not get landed. Believers are made, but somehow a good many of them do not consort, rather take pains, some of them, to let it be known that they do not. Many who really are believers in Christ, do not enter any Christian Church. But—1. It must always be good to "consort" with good men. 2. It must always be good to be associated as closely as possible with a good cause, and Christianity is unquestionably the greatest cause in the world. 3. It must always be good to escape from an equivocal position. To believe in One for life and death, who is not confessed, whatever excuses and explanations may be given, must be more or less equivocal. 4. It must always be good to remove a little farther from danger; and the shelter, the nourishment, the inspiration of a Church is, as far as it goes, a real safety; it helps in many ways, it ought to hinder in none. 5. It must always be good to obey Divine commandment, and as a Church is a Divine institution, connection with a Church must be the fulfilment of a Divine obligation. (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*)

An ancient pattern for modern times:—This is quite an old world, and it is a long time since men and women began to try to find out how the great things in human life should be done, and how to make the best of everything. Many struggles, many failures, have, no doubt, been experienced; but there has been, after all, a wonderful survival of the fittest, the best, on the whole. The result is, that there are very few really new things left for us to discover. For the most part, it is practically old things in a new dress—ancient patterns wrought out in modern forms. What wonder, then, if the modern Church of Christ should find her best example of work, and faith in the Church, ministers, and people, in the New Testament histories! I desire to call your attention now to Paul and his hearers, as giving to us a good example in these latter days. I. We have an example of KEEPING THE SABBATH, AND USING IT FOR DIVINE WORSHIP. "Paul, as his manner [custom] was, went in upon them," and joined in their worship. This worship of God springs out of the religious wants and instincts of the human soul; develops, strengthens, and perfects the aspirations of the soul in its following hard after God, things unseen and eternal. This we all much need. For six days in the week, the rule is, that our time and energies are centred in the struggle for existence and well being, amid things material and transient. It is hard work, too, to rule over the earth, and all that is therein, and have some true dominion over it, as, indeed, we ought to have. But when we have done that for six days, and the seventh day comes, and we rest from world ruling and training, as God rested from His world making—when this Sabbath of the Lord, this Sabbath made for man, has come, what are we to do with it, how use it? Paul and Silas, and the Jews, give us an example. Go to the synagogue, the meeting-house, where God meets with His people, and they meet with Him. Go to the synagogue, where God is, and is worshipped by song, by prayer, by all reverent speech and thought, and so shall we attain principles and inspirations for godly living, which will give high, noble meaning, and resolute purpose to our entire lives. II. We have an example of THE GENERAL OBJECT, ON WHICH OUR THOUGHTS SHOULD BE ESPECIALLY FIXED IN OUR SEASONS OF WORSHIP. It is God in Christ. God as revealed in Christ. Paul opened and alleged certain things concerning Christ. To him, Jesus Christ was God—God manifest in the flesh, in the form of a servant, and the fashion of a man. In Christ God was revealed in a new and wonderful form, uniting Himself with man as man, and lifting men up to a blessed union and fellowship with Himself. As a name, "Jesus the Christ" is the best translation of what God is to man, and for man. "Jesus" means "the Saviour," and there is an immensity of meaning in that when you consider the innumerable evils to body and soul for time, and in the far-off eternity, to which sinful men are deservedly and justly exposed. "The Christ" means "the anointed." Christ was set apart as Prophet to interpret and reveal the thoughts and love, and eternal purposes of God in the forms of human speech, life, suffering, and death—the form of a man, intelligible to all men everywhere. He was anointed—set apart as Priest—to appear in the presence of God for us, the sinful; and in the form of a man, through the Eternal Spirit, offer Himself in sacrifice for us, and obtain eternal redemption for us by His own blood. He was the anointed King, to rule over the new kingdom of grace and righteousness, to rule till all enemies to Him and to us shall be put under His foot. III. We have an example of THE BEST MEANS OF FIXING OUR THOUGHTS ON CHRIST; securing clear conceptions concerning Him, and certitude of faith in Him. Paul "reasoned with them out of the Scriptures." Reason in man is the apex of his spiritual nature—the point at which he touches the infinite in God, and the infinite in God touches and enters into finite man. Man is rational, because he is spiritual in living relation to God, who is a Spirit. He reasoned with them; he appealed to them by facts, by illustrations, by arguments, by principles, that they might know, understand, and believe the truth which he had to proclaim as a rational message from Jesus Christ to them and to all men. He "reasoned with them out of the Scriptures." When we reason, we commence from things which are admitted as true in fact, or in principle, on both sides, and then proceed to show that something else must also be true, on the ground of what has been already admitted. Paul and his hearers had things believed in common. God, Moses, the prophets, the Scriptures as the veracious history of God's thought and purpose in the past ages. He got the premises, grounds, foundations of his arguments, his syllogisms, in the records of God's thoughts and deeds, as he reasoned with them to prove that Jesus is the Christ, and that their instant duty was to believe on Him and obey Him as their Saviour King. So it must be still, from the sacred Scriptures, from human experi-

ence, that the true preacher must reason, and by reason and reasoning convince the gainsayers, convert the careless, and lead the inquirer to faith in the Lord Jesus. IV. We have an example of WHAT THE RESULT SHOULD BE IN THOSE WHO ARE HEARERS OF THE GOSPEL TESTIMONY. "Some of them believed and consorted with Paul and Silas." They believed, that is, they were persuaded by Paul's reasonings from Scriptures, and from facts well known and supported by reasonable evidence. In faith their minds looked out and up and saw the real Christ—the Saviour, King—and began, like Paul, to "count all things but loss for Him." Precious faith! for it sees Christ, embraces Christ, and, as such, is the root principle of the new life. But having believed, you see, they consorted with Paul and Silas. Man is social. Our very nature compels us to consort with one another. The means of this are doubtless very various. But, this sorting out and consorting of different classes for different purposes, are the strongest, most lasting, when the assortment arises from one faith, one love, one hope, one final end. But those are all found in Christian men and women whose one master-faith is God in Christ; whose one controlling master-love is God; whose one master-inspiration in the darkest hour is the eternal hope of glory; and whose final end is "to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever." (*Prof. Wm. Taylor.*) *The force of habit*:—Our outward deportment becomes a matter of habit. When a man has become accustomed to any particular course, he cannot avoid acting upon it. Paul could no more have stayed away from the synagogue than he could have given up his food. So there ought to be a principle, made our own by custom, which shall absolutely lead us in the right way with a force which cannot be resisted. And this fact should especially remind us of the duty which we owe to those whom we have in charge. Habits imbibed in youth may affect the happiness and eternal welfare of the child. Observe the importance of—I. The habit of PERSONAL DEVOTION. II. The habit of PRACTICAL ALMSGIVING. III. The habit of CONTEMPLATIVE OBSERVATION. IV. The habit of SELF-EXAMINATION. V. The habit of LOOKING TO THE FUTURE RATHER THAN THE PRESENT—that is, of weighing every circumstance, every event, every trial, every sorrow, every prosperity, in the light of eternity. (*Homilist.*) *Paul's custom*:—It was Paul's custom—I. To GO TO CHURCH. He didn't drop in now and then "to hear the new minister," or remain away because it was "too pleasant to stay at home." II. To DO HIS PART when he went to church. There is no record of his declining to take a class in Sunday-school because it interfered with the hour of his Sunday dinner. III. When he went to church TO TALK AND THINK ABOUT CHRIST—and he probably found something more practical to do between services than to stand around the church doors and talk about the state of the crops. IV. To SPEAK OUT—and he didn't wait until he could find exactly what style of preaching would best suit the Church at Thessalonica, and shape his sermons accordingly. V. To SPEAK EVERYWHERE OF A SUFFERING SAVIOUR. It was Paul's custom to suffer anything for that Saviour; it was Paul's custom to make his creed and his deeds correspond. (*S. S. Times.*) **Reasoned with them out of the Scriptures.**—*The use of reason in religion*:—There hath been an opinion too hastily taken up, and too warmly maintained by some, that reason is very little to be hearkened to in matters of religion; that we are to believe nothing but what is expressly taught us in the Word of God, and that we are not to draw consequences from Scripture, and to make them the articles of our faith, but most strictly confine ourselves to the very language of Holy Writ, and admit of no doctrines but what are there in so many words and syllables delivered. Now, true it is that the Scriptures are the adequate rule of our faith; but then it is not also true, nor by us confessed, that nothing is to be looked upon as taught us in Scripture but what is there in so many words delivered. It is the doctrine of our Church that "the Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to our salvation; so that nothing is to be required of any man to be believed as an article of faith, which is not read therein, or which may not be proved thereby." This disjunction would be unnecessary if there were not some things which, though they are not read therein, may yet be proved thereby. What is rightly inferred from the Scriptures doth as much challenge our assent as what is literally delivered in the Scriptures. I. I AM TO PROVE THIS DOCTRINE FROM THE AUTHORITY AND EXAMPLE OF CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES. Christ and His apostles often make use of reasoning, both for the establishment of those truths which they taught, and for the confutation of those errors which they opposed. When the tempter took up our Saviour "into an exceeding high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them," &c. (Matt. iv. 8, 9; Deut. vi. 13, v. 16). Now these reasonings of our Saviour against

His worshipping Satan, and throwing Himself down, are inconclusive if we may not argue from Scripture, and if we must admit of nothing as taught therein which is not there set down in express words, since neither is it said in the former of these texts, that Satan is not to be worshipped, nor in the latter that Christ might not throw Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple. When the Sadducees put captious questions to our Saviour about the resurrection of the dead, He showed the weakness of their objections against it by proving to them that the doctrine by them opposed was taught by Moses, whose authority they did not, and could not, dispute (Matt. xxii. 31, 32). But if those who are against all reasoning from Scripture, who will admit of nothing but what is directly therein contained, had been in the place of the Sadducees, they would not so easily have yielded to our Saviour's argument; they would have rejected this testimony from Moses as not direct, and would have required a more formal and plain proof. The apostles, in their writings, follow the steps of their Lord and Master, and prove the truths of the gospel against the Jews, who gainsayed them, not from any passages in the Old Testament in which the gospel truths are expressly and in so many words laid down, but by arguments and reasons drawn from the writings of Moses and the prophets. Thus St. Peter (chap. iii. 22) proves the coming of Christ from those words of Moses (Deut. xviii. 15), and His resurrection (Acts ii. 27) from that place of the Psalms (Psa. x. 10). After the same manner St. Paul (Rom. iv. 7) proves that we are justified, not by the law, but by grace, from those words of the Psalmist (Psa. xxxii. 1). He proves (Rom. ix. 33) the rejection of the Jews from the prophecy of Isaiah (Isa. xxviii. 16), and the vocation of the Gentiles (Rom. ix. 25), from Hosea's having brought in God, saying (Hos. ii. 23). This way of arguing he at all times, and in all parts of his writings, makes use of; from those truths which are expressly read in Scripture, by the laws of reasoning he infers other doctrines which are not there formerly read, but which do from them follow, and are therefore in them virtually contained. Now it is evident, and on all hands acknowledged, that this assertion, "Jesus is the Christ," is nowhere laid down in these very words throughout the writings of the Old Testament. Moses and the Prophets do indeed bear witness to Him, but in the testimony they give they nowhere formally declare that Jesus is the Christ. How, then, could the apostles demonstrate this proposition from their writings? Do they not refer us to such passages in the prophets from whence this doctrine, which is not in express words asserted, is by right reasoning regularly deduced? From the several parts of the Old Testament, compared one with another, they form the character of the Messiah, and then they prove that this character did truly belong to that Jesus whom they affirmed to be the Messiah. This method of proving St. Luke has expressed in very proper and apposite words, when he tells us that St. Paul "reasoned out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging." The apostle first opened to them the sense of the prophets, explained their words, and when he had thus shown what their scope was, he did then apply the prophesies thus explained to the person, doctrine, and works of Jesus; he compared the predictions with the events, the shadows with the bodies, the figures with the things prefigured; so that by this method the truth of the gospel which they preached was irrefragably demonstrated. Since, therefore, this way of arguing was made use of by Christ and His apostles, we must acknowledge that those things are rightly proved out of Scripture which do evidently follow from the doctrines taught in Scripture, though they are not in so many words anywhere to be found in the Word of God. And as we have the example of Christ and His apostles warranting us, so we have their commands enjoining us to make use of this method of reasoning. Our Saviour bids the Jews (John v. 39) to search the Scriptures, not barely to consult them, but to compare them; not only to find what they expressly, but what they implicitly taught; not only to read what was plainly said in them, but to discover what might manifestly be deduced from them. The Holy Scriptures would not be so perfect a rule of faith or manners, of what we ought to believe and do, as they are if we were left to judge of either only by what we are there in so many words expressly taught, and might not use our own reasons to infer from them some necessary truths, and some important duties which are there, though not in terms delivered. He would be thought very ridiculous who should plead his being under no obligation from the Scripture to obey the lawful commands of a sovereign princess, because, though he is there required to honour the king, he nowhere reads that he is to honour the queen, and that man is equally absurd who hath no better reason for the denial of a Trinity than that he nowhere finds the word "Trinity" in the Scriptures, though the doctrine by that word signified is

therein contained. II. BUT AGAINST WHAT HATH BEEN DELIVERED IT MAY BE URGED that if we thus give a firm assent to any truths which are not plainly and expressly taught in Scripture, but are only inferred from thence by our own reason, THEN WE MAKE OUR FAITH TO DEPEND, NOT UPON THE WORD OF GOD, BUT UPON OUR OWN REASON. But it might as well be urged that when St. Paul sayeth (Rom. x. 17) that "faith cometh by hearing," we make our faith to depend, not upon the testimony of God, but upon the sense of hearing. The ear is that organ or instrument by which we perceive the Word of God preached to us; but the authority of God is that ground or reason upon which we believe the Word of God which we hear. So our reason, or our understanding, is that faculty by which we perceive and know what things are taught us in Scripture: by that we understand the sense and meaning of what is there revealed; but it is the authority of God, who inspired the penmen of Holy Writ, and who by the guidance of this Holy Spirit secured them from error, upon which we found our belief of what, by the use of our reason, we discover to be by them taught. Those who ascribe thus much and no more than this to reason demand only the liberty of opening their own eyes, and of seeing the wonderful things of God's law; they do not pretend that it is given to them to reveal any new truths to mankind, nor do they usurp an unwarrantable power of framing new articles of faith. All that they demand or ask is, that the right of making use of their own faculties, which is given to every one by nature, and by the God of nature, may not be denied to them. There is no need that a man should be a prophet, or that he should have any extraordinary capacities of mind, or illuminations of the Spirit, to understand that the same Scriptures which teach him that all men have sinned do consequentially teach him that he is a sinner, or that the Word of God, which doth expressly deny that any "shall perish who believe in Christ," doth at the same time virtually pronounce that if he believes he shall not perish. But those who are against all reasoning from Scripture will again ask how can we be sure that the consequences which we draw from Scripture are just and regular? For may not our reason misguide us? And may we not, through mistake, infer such doctrines from Scripture which do by no means follow from it? And if we may be mistaken, why should we venture to believe anything which we think follows from Scripture, but which after all perhaps does not follow? Now, if this reasoning is good, there is an end of all certainty, not only in those inferences which are made from Scripture, and which are levelled against by this sort of arguing, but also in those things which are plainly and expressly taught in Scripture. Men have been mistaken in their judgments concerning things formally delivered in the Word of God. But will it not be said that, if there is any occasion for our drawing inferences from Scripture, then it is plain that the Scriptures are not so easy and clear as they are by the Protestants generally said to be? If we must not only believe what we read in Scripture, but what can be proved from thence, then none will be able to know what is taught in Scripture but such as have skill in drawing consequences; and at this rate we must be skilled in logic before we can pretend to "understand the Scriptures." To this I answer that those are very much mistaken who think that we, who maintain the perspicuity of the Scriptures, do assert them to be so easy, as that there should be no use of our rational faculties rightly to understand them. What St. Peter (2 Pet. iii. 16) saith of the Epistles of St. Paul, we believe of other parts of Holy Writ, that "there are some things in them hard to be understood," and we do not contend that everything therein delivered is suited to the apprehensions of all readers, but only that those things, which all are indispensably bound to know for their soul's health, are by all, upon the use of due diligence, intelligible. And even as to those truths which are necessarily to be known in order to our everlasting salvation, we do not affirm that wherever they are delivered in Scripture they are expressed in such terms as to leave no room for a mistake; but that somewhere or other in Holy Writ, they are so expressed that it must be our own fault if we do not rightly apprehend them. We believe, for instance, that the incarnation of Christ, His passion, and resurrection are taught by the prophets as well as by the apostles; but we do not believe that they are so explicitly and fully revealed by the prophets as by the apostles. What is obscurely hinted in the Old Testament is manifestly explained in the New. And when we affirm that the Scriptures are in some points thus intelligible by all Christians, we do not pretend that they may be understood without attention, diligence, and inquiry; but that we may be capable of knowing their sense with the use of these, and other proper methods of gaining instruction. Some truths indeed are written in so large characters that he that

runs may read them; but for the discovery of other truths revealed in Scripture, the words by which they are conveyed to our understandings are to be carefully weighed, the sense of them to be nicely and accurately inquired into; all passions and prejudices that may any ways bias our judgments are to be laid aside. In the understanding of such truths as these, there being more room for mistake, there is more occasion for our caution, and the way which we are to go being more intricate, it will be proper for us to take in the assistance of a guide. What of ourselves we could not discover, we may be able to perceive when discovered to us by others, in which case we do not implicitly follow the judgment of those whom we consult, but have our own judgments informed by theirs; we do not see with other men's eyes, but those truths which before were obscure to us, are by others, of greater penetration than ourselves, placed in so clear a light that we may now plainly perceive them with our own eyes; we do not in such a case follow our instructors, as blind men do their guides, trusting to their guidance without seeing which way they go; but we make such use of them as persons in the dark do of those who carry a light before them to show them the way and to direct their paths. (*Bp. Smalridge.*)

Rational preaching:—I. PAUL USUALLY PROVED THE TRUTH OF THE DOCTRINES WHICH HE TAUGHT. He did not desire his hearers to believe without evidence. He commended the Bereans, for searching the Scriptures, to see whether his doctrines were agreeable to that standard. In order to reason clearly upon the truth of a proposition, it is often necessary to explain it, to produce arguments in support of it, to answer objections against it. By Paul's proving the doctrines which he taught, we are to understand his reasoning upon them in this manner. This will appear in respect to a variety of subjects upon which he preached. He reasoned plainly and forcibly upon—1. The existence of God (vers. 23-29; Rom. i. 20). 2. The Divine sovereignty (Rom. ix.). 3. Total depravity (Rom. ii. 3). 4. Here it was Christ's sufferings, death, and resurrection. 5. The resurrection and future state (1 Cor. xv.). When Paul preached before Felix, "he reasoned" so that "Felix trembled." Immediately after he was converted he preached Christ, and reasoned so that he confounded the Jews. After he came to Corinth he "reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks." At length he came to Ephesus, where he reasoned with the Jews, "disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God." II. WHY HE MADE THIS HIS COMMON PRACTICE. 1. Because he meant to preach the gospel intelligibly to persons of all characters and capacities, and he knew that in order to do this it was necessary to explain its doctrines, to prove them to be true, that they might be believed; and to answer objections, that the mouths of gainsayers might be stopped. 2. Because he meant to preach profitably, as well as plainly. It is only through the medium of the understanding and the conscience that preachers can affect the hearts of the hearers. IMPROVEMENT: 1. It appears from Paul's usual mode of preaching that he was a metaphysical preacher. For, in the first place, he usually preached upon metaphysical subjects, which required the exercise of the highest reasoning powers of man—the existence, the perfections, the sovereignty of God, the free agency of man under a Divine agency, the divinity and atonement of Christ, the nature of holiness, &c., &c.; and he preached upon them metaphysically, that is, he reasoned upon them. He did not merely declaim upon them; but he explained them, proved them, and refuted the most plausible objections ever made against them. Let any minister, at this day, commonly preach upon the same subjects, and in the same manner that Paul did, and he will be called a metaphysical preacher, by those who are pleased with such a different mode of preaching. And we must allow that they are perfectly correct. 2. If Paul preached in such a manner, then none have any good reason to speak reproachfully of his manner of preaching. (1) Some may say that Christ did not preach metaphysically, but only taught plain, practical doctrines, without reasoning upon them; and therefore ministers should follow his example. Answer: There is reason to think that Paul felt his obligation to follow the example of Christ, as much as any preacher ever did. And so far as he deviated from Christ's example in preaching, he acted from pure and proper motives. And it is easy to see a good reason why Christ did not undertake to prove the doctrines He taught, for He taught as one having authority that none ought to dispute. But neither Paul nor any other human preacher is clothed with such authority. (2) Some may say that those who preach upon the same subjects in the same manner that Paul did, do not preach plainly and practically; and therefore are unprofitable preachers. But if Paul was a plain and profitable preacher, why should not those be? And who, indeed, generally preach the most plainly and successfully? No

man ever preached like metaphysical Paul. 3. If Paul, for good reasons, adopted the very best mode, then no other reason can be assigned for disliking it, but a dislike to the doctrines, which his mode of preaching exhibits in the clearest and strongest light. 4. If Paul preached plainly, in order to preach profitably, then other ministers ought to preach plainly, for the same purpose. Paul's plain preaching offended and disaffected many of his hearers. But this did not prevent his preaching plainly; for his design in preaching was not to please men, but to profit them, and please God (Gal i. 6-10). 5. If ministers ought to preach plainly and profitably, as Paul did, then people ought to approve of their preaching in such a manner, though it be not pleasing to their natural hearts. People have no right to desire preachers to seek to please them simply, but they ought to desire them to seek to save them. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*) **Opening and alleging.**—*Paul's treatment of the Old Testament*:—He treated it as a nut. He broke the shell, opened out the kernel, and presented it as food to the hungry. The Jews were like little children who had a fruit tree in their garden, their father's legacy. The children had gathered the nuts as they grew, and laid them up with reverence in a storehouse; but they knew not how to break open the shell, and so reach the kernel for food. Paul acts the part of elder brother to their little ones. He skilfully pierces the crust and extracts the fruit, and divides it among them. The passage, *e.g.*, that Philip found the Ethiopian reading on the road, or the second psalm, he opened, and from it brought Christ. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) **Devout Greeks, . . . chief women, . . . Jews which believed not.**—*Why Gentiles and women became converts more easily than Jews*:—The inveterate obstinacy of the Jews contrasted sadly with the ready conversion of the Gentiles, and especially of women, who in all ages have been more remarkable than men for religious earnestness, is a phenomenon which constantly recurs in the early history of Christianity. Nor is this wholly to be wondered at. The Jew was at least in possession of a religion which raised him to a height of moral superiority above his Gentile contemporaries; but the Gentile of this day had no religion at all worth speaking of. If the Jew had more and more mistaken the shell of ceremonialism for the precious truths of which that ceremonialism was but the integument, he was at least conscious that there *were* deep truths which lay enshrined behind the observances which he so fanatically cherished. But on what deep truths could the Greek woman rest, if her life were pure, and her thoughts elevated above the ignorant domesticism which was the only recognised virtue of her sex? What comfort was there for her in the cold grey eyes of Athene, or the stereotyped smile of the voluptuous Aphrodite? And when the Thessalonian Greek raised his eyes to the dispeopled heaven of the Olympus, which towered over the blue gulf on which his city stood—when his imagination could no longer place the throne of Zeus, and the session of his mighty deities, on that dazzling summit where Cicero had remarked with pathetic irony that he saw nothing but snow and ice—what compensation could he find for the void left in his heart by a dead religion? By adopting circumcision he might become, as it were, a Helot of Judaism; and to such a sacrifice he was not tempted. But the gospel which Paul preached had no esoteric doctrines, and no supercilious exclusions, and no repellent ceremonials; it came with a Divine Example, and a free gift to all, and that free gift involved all that was most precious to the troubled and despondent soul. No wonder, then, that the Church at Thessalonica was mainly Gentile, as is proved by 1 Thess. i. 9, ii. 14, and by the total absence of any Old Testament allusion in both Epistles. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) **But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy.**—*The spirit of envy*:—Alas! for this spirit of envy and jealousy coming down through the ages. Cain and Abel, Esau and Jacob, Saul and David, Haman and Mordecai, Othello and Iago, Orlando and Angelica, Caligula and Torquatus, Cæsar and Pompey, Columbus and the Spanish courtiers, Cambyses and the brother he slew because he was a better marksman, Dionysius and Philoxenius whom he slew because he was a better singer. Jealousy among painters. Closterman and Geoffrey Kneller, Hudson and Reynolds. Francia anxious to see a picture of Raphael, Raphael sends him a picture. Francia, seeing it, falls in a fit of jealousy, from which he dies. Jealousy among authors. How seldom contemporaries speak of each other! Xenophon and Plato living at the same time, but from their writings you would never suppose they had heard of each other. Religious jealousies. The Mohammedans praying for rain during a drought, no rain coming. Then the Christians began to pray for rain, and the rain comes. Then the Mohammedans met together to account for this, and they resolved that God was so well pleased with their prayers He kept the drought on so as to keep them praying; but that the

Christians began to pray, and the Lord was so disgusted with their prayer that He sent rain right away, so He would not hear any more of their supplication! Oh! this accursed spirit of envy and jealousy. Let us stamp it out from all our hearts. A wrestler was so envious of Theagenes, the prince of wrestlers, that he could not be consoled in any way, and after Theagenes died and a statue was lifted to him in a public place, his envious antagonist went out every night and wrestled with the statue, until, one night, he threw it, and it fell on him and crushed him to death. So jealousy is not only absurd, but it is killing to the body, and it is killing to the soul. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*)

Ver. 6. **These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.**—*The world turned upside down*:—This is just an old version of an oft-repeated story. It was laid to the charge of our Master that He was a stirrer of sedition, whereas He had refused to be a king, for He said, "My kingdom is not of this world"; yet was He crucified under the two false charges of sedition and blasphemy. The same thing occurred with the apostles. This plan was followed afterwards. There was never a calamity befell Rome but the multitude cried, "The Christians to the lions! The Christians have done this." And to this day the world still lays its ills at the door of the Christians. Was it not the foolish cry that the great massacre and mutiny in India was caused by the missionaries? But the calumny is too idle to need a refutation. Can it be true, that He whose gospel is love should be the fomentor of disturbance? Did He not Himself pay tribute, and have not His followers at all times been a peaceful generation?—save only and except where the liberty of their conscience was touched. But still, as there is many a true word spoken in jest, so there is many a true word spoken in malice. Christ's gospel does turn the world upside down. It was the wrong way upwards before, and now that the gospel is preached, and when it shall prevail, it will just set the world right by turning it upside down. See this—I. IN THE WORLD AT LARGE. As regards—1. Character. In the esteem of men, the kingdom of heaven is something like this. High there on the summit sits the great philosopher, the immensely intellectual man. Just below him there is a class—not quite so skilled, but still exceeding wise—who look down at those who stand at the base as the ignoble multitude who know nothing at all. A little lower down, we come to those who seldom will be taught, because they in their own opinion know all there is to be learned. Then after them come a still larger number, who are exceeding wise in worldly wisdom. Lower still are those who have just a respectable amount of knowledge; and then at the very basement are the fool and the babe. How wide the distinction between the simpleton who forms the base, and the wise man who stands resplendent at the apex of the pyramid! Now, see how Christ turns the world upside down. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children," &c. "God hath chosen the poor of this world," &c. If you wish to see the world turned upside down to perfection, turn to Matt. v. (1) "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Now, we like a man who has an ambitious spirit, and also a man who has a very fair opinion of himself. But Christ just turns that upside down. The men who have no strength of their own, but look for all to Christ; who seek not to lift their heads above their fellows; who, if they be great, have greatness thrust upon them, but never seek it—the world says they are soft; but Christ puts those on the top whom the world puts at the bottom. (2) There is another lot who are always mourning. They do not let you see it often, but they mourn for their own sin, and then for the sin of the times. The world says they are a moping, melancholy set; but Christ turns the world upside down, and those whom you think to be sorrowful, are the very ones who are to rejoice. Yes, worldling, your joy is like the crackling of thorns under a pot. It blazeth a little, and maketh a great noise: it is soon done with. But "light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." You cannot see the light now, because it is sown. But when Christ comes to turn the world upside down, they shall be comforted. (3) Then there is another race called "the meek." I know a man who never feels happy unless he has a lawsuit. A slight affront he would not easily forget. Now the meek are of a very different disposition. They do not put themselves into a passion on a slight affront, for they know that all men are imperfect, and therefore think that perhaps their brother made a mistake. They are quite content to bear and forbear, and put up with a thousand injuries rather than inflict one, though people say, "Such a man as that will never get on; he will always be taken in; he has no strength of mind." Ay, but Christ turns it upside down, and He says, "Blessed are the meek, for they

shall inherit the earth." Is not that provoking to you graspers, you high-spirited people? you do it in order that you may inherit the earth: see how Christ spites you, and treads your wisdom under feet. After all, the best way to get our rights is to let them alone. The safest way to defend your character is never to say a word about it. Our enemies cannot hurt us, unless we hurt ourselves. (4) Do you see that gentleman who attends church, reads his Bible, and has family prayers? It is true that he is hard upon his labourers, and exacting at times in his payments; but does justice to all men. This man is on very good terms with himself; and compliments himself on being a very excellent person. If you speak to him about his state before God, he says, that if he does not go to heaven nobody will; for he pays twenty shillings in the pound, and no one can find any fault with his character. Don't you envy him? Well, now, do you see standing at the back of the church there a poor woman? She dares not speak in the presence of respectable persons; but we gather thus much from her: She has lately found out that she is full of sin, and she desires to know what she must do to be saved. The man stands at the top of the ladder, and this poor woman at the bottom. Now just see the gospel process—the world turned upside down. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." (5) "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." The merciful are not much respected in this world; the man who forgives too much, or who is too generous, is not considered to be wise. But Christ declares that he who has been merciful shall obtain mercy. (6) "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." The world says, "Blessed is the man who indulges in a gay life." (7) And now look at the ninth verse. You walk through London, and there, upon the very top of the world, can be seen the armless sleeve of a Nelson; and there, in another place, a duke, a mighty man of war. But Christ says, "Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God." Here is the world turned upside down. The warrior with his garment stained in blood is put into the ignoble earth, to die and rot; but the peacemaker is lifted up, and God's crown of blessing is put round about his head. (8) We find a race who have always been hated, about whom He says, "Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The whole of these beatitudes are just in conflict with the world's opinion. 2. Maxims. "It was said by them of old time, eye for eye and tooth for tooth; but I say unto you, resist not evil." "Whosoever would sue thee at the law and take thy cloak, let him take thy coat also." "If any man smite thee on the one cheek, turn unto him the other also." "It has been said by them of old time, love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy"; but Jesus Christ said, "Let love be unto all men." We are told that it is good to a man to make himself rich, but Christ called a certain rich man "Thou fool!" You would have made an Alderman of him or a Lord Mayor. 3. Religious notions. The world's religion is—"Do, and thou shalt live"; Christ's religion is—"Believe and live." We will have it, that if a man be righteous, sober, upright, he shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but Christ says—This thou oughtest to have done; but still, not this can ever cleanse thee. II. IN THE HEART. Man is a little world, and what God does in the outer world, He does in the inner. If any of you would be saved, your hearts must be turned upside down. 1. Your judgment. Cannot many of you say that which you now believe to be the truth of God is very far opposed to your former carnal notions? 2. Your hopes. They used to be all for this world. If you could but get rich, be great and honoured, you would be happy! Now your hopes are not on earth; for where your treasure is, there must your heart be also. 3. Your pleasures. You loved the tavern once; you hate it now. You hated God's house once; it is now your much-loved habitation. The song, the Sunday newspaper, the lewd novel—all these were sweet to your taste; but you have burned the books that once enchanted you, and now the Bible is read and delighted in. The Sabbath was once the dullest day of the week. There are some of you who once loved nothing better than the theatre. You seek now the gathering of the righteous. 4. Your house. Look over the mantelpiece. There is a vile daub of a picture there, and the subject is worse than the style of the thing. But when the man follows Jesus he takes that down, and gets a print of some good old subject representing something Biblical. There is a pack of cards and a cribbage board in the cupboard; he turns them out, and instead he puts there good literature. The children say, "Father is so altered." He used to come home drunk, and the children used to run upstairs; and now little John and little Sarah sit at the window and watch till he comes home. He used to teach them to sing

"Begone, dull care," or something worse; now he tells them of "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild." A jolly set of companions he used to have come to see him on a Sunday afternoon; but that is all done with. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Revolution*:—The world is wrong-side up, and it needs to be turned upside-down in order that it may be right-side up. The time was when men wrote "Apologies for Christianity." I hope that day has passed. We want no more apologies for Christianity. We do not mean to make any compromise in the matter. We do not wish to hide the fact that Christianity is revolutionary, and that its tendency is to turn the world upside-down. Our religion has often been misrepresented as though it were a refined imbecility; a spiritual chloroform. The Bible, so far from this, represents it as ransacking and upsetting ten thousand things that now seem to be settled on firm foundations. I hear some man say: "I thought religion was peace." That is the final result. A man's arm is out of place. Two men come, and with great effort put it back in the socket. It goes back with great pain. Then it gets well. Our world is horribly disordered and out of joint. It must come under an omnipotent surgery, beneath which there will be pain and anguish before there can come perfect health and quiet. The religion of the Bible will make a revolution—I. IN THE FAMILY. Those things that are wrong will be overthrown by it, while justice and harmony will take their place. The husband will be head of the household only when he is fit to be. If the wife have more of all that is right, she shall have the supremacy. There is no human or Divine law that makes a woman subordinate to a man unworthy of her. As religion comes in at the front door, mirth and laughter will not go out at the back door. John will laugh just as loud; and George will jump higher than he ever did before. It will establish a family altar. Hannah will rear her Samuel for the temple; a Mary and Martha, and Lazurus will gather in fraternal and sisterly affection in a home in which Jesus dwells. The religion of Jesus will overthrow all jealousies, all janglings; and peace, and order, and holiness will take possession of the home. II. IN COMMERCIAL CIRCLES. Find fifty merchants, and you find fifty standards of what is right and wrong. You say to some one about a merchant, "Is he honest?" "Oh yes, but he grinds the faces of his clerks; or he exaggerates the value of his goods," &c. Ah! there is but one standard of the everlastingly right and wrong, and that is the Bible; and when that principle shall get its pry under our commercial houses, one half of them will go over. "What is the matter? Has there been a fall in gold?" "No." "Has there been a new tariff?" "No." "Has there been a failure in crops?" "No." "Has there been an unaccountable panic?" "No." The Lord has set up His throne of judgment in the exchange. What was 1837? What was 1857? What was 1869? A day of judgment. Do you think that God is going to wait until He has burned the world up before He rights these wrongs? The fraudulent man piles up his gains until his property has become a great pyramid; and as he stands looking at it he thinks it can never be destroyed; but the Lord pushes it all over. You build a house, and you put into it a rotten beam. The house is completed. Soon it begins to rock. You call in the mechanics and ask, "What is the matter?" Says the mechanic, "You put a rotten beam into that structure, and the whole thing has got to come down." Here is an estate that seems to be all right now. It has been building a great many years. But fifteen years ago there was a dishonest transaction, and that will keep on working ruin until down the estate will come in wreck and ruin about the possessor's ears. I have seen it again and again. The time will come when, through the revolutionary power of this gospel, a falsehood, instead of being called exaggeration, equivocation, or evasion, will be branded a lie! And stealings, that now sometimes go under the head of percentages, and commissions, and bonuses, will be put into the catalogue of state-prison offences. Society will be turned upside down, until business dishonesties shall come to an end. III. IN OUR CHURCHES. The non-committal, do-nothing policy will give way to a spirit of bravest conquest. Piety in this day is salted down just so as to keep. The Church is chiefly anxious to take care of itself; and if we hear of want, and squalour, and heathenism outside, we say, "What a pity!" and we put our hands in our pockets, and we feel around for a two-cent piece, and with a great flourish we put it upon the plate, and are amazed that the world is not converted in six weeks. Suppose there were a great war; and there were three hundred thousand soldiers, but all except ten men were in their tents, or scouring their muskets, or cooking rations. You would say, "Of course, defeat must come in that case." Millions of the professed soldiers of Jesus Christ are cooking rations, or asleep in their tents, while only one man here and there goes out to do battle for the Lord.

"But," says some one, "we are establishing a great many missions." Yes, and they are doing a magnificent work; but every mission-chapel is a confession of the disease and weakness of the Church. It is saying to the rich, "If you can pay pew-rents, come to the main audience-room." It is saying to the poor, "Your coat is too bad, and your shoes are not good enough. You will have to go by the way of the mission-chapel." The mission-chapel has become the kitchen, where the Church does its sloppy work. There are hundreds of churches—gorgeously built and supported—that, even on bright days, are not half full; and yet they are building mission-chapels, because the great masses of the people are kept out of the main audience-room. Now I say that any place of worship which is appropriate for one class is appropriate for all classes. Let the rich and the poor meet together the Lord, the Maker of them all. Revolution! The pride, the exclusiveness, the financial boastings of the Church must come down! It may be that, before the Church learns its duty to the masses, God will scourge it and drive out the money-changers. It may be that there is to be a great day of upsetting before that time shall come. In that future day of the reconstructed Church of Christ, the church building will be the most cheerful of all buildings. The pure atmosphere of heaven will sweep out the fetid atmosphere that has been kept in many of our churches boxed up from Sunday to Sunday. The day of which I speak will be a day of great revivals. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*) *The charge of sedition and faction against good men, especially faithful ministers, considered and accounted for:*—In discoursing upon this subject, it is proposed, through the assistance of Divine grace—I. By a short historical deduction to show THAT THE CHARACTER OF SEDITIOUS, TROUBLESOME, AND DISORDERLY, HATH BEEN CONSTANTLY GIVEN BY WICKED MEN TO THE SERVANTS OF GOD. It would not be difficult to point out something of this spirit prevailing in the world, from the life of almost every good man whose name stands upon record, however short and general the account be that is given of many of them in Scripture. I shall content myself with some leading instances, in very different ages, from the earliest to the latest times. The first I shall mention is 1 Kings xviii. 17. Another instance may be found in Jehoshaphat and Ahab's consultation before going out to battle (1 Kings xxii. 7, 8). Here, you see, Micaiah was the object of aversion because he denounced the judgment of God against the king's wickedness. See an instance of a general accusation of this kind against all the worshippers of the true God by Haman (Esther iii. 8). The prophet Jeremiah met with the same treatment at different times. Neither prince, nor priests, nor prophets, were able to bear without resentment the threatenings which he denounced in the name of God (Jer. xxvi. 8, 9, 11, xxxvii. 13, xxxviii. 4). The prophet Amos is another instance, precisely parallel to the last. Because of his fidelity to God he was invidiously represented as an enemy to the king (Amos vii. 10). Our Lord fell under the same accusation. However plain and artless His carriage, He is called a deceiver of the people (John vii. 12). His enemies endeavoured to embroil Him with the civil government by this insidious question, "Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not?" And that which brought Him at last to the Cross was the same pretended crime (John xix. 12). I shall close this view of the Scripture history with the passage of which my text is a part. The whole crime of the Apostle Paul and his companion was preaching the doctrine of the cross of Christ, his great and darling theme. Having produced these instances from Scripture, which is liable to no exception, I shall say but little on the subsequent periods of the Church. Whoever will take the pains to look into the history of the Church before the Reformation, cannot fail to observe, that when any one, either among the clergy or laity, was bold enough to reprove the errors in doctrine, or the ambition, luxury, and worldly lives of his contemporaries, he was immediately branded as a factious and disorderly person, and often severely punished as an enemy to the peace of the Church. II. We proceed now to inquire, WHAT IT IS IN TRUE RELIGION THAT GIVES OCCASION TO THIS CHARGE, AND MAKES THE WORLD PRONE TO BELIEVE IT. 1. The example of the servants of God is a continual and sensible reproach to the contrary conduct of the men of the world. As a deceived heart turns the wicked aside, so the continuance of self-deceit is necessary to his tasting those pleasures of sin in which his mistaken happiness is placed. To reproach his conduct, therefore, is to disturb his dream, and to wound his peace. And as pride, however finely disguised, has the dominion in every unrenewed heart, how offensive must every species of reproof be to men of this character? Now, is not the example of every good man a severe though silent reproof to the wicked? And, as every worldly man's own conscience is thus made troublesome to him by

the example of the children of God, so it tends to set sinners at variance with one another, and exposes the conduct of each to the censure of the rest. Sin, however universally practised, is yet generally shameful. Conscience though bribed, and comparatively blind in a man's own case, is often just and impartial, at least under far less bias in the case of others. It is in this way, and in this way alone, that the public honour and credit of religion is preserved amidst so great a majority who are enemies to it in their hearts. Must not, then, the example of a strict and conscientious person, set in the strongest light the faults of those who act a contrary part, so often as they happen to fall under observation together. Nay, does it not open the eyes of the world upon many lesser blemishes which would otherwise escape its notice? 2. Another reason why the servants of God are represented as troublesome is, because they will not, and dare not, comply with the sinful commandments of men. In matters merely civil, good men are the most regular citizens and the most obedient subjects. But, as they have a Master in heaven, no earthly power can constrain them to deny His name or desert His cause (chap. iv. 19). With what invincible constancy did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse to bow before Nebuchadnezzar's golden image? The case of Daniel was perfectly similar, whom even the king's commandment could not restrain from prayer to God. There is a love of dominion natural to all men, which is under no control or restraint in those who are void of religion. This must naturally dispose them to carry on their schemes, and to insist on having them universally complied with. It frets and provokes them, therefore, to find any who will not be subservient to their pleasures. How few are able to bear this with patience, the history of the world in every age is one continued proof. Such refusals, also, do always reflect some dishonour upon the measures to which they stand in opposition. Whatever any person refuses to do, he, as far as in him lies, represents as wrong and sinful; and, in some respects, unworthy or unfit to be done. Thus it comes to be considered, not only as withdrawing his own allegiance, but as corrupting and seducing others. 3. One other reason why the servants of God are accused as troublesome is, because they are, in many instances, obliged to bear testimony against the sins of others, and openly to reprove them (Lev. xix. 17). Some sins are so flagrant in their nature, that even to witness them with silence would imply some participation of the guilt. In such cases it is the glory of the poorest and meanest servant of God to resent the dishonour that is done to His name, and reprove the most exalted sinner. But this duty, and the odium arising from it, falls most frequently to the share of the prophets and ministers of God, who have received a commission to speak in His name and to plead His cause. How offensive this to human pride! It must certainly either convince or provoke, reform or inflame. How many martyrs to truth have there been since the world began! But there cannot be a better example, or indeed a more lively and well-drawn picture of the effect of plain and just reproof, than in the case of Stephen when pleading his cause before the Jewish rulers (chap. vii. 51, 52, 54). It is plainly for this reason that the apostles, in their prayers for assistance, do almost constantly ask that they may be endued with a proper degree of boldness and resolution (chap. iv. 29; Eph. vii. 19; 2 Thess. iii. 2). It is very natural for every one, at this distance, to imagine that he could have been in no danger of making such an obstinate resistance to the truth, or persecuting, with such implacable enmity, those who espoused it. But all worldly men, in every age, have still the same abhorrence of the faithful servants of God; the same impatience of reproof when it touches themselves. I have taken notice above that in every period of the Church, the most faithful of the servants and ministers of God have, in fact, been counted troublesome by corrupt and worldly men. The same passages of history constantly show that this has arisen chiefly from their attempts to stem the tide of prevailing vice; from their boldness and faithfulness in reproving fashionable crimes. In the twelfth century, Arnulphus, a devout man and excellent preacher, speaks thus to the clergy: "I know that you seek my life, and will shortly kill me. But why? I speak the truth to you, I reprehend your pride and haughtiness, avarice and luxury; therefore I please you not." III. PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT. 1. You may learn from what has been said upon this subject the just and proper answer to an objection against the gospel, much insisted on by its enemies, viz., That it has introduced persecution for conscience' sake, with which the world was in a great measure unacquainted before. There are few subjects on which infidels enlarge with greater pleasure, than the cruel animosity that has prevailed, the savage and inhuman massacres that have been perpetrated on a religious account since the publication of the gospel. I think this objection is

but seldom answered as it might be. It is usually observed that whatever may have been done by those professing the gospel, there is no countenance given in it to such a spirit and practice. But the objection is not wholly removed while infidels are allowed still to contend that persecution has been its constant attendant and inseparable effect. We ought, therefore, to wrest this argument out of their hands, and first to produce this fact as an accomplishment of our Saviour's prediction (Matt. x. 34–36). Having gone thus far, we have reason to contend that the disciples of Christ have always suffered, and never inflicted the injury, though they have often been obliged to bear the blame. The multitude of heathen religions, though not always, yet did generally agree together: and well they might, for they were all from the same author. None of them, however, could agree with the gospel, for this plain reason, that "no lie is of the truth." But from what quarter did the violence proceed? Did not the dreadful persecutions against the Christians, in the three first centuries, proceed from the heathens? Did the Christians commit any other crime against them, than pointing out the sin and danger of their idolatrous worship and immoral practices? Was not this alone sufficient to raise a cry against them, as turning the world upside down? And in all the subsequent persecutions among professing Christians, was it anything else than the proud, violent, and worldly spirit of those who made a gain of godliness, oppressing the few real believers of every denomination? 2. From what hath been said you may see the guilt and danger of those who falsely accuse the children of God. Nay, our present state as a Church and nation, seems to render such a warning peculiarly seasonable. We have long enjoyed outward peace. In every other country this has introduced a worldly spirit, ambition, luxury, and sloth. And is there no vestige of these characters among us now? Are there not some who cannot endure such strictness as is inconsistent with conformity to the gay and fashionable world? Do not all such incline to charge every profession of piety with hypocrisy? Do they not consider every faithful reprover as an enemy to their peace? Do they not hear with secret pleasure, and spread with apparent triumph, every report to the prejudice of such troublers of Israel? This, then, is the character, and as many of you as conscience charges with the guilt may see your danger. You may see whose cause you plead, and whose reward you shall share. 3. If this has been the constant lot of all the servants of God, to be accused as seditious and troublesome, let every cautious person beware of being misled by the persecuting cry. 4. Since the world is so prone to receive the accusation of faction against the children of God, let them be careful to give no real ground for it. (1) Let all our zeal for the glory of God be conducted, not only with steadiness but with meekness. (2) Let ministers take care to avoid officiously intermeddling in civil matters. 5. Since the charge of faction and sedition has been always brought against faithful ministers, let us learn to bear it with patience and never dissemble the truth, or depart in any measure from our duty in order to avoid it. (*J. Witherspoon, D.D.*) *The world turned upside down*:—We may regard the words in three points of view. I. AS AN EXPRESSION OF THE DEEP-SEATED HOSTILITY OF THE HUMAN HEART AGAINST THE GOSPEL. The love of God—the service of God—the glory of God—the actual intercourse of the soul with God, are all in complete repugnance to the emotions and tastes of general society: therefore such a religion must be opposed and decried. But how shall this be done? It is too palpable a thing to say that we ought not to love God, or serve Him sincerely; but rather to be satisfied with a mere dead form of religion. Such language were too palpable an insult to the rights of Deity. To what delusion, then, must they have recourse in this perplexity? The difficulty has been met in this way. They affix a reproachful term to true religion, and then they proceed to decry it, under the shelter of that term. Thus they soothe their conscience under the sophistical delusion that it is error, rather than truth, which they oppose. II. AS A VERIFICATION OF THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY. "The time will come," are the words of its great Author to His little band of brethren, "when he that killeth you will think that he doeth God service." "Ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake," is another of His predictions. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution." III. AS THE UNWITTING TESTIMONY OF ENEMIES TO THE POWER AND DESIGN OF THE GOSPEL. They said that the apostles were revolutionists, disturbers of the peace, preachers of another king—"one Jesus." Politically, this was a gross falsehood: evangelically, it was, and still is, true. Sin has turned away the heart of man, his face, and feet, and hands, from God; and the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, by which the entire moral nature of man is to be changed and converted from darkness to light—from sin to holiness—from

alienation to friendship—and from the vassalage of Satan unto liberty and life. (*American National Preacher.*) *The gospel a revolution*:—I. THE GOSPEL CREATES A DISTURBANCE. 1. Internally—in men's hearts. 2. Externally—in their social relations. II. THE OBJECT OF THIS DISTURBANCE. 1. Not the subversion, but the conversion of the world. 2. Not its destruction, but its salvation. (*W. W. Wythe.*) *Christianity a revolution*:—I. THE BROADEST the world has ever seen. 1. By its breadth, it aims at the whole world. 2. By its depth, the territory of the spirit. II. THE MOST LEGITIMATE. 1. By its aim, the salvation of the world. 2. By the means employed, the weapons of the Spirit. (*K. Gerok.*) *The revolutionary spirit of Christianity*:—I. THE WORLD IS WRONG SIDE UP. II. IT WANTS TURNING UPSIDE DOWN. III. WE ARE THE MEN TO DO IT. (*Early Methodist Sermon.*)

Ver. 7. **These do all contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another King, one Jesus.**—*Christ versus Cæsar*:—Thessalonica, though a free city, was yet under imperial government, and the Jews therefore appeal to the emperor's decree, probably to the edict of Claudius (chap. xviii. 2), as at least showing the drift of the emperor's policy, even though it was not strictly binding except in Rome and the *coloniæ*. This, however, might prove an insufficient weapon of attack, and therefore they add another charge, to which no magistrate throughout the empire could be indifferent (Luke xxiii. 2; John xix. 12). The preachers were not only bringing in a *relligio illicita*, but were guilty of treason against the majesty of the empire; they said there was "another King." It is clear from the Epistle to the Thessalonians that the kingdom of Christ, and specially His second coming as King, had been very prominent in the apostle's teaching (1 Thess. iv. 14, v. 2, 23; 2 Thess. i. 7, 8, ii. 1–12), and this may have furnished materials for the accusation. (*Dean Plumptre.*) *The King of kings*:—I. HIS PERSONAL ATTRACTIONS. "There is another King, one Jesus," who is "fairer than the children of men." Oh, how great is His beauty! II. HIS REGAL GRANDEUR. He is Lord of both the dead and the living. III. THE BLESSEDNESS OF HIS SUBJECTS. IV. HIS DURATION. "His name shall be continued as long as the sun." (*R. C. Dillon, D.D.*) *The King of kings, contrasted with the kings of the earth*:—I. THE DIGNITY OF HIS PERSON. II. THE EXTENT OF HIS EMPIRE. All created things are His. III. THE BLESSEDNESS AND SECURITY OF HIS SUBJECTS. Who are so—1. Safe. 2. Free. 3. Rich. IV. THE DURATION OF HIS REIGN. "He shall reign for ever and ever." (*W. Jay.*) *Jesus a King* (children's sermon):—1. What a blank would be produced if all we know about kings and queens were destroyed! We are not to suppose that all have been like our own good Queen Victoria. What we know of kings and queens ought to make us very grateful that we live under such a reign. 2. Do not suppose that there are not any kings or queens but such as wear crowns. If a boy does what is right, serves and loves God, he is a king. If a girl is gentle, wise, pure, dutiful, she has graces which make her queenly. Kingly qualities have often been developed by the ordinary trades of life. The walks of literature also have produced many. So that in the history of the world we have had more monarchs without crowns than with. The Lord Jesus is King—I. ON THE GROUND OF RIGHT. He had the right of the Father's appointment. We do not question the right of Moses to the leadership, or of David to kingship, or of St. Paul to the apostleship, because they received their offices from God. And it is quite as certain that Jesus received kingship from the same power. "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." II. BECAUSE OF HIS PERFECT QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE REGAL POSITION. This is a great deal more than can be said about all kings. If experience and knowledge, if tenderness and power, if majesty and condescension, if dignity and humility, if wisdom and wealth, and if royal lineage and great personal virtues, can show qualification for government, then Jesus has such qualification without limit. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell." III. BECAUSE HE HAS THE HEARTY APPROVAL OF HIS SUBJECTS. No king ever yet had the free, intelligent good-will of his people so fully accorded him. Convene a meeting of all His subjects, not any of the crowned heads of Europe would secure one vote from the subjects of Jesus, in opposition to His monarchy. Every voter would say, "Jesus only, our King." IV. BECAUSE HE ISSUES LAW TO HIS PEOPLE, AND MAINTAINS RESPECT FOR AND OBEDIENCE TO THE LAW HE ISSUES. What mighty contrasts exist between the laws of earthly sovereigns and those of Jesus! Human laws affect nations; Divine laws are for and affect everybody. Human laws have to be altered to suit altered circumstances, but "one jot or one tittle of His word shall not fail." Laws here have been

founded in error; Christ's are founded in eternal truth. Laws are frequently hard to interpret correctly, and men of plain, simple minds, as well as astute lawyers, have made mistakes. Christ's laws are all easy, simple, and plain. V. BECAUSE HE HAS POWER TO ENFORCE HIS WILL. No king, however large his army, or however great his power, ever had the might that Jesus has. VI. BECAUSE HE HAS A LARGE RETINUE OF ILLUSTRIOUS PERSONS. The retinue King Jesus has, and will have, will far surpass anything of the sort ever seen upon our earth—Abel, Noah, Abraham, David, &c. Yes, patriarchs looked forward to His day; prophets gladly announced His coming; kings and poets wrote of Him, and angels ministered unto Him. And now, as His chariot appears, they all say, "There is another King, one Jesus." Look at the chariot. It is called the gospel. Its wheels are capable of travelling over any sort of roads, rough or smooth, hard or soft; through woods, across seas, or over deserts. The chariot itself is so strong that not all the powers of men and devils can break it. No time can cause it to decay, nor can any element impair its beauty. It is lined within and without with promises. It is so full of provisions that not the supply of all the wants of all men can possibly produce deficiency. And then this chariot is so large that there is room for all: and all who ride do so free of charge. Then, what steeds are drawing this chariot! The one is called "Love abounding," and the other "Zeal undying"; and they never tire. But neither chariot nor horses are half so wonderful as King Jesus, the occupant of this chariot (Rev. i. 13). On the procession moves; and the illustrious ones following are as grand and even more numerous than such as preceded. Here come the apostles, martyrs, reformers, &c., &c. There is no wisdom so wise, no goodness so great, nor any act so becoming, as to join whilst we are young the retinue of King Jesus. This is done by giving our hearts to Him. Joseph joined when but a boy. Samuel also, and David, and Timothy. VII. BECAUSE HE TAKES A DEEP PERSONAL INTEREST IN THE ELEVATION AND GOOD OF ALL HIS SUBJECTS. All kings have not done so. Some have asked only how they could increase their possessions or dignity. Note the marks of the interest monarchs take in their subjects. 1. The sacrifices they make in their behalf. Look then at the sacrifices made by Jesus for all His people. 2. Their gladness when the people are contented and prosperous; and their tenderness and sympathy when calamity comes upon them. A king should be the reflex, or counterpart, of his people. This, I am sure, is what Jesus is; when His subjects are in suffering, He says, "Fear not, I will uphold thee"; and when He has turned their sorrow into joy, He says, "Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King." VIII. BECAUSE HE GIVES ACCESS TO HIS PEOPLE. The power of an earthly king to do this is limited; and those who approach earthly thrones can only do so at great cost. But Jesus allows all His subjects to approach Him at all times, and without expense. IX. BECAUSE HE HAS A LARGE REVENUE. "As rich as a king" is quite a proverb. Boys and girls may well wonder where the king gets all his money from. It is from taxes! Jesus is by far the richest king that ever occupied a throne. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." But He is not dependent upon gold for the progress of His kingdom. In His treasury there are contributions of greater value. Prayer, praise, holy living, zeal. X. BECAUSE HE PROTECTS THE RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES OF HIS SUBJECTS. Does He not say to all, "Touch not Mine anointed, and do My prophets no harm"? I know that sometimes it looks as though He gave them up to the power of their enemies. It looked as though He had forgotten Joseph, Daniel, &c.; but the issue showed how well they were cared for. XI. BECAUSE HE HAS ROYAL FAVOURS TO BESTOW. In all countries kings have been noted for this. Warriors, legislators, poets, philanthropists, the great, the wealthy, and the learned, are they who carry off royal honours; and should royal favours come down to the poor and indigent in any great measure, what a stir and to-do would be made about it! Jesus carries off the palm in this department. He restricts not His favours to any privileged class; like the sunlight, they fall with equal beauty and energy upon the brow of the poor and of the wealthy; like the dew, they descend with equal power upon the cottage and the palace home. What are the favours of King Jesus? 1. Pardon for all sin. "He is exalted a Prince and a Saviour," &c. 2. Purity of heart and life. 3. Grace, according to the wants of His people. 4. A valid title to heaven, and its possession at death. For these gifts the world's gold, valour, industry, wisdom, are all in vain; and so for each one we must say, "Now, thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift." (*J. Goodacre.*) *Jesus, "another King":*—As compared with earthly sovereigns, Jesus is another King; for He is one—I. CONTEMPLATING EXCLUSIVELY SPIRITUAL DOMINION. Earthly monarchs aspire after territorial dominion, and are accounted

monarchs because they possess it. Christ's kingdom has its seat in the soul. II. CLAIMING RIGHTFULLY UNQUALIFIED OBEDIENCE. Of what earthly sovereign can it be said that he rightfully claims unqualified obedience? He justly demands unqualified obedience—1. In right of His position. He is King of kings: obedience cannot be withheld from Him on the plea that there is a higher power we must first consult. 2. In right of the equity of His government. His service is always "reasonable," His honour and our interests never really clash. 3. In right of His grace. He is the Saviour. Obedience cannot be withheld from Him on the plea that we owe Him but little. III. SECURING INFALLIBLY HEARTFELT HOMAGE. If admission be granted to the presence of an earthly sovereign, how often is the homage rendered to him nothing more than compliance with a state ceremony! Jesus is "another King." He rules by love, He wins the heart. IV. EXPECTING CONFIDENTLY UNIVERSAL EMPIRE. (*J. T. Poulter, B.A.*) *The risen Christ as King*:—1. "There is another King." Alas! for the world, alas! for us all, if there be not. The hope of the world is a Christendom in which Christ shall reign. A Christendom in which He does not reign we see, and have seen enough of. Men are getting weary of the preaching of Jesus and His gospel, while Christian races are wasted by vice, poverty, and war. Along with all our Christianity we still need men to preach "another King, one Jesus"; to whom all the selfishness of our politics, the craft of our diplomacy, the fierce contention of our industry, are hateful; a King who has left "A new commandment, That ye love one another," and in one aspiration, "That they all may be one," the key to His hope and effort for mankind. The world has yet to try what Jesus can do for it. 2. Christ foretold that His method would try the patience and weary the hope of man. There is nothing in England or in Europe which is sadder than the picture which He Himself draws of the development of His kingdom in Matt. xxiv. But He saw beyond that which moved Him to pour out His soul unto death. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." And this is the rebuke of all our faithless doubts and dreads. Mark the patience with which through unnumbered ages the Lord of the world has been elaborating the chirping apparatus of a cricket, the feather of the pinion of a bird, or the spots on the gay plumage of a butterfly's wing—and yet we faint and lose heart because in a few centuries this great world is not converted to Jesus, and the harvest, for the sake of which the whole creation has been groaning and travailing through well-nigh infinite ages, is not yet reaped and garnered on high. 3. The fundamental question is, Why should man want another king? Why should we not leave the secular spirit to take charge of the interests and to guide the progress of human society? and I answer—(1) That something like the form of Christ's kingdom is implied in and prophesied by the very structure of human society. When we say that man is a social being, we mean something differing entirely in kind, and not only in degree, from what we mean when we speak of the social instincts and habits of the ants or the bees. The key to man's life is to be sought in heaven and not in the dust. In entering the sphere of human society we come under a higher law and enter a higher world. Consider the fact that all man's most exquisite pleasures and griefs arise out of his relations with others, out of his social habits and affections, of which the richest elements connect themselves with his duties and ministries to the poor, the weak, the helpless; can we believe with all this before us, that man's life as a social being is still to be but the struggle for existence in another form, of which self-seeking and not self-devotion must be the law? I can see no possible beauty, joy, or hope in human society, except "bear ye one another's burdens" be the law. And I can see no basis for that law, and no assurance of its supremacy, but in the contemplation of His life and His living energy who came from heaven "not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." Just as a skilled naturalist, looking at the structure of an animal, can forecast its habit and habitation, even so, as we look at the structure of man as a social being, we can affirm with certainty that the habit of his life was meant to be obedience to the law of Christ, and the home of his life and theatre of its development is the kingdom of heaven. (2) And what seems implied in man's constitution is exemplified in his history. Among all peoples there are visions of which this is the substance. Man's ideal of society everywhere takes this form; he seems to feel instinctively that only in such a world as the kingdom of heaven can he truly and nobly live. All the world's great thinkers lead on its thoughts to a time when that reign of truth, righteousness, and love, which the Bible associates with Messiah's kingdom, shall be realised, and all the woe and waste and wrong of the world shall be stayed. 4. But then, it may be said, if men

are dreaming about this and are aiming at this, why not leave them alone to work out their idea? The answer to this is that God did leave man in the Gentile world alone, that he might discover whither the course of things would drift him, and might be prepared through disappointment and suffering to accept at length the helping Hand which would be held out to him from on high. Cæsar was the result of man's development as a social being. The world's work for itself ends in ruin. The march of the ages resulted in a condition of the Roman Empire which, but for the restoring power brought to bear upon it by Christianity, nothing but a second deluge could have cured. Let the state of India before the English came to it, let the state of China and Africa at this moment, exhibit the result which comes inevitably to peoples when they try—or do not try, for this is what it ends in—to work out their own salvation for themselves. We need only look round us at this moment in Europe to form some just estimate of Cæsar and his work. We have had modern Cæsars in our day, enthroned in the centres of civilisation; and the end of their sway has everywhere been wreck. Blessed be God that there is another King, "one Jesus"; for man's experiments in government are failures, and must be failures. But is it not a stain on God's righteous government, does it not reveal a flaw in His will or in His power, that things in human society, thus left to themselves, tend to dissolution? Surely not: it was never intended in the scheme of Providence that man should work out his own salvation or the salvation of society. 5. What is the relation of this other King to the kingdoms of this world? The officers of Cæsar were naturally alarmed. This is what perplexed and alarmed Pilate. There was little that was kinglike in Jesus, in Pilate's sense of kingship. And yet he was anxious and afraid, though why he could not tell. Men are slow to believe in a kingship which makes no sign before the world. The true kingdom is a kingdom which penetrates and purifies all other kingdoms, just as the electric force pervades creation, everywhere felt, never touched and seen. We do nothing contrary to the decrees of Cæsar in preaching that there is "another King, one Jesus." He works entirely from within; what of blessing can come to the world by making men wiser, purer, more unselfish, more brotherly, that He bestows. But this breaks up nothing which the progress of humanity, however realised, would not break up; it consolidates everything on earth which stands square with truth, righteousness, and God. 6. Christ has one way of working out the regeneration of human society; Cæsar, under all the various shapes and forms of government, has another. The one works purely from the inward outward, and heals and cleanses at the spring. The other cleanses for awhile the outside, but finding itself powerless to cleanse the inward, finally gives up its work in despair. How many times through the ages has society been broken up, reconstructed, reformed, redressed, only to fall back again more hopelessly into the darkness. Guilt is oppressing, sin is corrupting, and selfishness is wasting humanity everywhere. The King whom we preach cares nothing for His Royalty, save in so far as it can lift that burden, heal that corruption, stay that waste. (*J. Baldwin Brown, B.A.*) *Christ our deathless King*:—Christ is our King, King of Zion, King of glory, King of earth, King of heaven. He is a King that always lives. Where is Louis XIV.? Dead. Where is Richard III.? Dead. Where is Henry VIII.? Dead. Where is Peter the Great? Dead. There is a whole sheaf of sceptres at the door of the tomb. Death is an old monarch, and his palace is a sepulchre, and the kings of the earth are his cup-bearers; and the old blind monarch, walking around in the palace of sepulchres, ever and anon stumbles over a newly-fallen coronet. Charlemagne after death sat on a throne, and a crown was put upon his pulseless temples and a sceptre was put in his lifeless hand; but these things did not bring back his kingdom. But our King always lives. He lived before the world was made. He will live after the world is burned. King immortal! (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *Jesus a sympathetic King*:—The Sultan of Turkey arranged that whenever he rode out on horseback his subjects might come up to him and tell their sorrows and tell their wrongs; and when the Sultan rode the crowd came up, and after a while his progress was impossible. But more merciful is our King, for at any hour of the day or night we may come up to Him and tell all our wants and all our sorrows and get relief. To come to other courts, we must have a court dress rightly cut and rightly adorned; but to come into the presence, into the court of our King, we need no such preparation, and the beggar may come with his rags, and the prodigal from the filth of the swine trough, and be without introduction immediately ushered. Merciful King! Pardoning King! Sympathetic King! Oh, Jesus, live for ever! (*Ibid.*) *Jesus a helpful King*:—On the first elevation of the ancient amphi-

theatre, on the day of a celebration, sat Tiberius, or Augustus, or the reigning king. So in the great arena of spectators that watch our struggles, and in the first Divine gallery, as I shall call it, sits our King, one Jesus. The Roman emperor sat, with folded arms, indifferent as to whether the swordsman or the lion beat; but our King's sympathies are all with us. Nay, unheard-of condescension! I see Him come down from the gallery into the arena to help us in the fight, shouting, until all up and down His voice is heard: "Fear not! I will help thee!" (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 10-15. **And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas unto Berea . . . These were more noble than those in Thessalonica.**—*From Thessalonica to Berea*:—1. Paul and Silas were sent away "by night." That is the way to make the most of time. Travel by night and preach by day if you would make the best of your opportunities. We sleep by night, and hardly get over the slumber all day. The enemy would say they had driven Paul off the ground—Paul himself would say that he was going to make new ground, and that he would certainly come back again to the old place. We have seen the tide go out, but we have seen it also return, and in the returning it seems to play at going back again; but the refluent wave increases in volume, and returns with enhanced force and grandeur. Paul will come back again—personally, or by letter—to Thessalonica. He is fifty miles away, and yet he is not one inch off. He has taken with him in his heart all that he won at Thessalonica. 2. When Paul came to Berea he went into the synagogue of the Jews. How was that? Surely he had suffered enough in connection with synagogues! It is one of two things with us all: either the inward conquers, or the outward—the soul or the body, love of God or love of ease. 3. "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica." Thessalonica was a capital, a metropolis, and Berea was an out-of-the-way place. Yet the Bereans were "more noble" than metropolitans. That often happens. London is the largest place in England; it is not, therefore, the greatest. It is quite possible that there may be more reading of a solid and instructive kind in a little country town. Every locality has its advantage. In the metropolis we have continual motion, man sharpening man by daily collision, and in the country we have the opportunity of profound cultivation, because of the time which is at our disposal. Let us not complain of our circumstances, but rule them, sanctify them; and every sphere of life will afford an opportunity for intellectual and spiritual advancement. 4. What is the test of "nobleness"? Good listening is one trait. The hearer makes the preacher. Expectation becomes inspiration. To good listening was added patient examination. The model congregation is a congregation well provided with Bibles; that looks from the sermon to the text; from the text to the sermon; from the text to the context; and that binds the speaking man to keep within the sacred brief which God has given to him. That would be a congregation that would compel sublime preaching! You have lost your status as hearers! Where are your Bibles? The preacher could quote fifty things that are not in the Bible, and if he quoted them in old English, he could make many people believe that they really were in the Bible. If we would be "noble" in the estimation of Heaven, we must acquaint ourselves deeply and accurately with Heaven's own Word. One thing would follow from the Biblical examination—we should destroy the priest. The priest is a magician who lives upon the credulity of the simple. How is his influence to be broken? By the Bible; by the people knowing the Bible. 5. There is a logical term in the twelfth verse—"Therefore." That is the true rationalism. Why did you believe? "Because the speaker fascinated me; because he laid a spell upon my imagination." You will one day escape from those poor chains—they are not chains of iron, they are little bands of straw. Why did you believe? "Because it was shown to me by the Living Word that this is the only conclusion that can be established." You will stand like a rock amid troubled waves! (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The Thessalonians and the Bereans*:—We have here —1. POINTS OF RESEMBLANCE. (1) The mode of the preaching, and (2) its twofold result: "some believed the things that were spoken, and some believed not." 2. Points of contrast; a difference in their way of hearing and in their manner of inquiring into truth. It is deeply interesting to be able thus to individualise some of Paul's congregations. We all know that there are such differences now. There are varieties of character and locality. Between one country and another, between one part of one country and another part, there are many noticeable differences, the result of many various and long-working influences. Often the ministry has to be blamed or praised for them. A place in which a faithful pastor has long been

at work bears the impress of his hand for the next generation or two. And the absence of such a ministry will leave an opposite stamp. Who that reads the Epistles of St. Paul could for one moment confuse or interchange the spiritual characteristics of the churches of Corinth, of Philippi, of Galatia, of Thessalonica? Take that of—I. THESSALONICA. Berea was more noble, because it received the Word frankly, and searched the Scriptures. Thessalonica was less noble in this respect. But there were those even in Thessalonica who had all the nobleness of Berea. Look at St. Paul's Epistles to them. Observe—1. How St. Paul had treated them. (1) Like a father, "we exhorted and comforted and charged you, as a father does his children"; and like a mother also, "we were gentle among you, even as a nursing mother cherisheth her own children." What a picture of the true pastor! not a "lord over God's heritage," not one "having dominion over their faith, but a helper of their joy." (2) "Ye remember our labour and travail; for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable to any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God." If we, by changes of times, and by God's overruling goodness, are exempted from the necessity of working for our bread, let us take heed that that toil saved from the one be given to the other. 2. His teaching. First of all, it was a gospel, a message of comfort and joy to fallen man. It told him that his sins are forgiven. But it did not leave him even there. What is it to me to be told that God forgives, if you cannot add that God will give me His Holy Spirit to live in me and to work in me effectually? In the strength of this he was not afraid to preach to them of duty. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification"; and if it is His will that we should be holy, certainly He will give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. But St. Paul knew that, if you would inspirit a man for duty, you must inspire a man with hope. Therefore he fixed their eyes upon an Advent of the Lord and Saviour in which "blessed and holy is he who shall have part." 3. The rapidity of the work of God there. A few weeks at the very utmost must have comprised it, and yet what a work was already wrought (1 Thess. i. 3–10). It is our own fault if the gospel works in any of us slowly or indecisively. A few short weeks are enough, in God's hand, for a complete transformation of the heart and life. Yet let us not lose the force of that solemn admonition, that he who thinketh he standeth must always take heed lest he fall. Scarcely had St. Paul left Thessalonica than he sends back Timotheus to see "lest by any means the tempter had tempted them, and so his labour should be in vain." We are still in an enemy's country, however armed; in the region of death, however full of life. Even from our Lord Himself, after His great temptation, the devil departed but for a season: let us take heed lest confidence breed presumption, presumption sin, and sin death! II. BEREA. 1. In speaking of Thessalonica, we have spoken of the Church gathered out of the world. The nobleness of the Bereans was shown not in their way of acting upon a gospel already believed, but in their way of trying the credentials of a gospel first heard. They did not refuse the gospel because it contradicted their previous opinions; neither did they, in an excess of credulity, receive it because it was presented to them. They listened to it with the readiness of a candid spirit, and they daily examined their Scriptures to see whether its language and theirs were the same. "Many therefore of them believed." 2. If our teaching were carried back by you to your Bible; if, when we urge upon you any particular duty, or any side of the truth, you would readily examine your Scriptures to see whether what you have heard has God's sanction to it or no, how interesting would become the work of hearing and the work of teaching! You would feel that you were engaged in a pursuit of truth; that it was not a question of pleasure or interest, but a question of right and wrong, of life and death; you would come hither not to criticise, but to learn, and you would go hence not to discuss, but to digest. And we on our part should feel that we were aiding you in settling the most momentous questions, and that out of such inquiries would spring forth a full-flowing stream of satisfaction, strength, and peace. The word denotes the examination of a witness, or the trial of a challenged life. Let us thus put the Word of God upon its trial. Let us not treat it as a dead, unmeaning, monotonous thing, to be carried in the hand, read at church, or suffered on the table; but rather as a living person, to be questioned, to be listened to and judged. So treated, the Bible will become to us a voice, not a page only. So treated, we shall at last be able to say, "Thy Word is tried to the uttermost, and Thy servant loveth it." (*Dean Vaughan.*) *The reception of the gospel at Berea:*—I. THE CONDUCT OF THE BEREANS IN REFERENCE TO THE PREACHED WORD. Note—1. A spirit of earnest inquiry after religious truth. The gospel offered them no

secular advantages (chap. xiv. 22; 2 Tim. iii. 2). In the total absence, therefore, of all worldly attractions, what could induce them to receive the Word with all readiness of mind but a deeply serious concern about religious truth? The origin of this state of mind may probably be referred to that spiritual influence which went forth a little before this period—"to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." 2. A remarkable superiority to the power of prejudice. They did not refuse to listen to these strangers, although they were either unknown, or had been preceded by unfavourable rumours (chap. xvii. 6, 7). 3. An exercise of cautious investigation before they proceeded to make up their minds. The Bereans received the Word in a widely different manner to those in Matt. xiii. 5, 20, 21, and, there is reason to believe, abode in it with far greater stability. 4. As the result of the whole, note—their professed faith in the gospel, and their union with the Church. The Church thus founded appears to have been numerous: at Thessalonica some believed, at Berea many. And where the good precedent of the Bereans has been followed, a solid work of God has been perpetuated; but where people have rushed into religious profession under the influence of novelty or angry sectarianism, the consequence has too often been the erection of an airy castle, soon scattered to all the winds of heaven. It farther appears, that many of the Berean believers were highly respectable in their station and circumstances; literally, persons of figure, and the addition of such to the Church is a very desirable occurrence; for, to say nothing of subordinate and extrinsic advantages, their piety, found in connection with knowledge and refinement, is likely to be instrumental of great good in giving a tone to the whole community. II. THE JUST DISTINCTION WHICH ATTACHES TO THEM IN CONSEQUENCE OF THEIR CONDUCT. In Luke's opinion they possessed nobler souls, or had a more generous nature than the people of Thessalonica. Possibly the term may advert to the genealogical pride so deeply rooted amongst the Jews (John viii. 31–33). This nobleness of mind is strikingly apparent.—1. In the candour with which they received the Word with all readiness of mind. Candour is that quality of mind which leads us not exclusively to look upon our "own things, but also on the things of others." How many advantages may we have lost, and to how many inconveniences may we have been subjected, in consequence of blindly yielding to the suggestions of prejudice! 2. In the reasonableness of their proceedings on hearing the gospel. The course they pursued was equally removed from the extremes of a hasty adoption of the new system, and a prejudiced closing of their understandings against evidence. The preaching of Paul and Silas related to the Messiah, and the conformity of their announcements with the Scriptures of the prophets was the great subject in the investigation of which the Bereans employed their nobler powers. Yet it is to be feared that the great mass of modern hearers never properly bend the energies of their minds to the clear apprehension of Christian truth, or the just appreciation of scriptural evidence. 3. In the noble resolution which they conceived and executed on having made up their minds on the great subject of Christianity. They formed themselves into a Christian Church under the direction of Paul and Silas, and resolved to encounter all the evils then connected with profession of faith in Christ. (*T. Galland, M.A.*) *The Bereans* are types of those—I. WHOSE MINDS ARE OPEN TO RECEIVE NEW TRUTHS. To the Berean Jews Paul's propositions were as novel and naturally unpalatable as they were to the Thessalonians, but they did not refuse to examine them. Such openness of mind is equally removed from the ignorant bigotry that assumes acquaintance with all truth, and the vacillating uncertainty which is "always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth," and consequently is "tossed about with every wind of doctrine." II. WHO ARE IN NO HASTE TO CONCLUDE THAT WHAT IS NEW IS TRUE. The Bereans did not rashly and impulsively embrace Paul's teaching; they carefully considered it—prepared to accept or reject it, according as it stood the test of examination. III. WHO TRY ALL HUMAN TEACHING BY THE DECLARATIONS OF GOD'S WORD. Lessons: 1. Doctrines are not to be rejected merely because they are unpalatable. God's Word must be unpalatable to sinful hearts, just as sunlight is to diseased eyes. 2. In studying Scripture we must carefully guard against prepossessions and prejudices. 3. We must steadily reject the idea that we have learned all that the Scriptures teach. It is possible to pass an object ten thousand times without really seeing it. God has yet more light to break forth from His Holy Word. 4. A diligent and candid study of the Scriptures will lead to faith in Jesus as the Christ. (*R. A. Bertram.*) *The noble Bereans*:—I. THE HIGH HONOUR BY WHICH THE BEREANS ARE DISTINGUISHED. This distinction is to be valued because of—1. The source whence it proceeds. 2.

The great dignity it implies. II. THE REASON WHY THIS DIGNITY IS ASSIGNED TO THEM. 1. Their conduct. (1) Their favourable impression as to the gospel. (2) Their diligent inquiry into its truth. (3) Their truly rational faith. 2. The principles which this conduct involved. (1) God's Word is the only standard of faith. (2) We should not reject truth whoever might proclaim it. (3) The truth when discovered is to be professed. Application: 1. See wherein true dignity consists. 2. The means of acquiring solid faith. (*Evangelical Preacher.*) *Berean nobility*:—There is a heraldry in the kingdom of God. Our King's throne is encircled by a high-born nobility. In the Scriptures you will find the record of their deeds and the patent of their rank. If we could obtain a view of this earth from the heavens the mountains would not be very high, nor the valleys very deep. The same law rules in the spiritual sphere. When any one obtains, spiritually, a great elevation, the differences of social condition almost disappear. All are low until grace raise them up. But distinctions there are, notwithstanding. Some are slaves, and some are free; some are rich in grace, while others are poor. The Bereans were noble, high-born. Two things go to constitute nobility—first the sovereign's choice in its origin; second, the actual birthright of each noble in successive generations. It is the same in the heavenly kingdom. Abraham was of plebeian blood, and received the patent of his nobility in the specific promise of the King Eternal, and large possessions were bestowed upon him for the support of his dignity. At a later period, when the King's Son was sojourning in this province, He called other plebeians, fishermen, &c., and conferred upon them the patent of nobility. In Rome they call Peter a prince: the title is not amiss, although they apply it falsely. Further, each noble is born to his title and estate. Nicodemus, though a son of Abraham by his first birth, must himself be born again ere he could enjoy the privileges of a peer. Two characteristic features of Berean nobility are recorded in order that we may be able to distinguish between the genuine and the spurious. I. THEIR HEARTS WERE RECEPTIVE. In this matter the Bereans were favourably distinguished from the Thessalonians. The distinction is similar to that which the parable makes between the good ground and the wayside. As more depends on the condition of the soil than on the skill of the sower, so more depends on a receptive spirit in the hearers than on the peculiar ability of the preacher. II. THEY EXERCISED THEIR PRIVATE JUDGMENT. This short, simple intimation puts to shame the sophistry with which Rome has for ages striven to conceal the Word of God from the people. For this noble act the Romish hierarchy has persecuted even unto death. The term "searched" indicates that they pored over the page; and after having read a sentence, returned to traverse the lines again, in order that the track of the sense might be more deeply graven on their minds. They avoided the two extremes of easy credulity and hard unbelief. It is a general law of human nature that what comes lightly goes lightly. What we gain by a hard struggle we retain with a firmer grasp, whether it be our fortune or our faith. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *Berean nobility*:—I. THE DEPORTMENT OF THESE NOBLE BEREANS. They manifested—1. A laudable spirit of inquiry in reference to the truths of religion. All inquiry is not laudable; we may be busybodies in other men's matters, but inquiry is laudable here. Human investigation is extended to every other subject; why should it be excluded from this? 2. A peculiar deference to the authority of the sacred writings; they were convinced of the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, and it was in them they expected to find the principles of true religion. 3. A candid and ingenuous temper: "readiness of mind." They did not examine the Scriptures for the purpose of finding objections against the doctrines of the apostles, or to establish their own previous opinions, but for the purpose of ascertaining "whether those things were so." II. THE REASONS WHY WE SHOULD IMITATE THIS NOBLE DEPORTMENT. 1. We are endowed with powers and capabilities of engaging in this important investigation. 2. The Scriptures are addressed to all men; all men are commanded to read and examine them. "Search the Scriptures," said our Lord. "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly," said the apostle. 3. All men are deeply concerned in the important truths which the Scriptures contain—as men, as sinners, as inhabitants of this world, as heirs of immortality. III. THE ADVANTAGES WHICH WILL RESULT FROM AN IMITATION OF THIS NOBLE DEPORTMENT. 1. We shall obtain accurate information respecting the doctrines of revealed truth. 2. We shall derive strong consolation under the difficulties and afflictions of life. 3. We shall receive ample instruction as to the performance of all personal, social, and religious duties. If you ask in what way should we examine the sacred writings, in order that we may obtain these advantages, I

reply, examine them with impartiality, with humility, with self-application, and with prayer. It is greatly to be regretted that any portion of the Christian Church should ever have interdicted the use of the Holy Scriptures, and for this purpose have prohibited their translation into the vernacular tongue. But we have not so learned Christ. Go, imitate the example of the noble Bereans—search the Scriptures. (*G. Collinson.*) *Spiritual nobility*:—Nobility is a grand word, but does not always represent a noble thing. It is often applied to physical prowess and ancestral lineage; but the word in such applications is more or less degraded. There is a mental and moral nobility. The latter is the greatest of all; it is God-like. The Bereans—I. RENDERED A CANDID ATTENTION TO NEW DOCTRINES. They did not allow prejudice to seal their ears and close their souls; they were prepared to listen. This conduct is—1. Ever befitting. As there must always be to the highest finite intelligences universes of truth of which they know nothing, it becomes even a seraph to be docile. How much more man, who knows so little, and that little so imperfectly! 2. Very rare. Somehow or other men for the most part grow up with preconceptions that close the soul to all that does not blend with them. Their pre-formed ideas they treat as absolute truths, and recoil with a jealousy from all that is new. Nothing is more repugnant to these men than a teaching pulpit. II. GAVE A PROPER EXAMINATION TO NEW DOCTRINES. They were not mere passive listeners, receiving impressions which led to no effort, and which passed away in the hour. They examined—1. Independently. They searched the Scriptures for themselves. They were not swayed by the authority of others, nor did they accept the statement of the apostles on their own credit. There is much talk about the right of private judgment; we want more of the duty. Men are blockheads in theology, and priest-ridden in religion, because they search not the Scriptures for themselves. 2. Perseveringly, "daily." So vast the area and so deep the mines of Scripture, that you can know but little of it by a glance or two. Desultory, occasional and unsystematic efforts will be useless. You must be at it daily—walk some new field, scale some new mountain, penetrate some new depth daily. III. YIELDED TO THE EVIDENCE OF NEW DOCTRINES: "believed." They bowed to the force of evidence. It is childish to believe without evidence. It is wicked to resist evidence. It is noble to surrender to its force. Their faith was—1. Intelligent. It came as the result of investigation. It was not a blind prejudice, a traditional idea; it was a living conviction. This is the faith that is wanted, the only faith of any worth. 2. General: "Many believed." Influential women and men not a few. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The nobility of the Bereans*:—In this account of the conduct and conversion of the Bereans we are struck with—I. THE WILLING PERMISSION THEY GAVE TO THE APOSTLES TO DECLARE THEIR ERRAND. For we must remember how different were their circumstances from those in which we ever have been, or can possibly be found. They were Jews, who had never, until this moment when Paul and Silas entered their synagogue, heard of any other system than the law of Moses. They were men in whose minds the avenues of conviction lay open; they were willing to give a hearing to the arguments of reason. Scarcely any sacrifice is so costly to flesh and blood to make, as that of long-established and deeply-rooted prejudice. But the Berean Jews were prepared to make even this surrender. But their respect was shown to the commission of the apostles, not to their persons only. Is not the subject of the gospel of supreme importance? With how many has the gospel had no better fate than those unhappy persons find whose lot it is to wait upon some proud patron or dilatory judge, who has promised to grant an audience, but has never yet done it, and still promises, and still postpones? II. As they allowed the apostles to declare their errand, so we find that THEY GAVE A GLAD RECEPTION TO THE MESSAGE ITSELF. An ingenuous spirit opens the fairest door to the entrance of truth. Candour opened their ears to what Paul and Silas had to urge; and by that opening conviction entered. Such were the earliest disciples, and as such they are described: "they that gladly received the Word." A spirit this, differing altogether from that of Herod, who heard the Word gladly, having a curiosity to know what kind of matters it treated about, but having no desire to enlarge his acquaintance with it, when he found that it laid the axe to the root of his sins; but a gladness, going the whole length of the gospel itself, the glad receiving, as well as hearing of it. Who amongst us desires to know whether we are inheritors of this Berean "readiness of mind" towards the gospel of God? We are so, if we yield ourselves to the fair influence of truth. III. There is yet one more point of excellence in the conduct of the Bereans: THEY SERIOUSLY EXAMINED THE CLAIMS OF THE GOSPEL. The doctrine of

Christ fears not a scrutiny. And now, after this review of the conduct of the Bereans, shall we hesitate to award to them the title given in our text, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica"? True nobility, then, is not the spurious expansiveness of infidelity, but the reverence of Scripture as the test of truth. (*R. Eden, M.A.*) *Searching the Scriptures*:—Let us mark—I. THE ATTENTION SHOWN BY THE BEREANS TO THE MINISTRY OF ST. PAUL. 1. They "received the Word with all readiness of mind," which argued a simple teachable disposition. Hence their attention was prompt, cordial, and submissive. They felt their helplessness and were willing to be led. The mind of the hearer was as soil prepared for the word of the preacher. Doubtless St. Paul adduced his favourite themes—"Jesus and the resurrection." Paul might state many things which would be new to the Bereans, opposed to their sentiments and ordinary habits and pursuits; but such was their docility that they were cheerfully contented to be hearers, not teachers. 2. Ought not this to be the disposition of modern hearers? But is not rather the ministry of the gospel usually attended with little or no readiness of mind to receive it? We preach the fall of man, but who feel themselves to be fallen? We declare the nature and the consequence of sin, but who feels its "exceeding sinfulness," and "flees from the wrath to come"? We publish "glad tidings," but "who hath believed our report?" And why is this? Because our hearers have so little readiness of mind to receive it. The hearts of the generality are either as soft as water, or as hard as rock. If you dip your finger into water an impression will easily be made; the moment you withdraw your finger the impression vanishes. You may, too, pour water upon a rock, but it all runs off; it never penetrates and fructifies the stone. 3. Now it is this disposition which we wish to correct. As the preaching of the Word is a weighty and important charge, so surely does the hearing of it involve a very solemn responsibility. People too commonly imagine the delivery of a sermon to be a matter of course. "Judge your own selves." Do as these noble-minded persons did: hear impartially, teachably; with readiness to receive; for your edification in the faith of Christ, for eternity; as those who must one day account to the Master of our Assemblies for the means of instruction so graciously vouchsafed. II. THE CONDUCT THEY WERE INDUCED TO ADOPT. 1. They "searched the Scriptures daily," &c. The Scriptures which the Bereans possessed were merely the Old Testament. From that, however, they had learned that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head"; that God would raise up unto them a Prophet that should, like Moses, promulgate a new dispensation of grace and mercy; that "in His love and in His pity He would redeem them," and reign as King of Zion, &c., &c. These things the Bereans knew, and therefore they "searched the Scriptures" to see how far the statements of St. Paul accorded with the Word of God. Nor did they indolently do so: so cautious were they about receiving what they heard, and so desirous that whatever they received should be strictly analogous to the truth, that they searched the Scriptures "daily." Using, with lowliness and sincerity, the only infallible means of information, the promise was fulfilled to them—"The meek will He guide in judgment, the meek will He teach His way." So true it is, "They that will do the will of God shall know of the doctrine," &c. 2. Now here I cannot but say, "Go ye and do likewise." Here is an example of earnest and devout inquiry worthy of our closest imitation. We can boast no extraordinary inspiration, and therefore we may err. Bring, then, what you hear from us to your Bible. In addition to the Old Testament you have the New. When we insist on the necessity of repentance, look and see if He in whose name we speak requires it. When we tell you that Christ is "all in all"—a sinner's justification and salvation—take not our word for it: search the Scriptures. Do not so reluctantly, as though it were a labour, but diligently, and that "daily," and as if your everlasting all depended on your right apprehension and belief of the truth. If you received a letter from a dear friend, would it lie long unopened by you? Say not, "We have no time." Have you no time to read other books? Remember, that alone is truth which will endure a Scriptural test. It is Scripture, too, that will try our principles and conduct in the judgment of the great day. "The words which I have spoken, the same shall judge you." (*W. Mudge, B.A.*) *Searching the Scriptures*:—I. WHY? 1. Because it contains the statutes and judgments of God (Deut. iv. 14). 2. It is the Word of God (Jer. xxxvi. 6). 3. Christ taught out of it (Luke xxiv. 27). 4. It testifies of Christ (John xx. 31). 5. If rightly studied it will lead to salvation (James i. 21). 6. It is profitable both for doctrine and practice (2 Tim. iii. 16). 7. Christ enjoins its study (John v. 39). 8. Without a knowledge of it we go astray (Matt. xxii. 29; Acts xiii. 27). II. How?

1. Thinking of it continually (Deut. vi. 7). 2. Receiving it as the Word of God, not of man (1 Thess. ii. 13). 3. Receiving it with meekness (James i. 21). 4. Meditating upon it in the night watches (Psa. cxix. 148). 5. Hiding it in the heart (Psa. cxix. 11). 6. Making it the standard of teaching (1 Pet. iv. 11). 7. With prayer that its truths may be understood (Psa. cxix. 12, 18). 8. Teaching it to the children (2 Tim. iii. 15). (*S. S. Times.*) *Searching the Scriptures:*—"You interpret the Scriptures in one way," said Mary to Knox, "and the Pope and the cardinals in another; whom shall I believe, and who shall be judge?" "You shall believe," replied Knox, "God who speaketh plainly in His Word; and further than the Word teacheth you, you shall believe neither the one nor the other—neither the Pope nor the Reformers, neither the Papists nor the Protestants. The Word of God is plain in itself; if there be any obscurity in one place, the Holy Ghost, who is never contrary to Himself, explains it more clearly in other places, so that there can remain no doubt but unto such as are obstinately ignorant." (*Stewart's Collections.*) *Delight in the Scriptures:*—I use the Scriptures not as an arsenal to be resorted to only for arms and weapons, but as a matchless temple, where I delight to contemplate the beauty, the symmetry, and the magnificence of the structure, and to increase my awe and excite my devotion to the Deity there preached and adored. (*Hon. R. Boyle.*) *Searching the Scriptures as a chart:*—There is a ship at sea. A heavy fog has come on: there is nothing to be seen all round about; the very stars are shut out of view, and no longer serve to guide the vessel's course; and as the man at the masthead hoarsely cries out, "Breakers ahead!" and the crew furl the sails, and the helmsman turns the wheel, what is the captain about, old sailor as he is, now poring over his charts, and now glancing at the compass, and now loudly giving his orders? What can he mean by looking so often and so eagerly at that map-looking thing of his? That is his chart by which his course is guided; and he is searching it to find where he is, and how he may steer his ship in safety, to keep clear of a rock here, and a shallow there, and make a good passage through the channel, and save his crew and his cargo, and at length gain the harbour. So says the Great Teacher, "Search the Scriptures." (*J. H. Wilson.*) *Searching the Scriptures, Love the motive for:*—A blind girl had been in the habit of reading her Bible by means of raised letters such as are prepared for the use of the blind; but after a while, by working in a factory, the tips of her fingers became so calloused that she could no more by her hands read the precious promises. She cut off the tips of her fingers that her touch might be more sensitive; but still she failed with her hands to read the raised letters. In her sorrow she took the Bible and said, "Farewell, my dear Bible. You have been the joy of my heart!" Then she pressed the open page to her lips and kissed it, and as she did so she felt with her mouth the letters, "The Gospel according to St. Mark." "Thank God!" she said; "if I cannot read the Bible with my fingers, I can read it with my lips." (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*) *Delving for the treasures of the Word:*—The Bible is a book which requires working into, in order to get out of it that which is most precious and profound. Some Christians do not know anything like what the Bible is really worth, because they are not willing to work hard enough to find out. When they read it, it is in such a prayerless, lifeless sort of a way that they receive but very little benefit from it. Perhaps this is true of the great majority of Christians. Very likely if all of the most precious truths lay on the mere surface of the Bible, and could be as easily picked up as one does the common pebbles which lie about the streets, there are many who would possess more than they now do. But then would the great and precious gems of Divine truth seem so precious if they could be had with so little effort? We think not. If gold were lying on the surface of the earth as plentifully as the stones do in many places, and could be gathered as easily, its value would not be so highly esteemed as it is, nor would it be regarded as so precious. We see God's wisdom in putting many of His richest and brightest gems of truth and promise down into the depths of His Word, so that, if we would get hold of them, we must work our way down into the profound recesses of the vast reservoirs of inspired thought and revelation. A certain writer says: "It is only when our energies are roused and our attention awake—when we are acquiring, or correcting, or improving, our knowledge—that knowledge makes the requisite impression upon us. God has not made Scripture like a garden, where the fruits are ripe, and the flowers bloom, and all things are fully exposed to our view; but like a field, where we have the ground, and seed of all precious things, and where nothing can be brought to view without our industry—nor then, without the dews of heavenly grace." If you would increase the value

of the Bible to you, work in its depths! Equip your energy by God's Spirit, and make a profitable task of delving for the pearly treasures of the Word! *Stored up gold in the Scriptures*:—When I was in California an old Scotchman brought me a piece of quartz in which was imbedded a small piece of gold, saying, "Mr. Scott, I would like you to see how our heavenly Father stores up the gold for our use." There it was sparkling in the midst of a bit of useless rock. (*J. Scott.*) *Searching Bible reading*:—There is a great deal of listless, careless reading. Coleridge divided readers into four classes. The first class he compares 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. A third class is like a jelly-bag, which allows all that is pure to pass away, and retains only the refuse and the dregs. The fourth class, like the slave of Golconda, cast aside all that is worthless, preserving only the pure gems. Or perhaps we might compare this fourth class to the gold-pan, used for retaining the pure metal, while the refuse is washed out. The only profitable reading of God's Word is a searching reading. The word translated "search" is emphatic and intense, and literally means to "look carefully," as a wild animal searches the sands to find the footsteps of a stray cub. The Bible is full of hidden treasures, to be sought as the merchant-man sought goodly pearls. They are not revealed to indifferent and superficial readers. (*A. T. Pierson, D.D.*) *The Bible invaluable*:—Do you love to turn the pages of old books? None can be found that are older than the earliest books of our Bible. Do you find special delights in history? Here are records than which none are more ancient, more trustworthy, or more important. Are you fond of biography? Here are the lives of Moses, the lawgiver and leader of the Hebrew race; of David the shepherd-boy, poet and king; and of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God. Is poetry, to you, a feast of beauty, an intoxicant of the emotions? Here are sublimest songs and sweetest consolations; the oldest of all poems, the epic that recites the fidelity of Job in unprecedented trials; the seraphic psalms of David; and the lofty imagery and panoramic prophecies of the unsurpassed Isaiah. Yet idle people tell us the Old Testament is dry! Is the ocean dry? Is the sunlight black? Is ambrosia bitter to the taste? Then is the Bible an unattractive book. Shallow sceptics may scoff at it; but the profoundest scholars know its worth. For many years John Quincy Adams, by reading one hour each morning, read the whole Bible once a year. He said that in whatever light he viewed it, whether with reference to revelation, to history, or to morality, it was to him "an invaluable and inexhaustible mine of knowledge and virtue." Daniel Webster said that from the time when, at his mother's feet or on his father's knee, he first learned to lisp verses from the sacred writings, they had been his daily study and vigilant contemplation—and that if there was anything in his style or thoughts to be commended, the credit was due to his kind parents, who instilled into his minds an early love of the Scriptures. Sir William Jones declared it to be his opinion that "the Bible contains more true sensibility, more exquisite beauty, more pure morality, more important history, and finer strains of poetry and eloquence than can be collected from all other books, in whatever language they may be written." Rousseau confessed that "the majesty" of the Scriptures astonished him, and that the holiness of the Evangelists spoke to his heart. Paul said, "The Scriptures are able to make men wise unto salvation." In proof of the professions of no other book or collection of books can testimony so abundant, so clear, and so weighty be adduced. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*) *Practice in the study of the Scriptures*:—Have set times, from which you will allow nothing to divert you, for reading and prayer. Always keep a promise in mind, and try to find a new one each day—not in a book made to hand, with a promise for every day in the year (a sort of crutch such a book is for those who expect to remain spiritual cripples), but in your own reading. We know a person who can find flowers enough in the woods every time she goes out to make a beautiful bouquet; and she does this when most would see nothing but leaves. Practice will enable you to learn the art of finding a flower of promise in every chapter. (*Christian Age.*) *The Bible lit up*:—A little while ago I was in the noble cathedral at Cologne. Going in the early morning, I saw the eastern windows lit up by the sun. Far away in the great church the other windows were all obscure and dusky. We strolled in about noonday, and then these windows in the depths were lit up with ruby, purple, gold—prophets, apostles, saints, martyrs. And then, when the sun was going down, we looked in to find that the great western window was magnificently kindled, like a window that opened into heaven. As the hours

of the day went on, first one window was illuminated, then another, until in the end there was not a painted pane but had added some splendour to the temple. It is a great deal like that with your Bible. There is many a dark page in the Bible to-day, but in the process of the suns they are lit up one after another. Successive generations will find in that Book the specific doctrine that is necessary to them, their complexities, their perplexities, their interests, their perils. Chrysostom, Bernard, Luther, Wesley, found in the Bible the truth for their day, and the great original preachers of to-day are giving to that Book interpretations that are necessary to our enlightenment and discipline, and before the world finishes there will not be a dark passage left. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *The right of private judgment in religion*:—The primitive preachers considered their hearers as capable of judging of the truth of what they heard. They not only taught the truth, but exhibited evidence to support what they taught, and encouraged their hearers to examine this evidence. This conduct of the Bereans was agreeable to common sense, and sanctioned by Divine authority. Let us consider—I. WHAT IT IS TO EXERCISE THE RIGHT OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT. It is the right which every man has of seeing with his own eyes, hearing with his own ears, and of exercising his own reason. But this implies—1. A right to hear what may be said upon the subject. The Bereans had a right to hear the apostle's reasons in favour of Christianity before they received it or rejected it. We have a right to collect evidence upon any subject, from any who are able to give us information about it. And the more information men can collect, the better they are prepared to judge correctly. 2. A right to examine every subject for ourselves. Though many things may have been said and written upon any religious doctrine, yet we have a right to reason upon it, and to search the Scriptures to see whether it be there revealed or not. When we come to think seriously upon a subject which others have treated, we may find good reasons to differ from them. They may have overlooked, and we may have found the real truth in the case. 3. The right of forming our opinions according to the best light we can obtain. We have no more right to judge without evidence than we have to judge contrary to evidence. We have no right to keep ourselves in doubt when we have sufficient evidence to come to a decision. "Prove all things," *i.e.*, examine all things; and after examination, decide what is right. II. MEN OUGHT TO EXERCISE IT IN FORMING THEIR RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTS. 1. God has made men capable of judging for themselves in matters of religion. He has made them wiser than the beasts. He has endued them with the highest powers of reason and conscience, by which they are capable of judging what is right and wrong, true and false. As they are capable of judging for themselves, so it is their duty. Their capacity creates their obligation. As they are rational creatures, they are bound to act rationally. This, indeed, is the only power which they have no right ever to resign. They may, when necessary, give up their property or liberty; but they may never give up their right of forming their own religious sentiments, and of serving God according to the dictates of their conscience. They have no right to let their own depraved hearts, or the false reasonings of others, warp their understanding, and obscure the real evidence of Divine truth. 2. God has given men not only the proper powers, but the proper means of forming their religious sentiments. The Bible contains sufficient information in regard to all the doctrines and duties of religion. The Scriptures are level to every one's capacity, so that wayfaring men though fools cannot err therein, unless by prejudice, partiality, or blindness of heart. And since men have this ample source of information in their hands, they cannot, without great impropriety and danger, neglect to search the Scriptures. 3. God has appointed none to judge for any man in respect to his religious opinions. It is true God has appointed teachers, but not judges; and after all they have done to exhibit and support the truth, the hearers are to judge for themselves whether those things they have heard be the truth. The Pope and all his hierarchy are usurpers, whose pretensions to infallibility are to be treated with disdain, as vile impositions. Christian churches have a right to form their own creeds and exercise their own discipline, independently of any superior ecclesiastical power on earth. 4. God has forbidden men to take their religious sentiments from others upon trust. His direction to His ancient people was to "the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them." And we are commanded to prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good. And Paul tells the Galatians to reject any false doctrines, though brought to them by men or angels. 5. Every man must feel the effects of his own religious opinions, and consequently ought to exercise his

own judgment in forming them. This is a matter of too much consequence to put out of his own hands. We must give an account of our faith as well as of our conduct. III. IMPROVEMENT. If it be the duty of men to exercise their private judgment in the manner that has been mentioned, then—1. They may always know what they ought to believe and practise. God never places mankind in a situation in which they cannot know and do their duty; for then they would not be moral agents, nor proper subjects of moral government. Though God does not require a heathen to search the Scriptures to know his duty, yet he is morally obliged to consult his reason and conscience to learn his duty, and to act agreeably to the dictates of these intellectual powers, which he knows he ought to obey. It is absurd for Christians, who have the Bible in their hands, to plead in excuse for believing and doing wrong that they could not know what to believe, or what to do; for they always may have evidence which makes it their duty to believe or not to believe, and to act or not to act. 2. They may not only know that they have acted right in forming their religious sentiments, but know that they have formed them according to truth. Many imagine because men may err in forming their religious sentiments that they never can know whether they have formed them right in any case whatever. But they have no right to draw this consequence from human fallibility; for though men may judge wrong in some cases, yet they may judge right in others. Paul first formed a wrong opinion of Christ, and verily thought it was a true opinion; but after he had formed another and true opinion of Christ, he knew that his present opinion was right, and his former opinion was wrong. 3. It may be greatly abused. Under the pretext of this right, men may take the liberty of judging very erroneously, unreasonably, and wickedly, as did the Jews at Thessalonica, under the influence of tradition, education, and prejudice. Wherever the gospel has been preached it has been opposed, rejected, or perverted by hearers, under the pretext of the right of private judgment. But though the right of private judgment has been, and still is so extensively and grossly abused, it is far better to tolerate it than to restrain it by any other means than those which are rational and spiritual. 4. We may easily see how those who judge for themselves on religious subjects, and with the same degree of light before them, may judge very differently. One may pay more attention to the arguments on one side of the question, and another may pay more attention to the arguments on the opposite side; or one may wish to find the truth in the case, and another, for some sinister motive, may wish not to find it. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*) *Stages of a true use of Scripture*:—I. WILLING RECEPTION, as opposed to frivolous contempt (ver. 11). II. DILIGENT SEARCHING, as opposed to blind imitation (ver. 11). LIVING FAITH, as opposed to dead knowledge (ver. 12). (*K. Gerok.*) *Docility of temper in relation to the truth*:—The self-evidencing power of Christian truth depends on the moral condition of the man. A flash of lightning reveals nothing to him whose eyes are closed. Two classes of people, both Jews, hear the same gospel, from the same lips, under the same circumstances; and they reach opposite results. For every kind of truth a special capacity is needed. The eye sees only what it brings with it the power of seeing. We shall see how this faculty was trained in the Bereans. Note—I. THE TEACHING, THE RECOGNITION OF WHICH THE WRITER COMMENDS. 1. The "Word" is more fully expounded in ver. 3. The Messiah of ancient promise had come. The great photographic shadows thrown forward upon the sensitive page of prophecy had taken substance. This was a position which he only would take who was sure of his ground; for it was an arraignment of the verdict of both the Jewish and Roman tribunals. "This Jesus is neither a blasphemer nor a seditious intriguer, but the Son, and the Sent of God." And not only so. If this Jesus were the Messiah, then the death knell of their national, religious pre-eminence had been sounded. "The sceptre shall not depart . . . until Shiloh come"—then it was to depart. And then, in his insistance on the mission of Christ, the apostle drew two conclusions, both of which warred against the prejudices of his hearers—the one against the creed of the Jew, who believed his race exclusively the people of God, and the other against the pride of the Greek, to whom the doctrine of the Cross was an intolerable offence. 2. Having taken up his main position, the apostle proceeds to establish it by an appeal to the highest authority. "He reasoned with them out of the Scriptures." (1) There were prophecies announcing the coming, character, and work of the Messiah. "To Him gave all the prophets witness." (2) There were supernatural occurrences in the birth and ministry of Christ, each connecting His appearance and Person with these prophetic foreshadowings—particularly the resurrection. But he is not satisfied

with demonstrating the historical validity of this latter fact. "If Christ be not raised ye are yet in your sins." It requires for its doctrinal antecedent a sacrificial death, which postulates a Divine Person. II. THE SPIRIT IN WHICH THIS TEACHING WAS RECEIVED. "They received the Word with all readiness of mind." Here is—1. The docility of temper which belongs to a right conception of the truth. They were in that balanced equipoise of mind which, equally removed from listless indifference and haughty presumption, left them at liberty to listen to the apostle's reasoning, to think dispassionately on it, and to draw their own conclusions. They did not surrender their honest convictions at the bidding of any man, however important his message or high his authority. That is a poor faith which neither asks nor requires a reason for its believing; and it is an equally poor scepticism which contents itself with thoughtlessly denying. The Thessalonian Jews rejected the Word, because they refused to examine its evidences. The Bereans more wisely received the Word, and then examined its evidences. The open eye went in quest of the teaching light. And as the healthy body through its myriad open pores drinks in the air and sunshine, and turns them into a ministry of life, so did the ingenuous candour of these Bereans. The one question was, What is the truth? not What do we wish to be true? 2. The course of inquiry marks—(1) Their fearless honesty. They were not afraid to examine either their old opinions or the new. The great question was whether Paul's statements were founded on fact and accessible to the ordinary methods of moral conviction. To test this question they searched the Scriptures to which the apostle had appealed as justifying the departure he had sought to establish between Judaism and Christianity. They searched them, not the apostle's argument, but the great spring and reason of all that he had affirmed. They searched with keen, inquisitive eye, looking beneath, and over, and all around. The question was too grave for delay, too personal to be honestly evaded. They were bound to face the crisis. So they "searched the Scriptures." (2) Their manly independence of spirit. The child has a safeguard from perplexity in its ignorance. Where it does not know, it is careless to inquire. With no sense of danger there is no fear. But the man must interrogate. To know the truth and to build upon it, whether it throw up a basement of rock or open into abysses of despair, that is the only satisfaction for a man. (3) Their rationality. The argument for Christianity, if it be true, must be in its facts. The "reason for the hope that is in us" implies a reasonableness of the evidences without us. The realism of Christianity asks to be examined with the keenest critical research, whether as to its documents, authorship, spirit, or effects. (4) Their reverence. They went directly to the "Scriptures." The problem was outside the schools: why then go to these? It was a supernatural question; why then go to nature? If I want to map out a diagram of the stars, I do not go to geology. 3. What followed on this procedure. (1) Note the logical consequence. "Therefore many of them believed." Faith waiting on the light of evidence is met by the evidence of light, and following that is led into the liberty of truth. "If any man will do His will, he shall know," &c. Obedience is the spirit in which to seek, knowledge its after product. The old philosophy sought first to construct a science of nature, and then to bend nature to its science, and it failed. Now, we begin with what is known and advance to the unknown, and end with a science of things. It is just so in dealing with the secrets of revelation. A childlike docility, putting the mind into sympathy with the truth, will get into fellowship with God. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord"; but a self-constructed scheme of interpretation, which assumes the negative of revelation, or makes its teachings follow its own sceptical preconceptions, is sure to flounder into confusion and hopeless doubt. To the man whose senses are all that, Omnipotence itself is a waste of power. Now what the telescope does for our knowledge of the stars, revelation does for our knowledge of God; it manifests what before was unknown, and in both cases the value of the instrument is in its use. If a man will reverently use the one as he does the other, "he shall know." If he will not, he "cannot know the things of God, for they are spiritually discerned." (2) The word "therefore" is a marked one. There was, first, a clear presentation of the truth to the mind; then the actual contact of the mind with the truth, and reflection upon it. There was a readiness to surrender old convictions to the authority of evidence, and then the light came: "they believed." And this belief was not a solitary or a miraculous act; it was an ordinary result. It was something more than a vague conviction, a mere sentiment of wonder. The foundation of their religious beliefs had been torn away; but they were no longer adrift on a sea of doubt. "They believed"; and faith is trust,

calmness, certainty. It is the eye of the soul looking through and with the eye of reason, and resting on the reality of things. And this effect will, in all ordinary cases, be produced wherever the same process of inquiry is pursued. (3) Besides this satisfying conviction that comes from conscious experience of the power of truth, there are the facts without. (*a*) There are the Jews—a standing witness of the fulfilment of prophetic Scripture. (*b*) The existence, history, and standing of the Christian Church. (*c*) The Christ of Christianity—the miracle of miracles. Conclusion: 1. The fitness of the gospel to deal with dissimilar classes of men. Jews, Greeks, "honourable" men and women. 2. The great impediment in the way of any man's salvation is not in the gospel, nor in the ministration of the gospel, but in the indifference or pride with which men deal with its transcendent statements. (*John Burton.*) *Ignorance of the Scriptures the cause of infidelity:*—The most prominent and invariable cause of infidelity is found in the fact that men will not investigate the Scriptures. Many infidels have confessed that they had never carefully read the New Testament. Thomas Paine confessed that he wrote the first part of the "Age of Reason" without having a Bible at hand, and without its being possible to procure one where he then was (in Paris). "I had," says he, "neither Bible nor Testament to refer to, though I was writing against both; nor could I procure any." (*A. Barnes, D.D.*)

Ver. 12. **Therefore many of them believed.**—*The gospel and the classes:*—1. They "believed"—a little word, but a great thing—the step by which they passed from condemnation to peace; from the house on the sand before it fell, to the rock. The moment before they were without Christ and hope; the moment after they were in Christ, and heirs of eternal life. How could interests so vast turn on a point so small? All decisive turnings are made on points. The poles are mathematical points, yet how huge the mass that spins round them! 2. "Many believed." A swelling of spiritual life sometimes comes over a city or country, as the tidal wave over the ocean—lifted and led in both cases by a power in the heavens. The symptoms which portended this revival were a bent of mind towards the Word, and a daily searching of it. When we see the same symptoms we may expect the same enlargement. 3. Note the classes who were won to the Lord. I. GREEKS. There is no respect of persons with God: "neither Jew nor Greek." Yet the conversion of a Greek may give an apostle greater reason for joy, inasmuch as while of no more value intrinsically than a Jew, a Greek could open a door into a wider field. Those successes were sweetest which were promises of more. II. MEN AND WOMEN. God made both in marvellous wisdom for each other; together they have gone from Him; it is a glad sight when they return in company. How sad when the sexes are divided by that partition which divides the Church from the world! As there is neither Jew nor Greek, so there is neither male nor female in the kingdom of Christ. Sometimes the husband or brother believes, while wife or sister smothers the spiritual life by the cares of this world. Sometimes the women of the family are devoted to Christ, while the men are too philosophic or self-indulgent. Husbands and wives, &c., be heirs together of the grace of life. III. PEOPLE OF HIGH STANDING. Are the upper ten, then, more precious? No. But there are times and circumstances in which their conversion is more noteworthy. 1. If for nothing else, the early disciples valued it as men value certain gems, on account of its rarity. The common people heard the Master gladly, but the rulers held aloof. On that account Jesus looked fondly on the rich young man who came to Him. 2. Their influence is greater. 3. Great temptations bind them. IV. NOT A FEW. There is a strange appetite in the Christian's heart; it continually cries, Give an appetite inherited from Christ. When many came He invited the rest as eagerly. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) **Also of honourable women.**—*Women and the Church:*—Women are first named, implying that they were first to believe. This is still no common occurrence. I. WOMEN RECEIVE THE GOSPEL MORE READILY THAN DO MEN. Lydia's case is repeated in all quarters of Christendom. The sisters of Bethany, the women who ministered unto Christ, prophesy the faith of their sex. II. Upon the basis of this fact it is not flattery to say that WOMEN ARE MORE NOBLE THAN MEN. There are qualities belonging to their sex fitting women above men to appreciate the gospel. Though first in the fall, also first in relations, qualifications, and promise to bring deliverance. III. WOMEN HAVE SPECIAL REASONS FOR BECOMING CHRISTIANS. Their aptness to receive it is evidence of their need of it—1. To satisfy their finer, quicker sense of right, truth, beauty. 2. To fulfil their mission in life not by power, but by influence. Their want of Christian character is a want of

qualification for their life work. IV. WOMAN'S OBLIGATION TO CHRISTIANITY. Outside of the religion of revelation they were burdened and enslaved. Their elevation they owe to Christianity. (*S. Mease, D.D.*) **And of men not a few.**—*Men and the Church*:—Of the men in Berea, not a few received the gospel. The same is true wherever the gospel has been carried. The inference, however, is that the number of men was not equal to the number of women. This inference is confirmed by observation of modern churches. This unfortunate phenomenon is deserving of discussion. I. MEN'S NEED OF THE GOSPEL IS AS ABSOLUTE AS THAT OF WOMEN. 1. Depravity is as deep and real, effecting an equal estrangement from God, and producing the same evil fruits—disobedience, perversion of life, unrest, apprehension of evil, and death, both in body and soul. 2. Their manly courage, strength, and capacity leave them helpless as women; for spiritual ends God's help alone will avail. 3. They must find the same one remedy—the blood of Christ. 4. To men the gospel is as much and all that it is to women—the power of God unto salvation to them that believe. II. THE ALLEGIANCE AND SERVICE OF MEN ARE AS UNCONDITIONALLY REQUIRED AS THOSE OF WOMEN. 1. The gospel is the one instrumentality for the world's redemption. Against it are arrayed all the forces of sin and Satan. Will men, strong and courageous, refuse to enlist, while women contend with readier will and in greater numbers? 2. The work of the gospel is great above every other, securing human happiness here and hereafter. Wherever men are, there is a call to labour. Sin, crime, poverty, and suffering are devouring multitudes by reason of gospel work undone, whilst men are idling in the market-place. Will men, with stronger endowments and better advantages, look on, leaving the burden to weaker but better women? III. THE EVIL RESULTING FROM MEN'S GREATER RELUCTANCE THAN WOMEN TO ACCEPT AND PROMOTE THE GOSPEL. Were the men as ready to believe as are women, the latter in still greater numbers would be at the feet of Jesus—our daughters, wives, and mothers. An increasing host of both sexes would flock to the standard of the Cross. Men out of the Church are hindrances to women who would enter, and often difficulties to such as have entered. The men are in the front ranks of the world's battle: why should they not be in the front as to numbers and activity in the battle for truth, salvation, and God? (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 15–36. **And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens.**—*Paul at Athens*:—I. THE PLACE WHICH THE APOSTLE VISITED. Athens. II. THE FEELINGS OF WHICH HE WAS THE SUBJECT. Not of admiration at the masterpieces of art by which he was surrounded, but of—1. Holy indignation. He saw how God was dishonoured; how He was robbed of the homage which was His due. 2. Christian compassion. He felt deeply at the contemplation of such moral debasement—a city wholly given to idolatry. 3. Zeal. It is well to feel; but what need have we to guard against a mere fruitless sentimentality. III. THE CHARACTERS WITH WHOM HE CAME IN CONTACT.—1. Jews. With them he disputed daily. 2. Certain philosophers. IV. THE ADDRESS HE DELIVERED. His text was the inscriptions he witnessed on one of the altars: "To the Unknown God." He at once proceeded with his subject, saying, "Whom, therefore, ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you." He is declared—1. In reference to His nature. In what he says on this subject, we are reminded—(1) Of the apostle's boldness. It is said that the laws of the city denounced death upon those who should introduce a foreign deity. (2) His decision. The philosophers in speaking of God had nothing but mere guesses and peradventures; but in no hesitating tone does Paul speak. (3) His skill. This was unlike his discourses to the Jews, where he mainly appealed to the Old Testament. 2. In reference to the Divine dispensations. (1) The past dispensation of forbearance. (2) The present dispensation of grace. (3) The coming dispensation of judgment. V. THE EFFECTS PRODUCED BY HIS LABOURS. They were threefold. 1. Ridicule. "Some mocked." 2. Procrastination. "We will hear thee again of this matter." 3. Faith. "Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed." (*Expository Outlines.*) *Paul at Athens*:—1. No moment in the annals of the Church has larger significance than that in which the gospel of the living Christ comes to its first contact with the worn faiths of paganism,—its philosophy and its science. 2. The very inequalities in social position of this meeting between the Jewish tent-maker—"whose bodily presence is weak, and whose speech is of no account"—and the classic and proud city of the ancient world, and the contrasted weapons of the debate—in the warm personal faith of the one, and the lifeless but cultivated ignorance of the other—all conspire to make this apostolic visit of historic significance, and this address a model in the missionary records of the Church. I. THE

PULPIT. 1. The apostle was in that "Holy Land of the Ideal," to which the ancient world of art and letters made pilgrimage. Here was the shrine at which "the fair humanities" of the pagan faith were worshipped—here the gymnasium, in which the human form came to its most perfect development in grace and beauty. Here, also, the human mind, the laws of thought, and that language which became the chosen medium of God's truth, attained an almost ideal acuteness and expansion, while in the age of Pericles art, poetry, and philosophy reached such consummate excellence as to become classic models of form and style to all the generations. It was in the market-place at Athens that Socrates, "the wisest of men," asked his immortal questions; and yonder in the olive groves by the brook Plato founded the academy; to the east, under the shadow of the mountain, was the lyceum of Aristotle, while near at hand, in the agora, were the garden of Epicurus and the painted porch of the Stoics. Here was the home of the drama, and the scholar speaks with pride the names of Æschylus and Sophocles. Here spoke the orators of Greece, not only to the civil issues of that time, but also to the listening ears of the future, and here wrote historians like Thucydides and Xenophon; while in her temples was deified the national spirit in the marble images of her heroes and soldiers, in the trophies of her victories, and the memory of her defeats, until we may say with truth that no city of like limits ever gathered to itself so much of history, so many objects of interest, and such prestige as Athens. 2. In the midst of such surroundings Paul was waiting for the coming of Silas and Timothy from Berea. As his eyes rested upon the images of gods and goddesses which filled the temples and lined the avenues of the city—where, the historian says, it was easier to find a god than a man—"his spirit was stirred within him as he beheld the city full of idols." The apostle was not destitute of that fine sense of the beautiful which belongs to all great souls, nor did the mind of the Jewish scholar fail in quick response to real culture; but the beautiful in art or letters was subordinate to the truth in Jesus, which filled his soul. 3. He was not of choice nor as a student in this university city, but in the providence of God he was a delayed messenger of the Cross; and, true to the great mission which possessed him, he engages the loiterers of the market-place in religious debate. For such street colloquies the Athenians had particular liking. It was through such that their great philosophers had come into prominence; and, having abundant leisure on their hands, the citizens generally found both occupation and excitement in taking part in them. 4. We can easily picture the amused curiosity, and the half-serious, half-sneering questions of the crowd which gathered around him: "What would this babbler say?" "He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods." As the circle grew larger, and hearing more difficult, curiosity in the new religion became more earnest, until, in the spirit of mischief or half-mirth, "they laid hold upon him," and led him up the stone steps to the top of the Areopagus, the ancient judgment-seat of Athens, where in the crescent of stone seats had sat the judges, who, three hundred years before, had condemned Socrates to die. Beyond the tribunal, in the cleft of the rock, was the menacing sanctuary of the Furies, while above was the great temple of Mars, the god of blood. Here, then, was the pulpit of the apostle—such a pulpit as no man, unless sent of God, and filled with the courage of the truth, would have dared to occupy! II. THE AUDIENCE. Their temper and character have exhibition in the half-earnest, half-contemptuous, inquisitive spirit with which they placed the apostle on "the stone of impudence"—where the accused were wont to plead their cause before the council—and with mocking judicial tones bade him speak. 1. The Athenian was religious: the innumerable temples, statues, and altars prove his "carefulness in religion"; but it reveals also what his religion was. It was one which made him a splendid animal with a splendid intellect, which had no holding power against profligacy and fatalism, but, like the sun, while it preserves the living, it hastens the decay of the dead. The same temper of mind and life had gone over into philosophy. (1) Three hundred years before, in his little garden beside the market-place, Epicurus had taught his followers that happiness is the great purpose and pursuit of life. In close alliance with this standard of life was a material theory of the universe, which made the world "a fortuitous combination of atoms," so that Providence became accident, and chance the disposer of events. (2) The Stoics taught a system of ethics radically at variance with this; for, while the Epicurean had made the world conform to self, the Stoic had made self conform to nature; thus self-gratification became the maxim of the one, and self-denial of the other. And while the Epicurean avoided pain, the Stoic welcomed it in order to despise it, and found the secret of life in living in conformity to nature, receiving

its bitter as sweet, and its sweet as bitter, with equal composure. But while its austere morality commands our admiration, its theories of the universe are degrading and material. Mind and matter were not distinguishable. God is only the reasoning principle in the universe—one with the material world. The very souls of men, like their bodies, were material. (3) One other class of hearers were represented; the gossips who spent their time in hearing and telling some new thing. This sect needs no analysis; their creed is simple and their history is familiar. Every community knows them, and every successor of the apostle addresses them. 2. We have outlined the character and creeds of the company that we may note one or two facts. (1) That, while unbelief is a revolving wheel, it is not a progressive one; for the very phases of unbelief against which the Church is contending to-day Paul met on Mars' Hill. Our materialistic philosophy which rules out God; our advanced thought in natural science; where do they receive better statement or definition than in that old poem of Lucretius "On the Nature of Things"? Our selfish and infidel systems of ethics—what are they but echoes of voices across that line which has divided the centuries? Unbelief always carries its ball and chain; it has no progress, and it cannot build. (2) In the focused light of Christianity in which we live to-day it would seem impossible for the worn pagan faiths of Epicurus and Zeno to exist among us. But such is not the case. For multitudes are living upon the unformulated theories and unspoken creeds of heathendom. Self is the centre of the universe, pleasure the great end of life; and as regards conduct they have no souls; there is no hereafter, and God is a fiction. Or they are austere, stern moralists, complacent in their own rightness, conforming to the events of life with stoical composure; scorning that humility which comes from repentance, and treating with disdain an atonement for its guilt and death. 3. Athens teaches us that culture cannot save a man nor a city from moral decay. Not commerce nor national era, not wealth nor taste, not even the library nor the college, convey the forces of permanent power or real welfare to men; but the gospel is the power of God unto life to the man and the state. III. THE SERMON. Note the courteous prudence with which he begins as he raises his hand for silence—"Men of Athens, in all things I observe that you are unusually religious"—a compliment which carries the truth and the attentive favour of his audience; and yet such conciliation does not compromise the man nor his message. He continues—"For as I passed through your city," &c. (ver. 23). Paul might have denounced their idolatry with a sledge-hammer blow, for his spirit had boiled within him as he beheld it; but alert to every circumstance which should serve a Christian purpose, he uses the very errors of heathendom to guide their feet and thought to Him who was the way and the truth. And now every sentence is packed with "the deep things of God" as he proceeds, and every word is a battle-blow to the false philosophy of his hearers. IV. ITS RECEPTION (ver. 32). The same old story wherever the truth is taught. Mockers, procrastinators, believers; to which class do we belong? (*Sermons by the Monday Club.*) *Paul at Athens*:—It is one test of a real gospel, that it can overleap all barriers placed between man and man, and find its way into that innermost heart's core which makes the whole world kin. Already in this one Book we have seen it dealing with the Jew and with the Gentile: we have seen it in Palestine, in Asia Minor, in Europe. Everywhere it has found some hearts into which it entered as a healing balm, some lives which it penetrated with transforming power. Now we are to see it at Athens. I. ST. PAUL'S FEELING. He was left there for a time alone. Some of us know that sinking of the spirits which is occasioned by loneliness in a strange city. He was a man of quick feeling, lively emotion, and gentlest affection; but even these were not the causes of his chief distress. His life was given to one work, and his whole heart was in it. Many a so-called Christian has tarried in an idolatrous place, and seen nothing in it but the antiquity of its associations or the curiosity of its monuments. At Athens the traveller feels nothing but a thrill of historic and poetic interest; and it would be judged by many a mere narrow-mindedness to remember the gospel. But St. Paul could not dissever the magnificence of a temple or the perfection of a statue from the remembrance of the idolatry which it served and of the souls which it debased. Yet his irritation was not a merely vexing and annoying thing, torturing to himself and to all about him, on the contrary. II. IT STIRRED HIM TO ACTION. 1. At Athens, as elsewhere, there was a Jewish synagogue: there at all events he might find some to sympathise with his horror at idolatry; there, too, he might at least argue from the common ground of Scripture, and assume both the unity of the Godhead and the expectation of a Christ. 2. But the Jews he had with him always, the Athenians

he met but for once; this was their day, the season of their visitation. Accordingly we read that in the far-famed Agora "he reasoned daily with those who met with him." St. Paul was not too proud, reserved, indolent, or half-hearted, to seize opportunities of conversing with strangers. A man with a soul to be saved or lost must have, for him, a ground of interest and a point of contact. Thus there encountered him some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. Strange meeting between a man who lived but for duty, yet found that duty in love Divine and human, and those who either denied the existence of a duty, or else made duty another name for hardness. Very brief, yet very graphic, is the account given of the treatment of the gospel by these philosophers. Nothing could be more contemptuous. They treated him as a mere reporter of idle tales picked up from others, and as a man incapable even of expressing the follies which he has adopted. Others took a more serious view of the case, and thought him a sort of travelling missionary of false gods, desiring to add new names to an already overflowing Pantheon. Because the names of Jesus and the Resurrection occurred so frequently they ran to the conclusion that they were the names of two deities whom he sought to incorporate in the national religion. And if this were so, it was a case requiring the cognisance of the great religious court of Athens (vers. 19, 20). A brief word of comment on the Athenian character is here introduced (ver. 21). It was the complaint of their own orators. When they ought to have been taking vigorous measures for the welfare or protection of their own state, still the love of news predominated over every other principle, and they who should have been acting were ever talking still! There are some in every congregation to whom this reproof belongs. 3. Then St. Paul stood before that famous court, of which the poets and orators of Greece tell such proud things. It does not appear to have been a formal trial, nor that life or death hung upon the issue. For the present it was a hearing only for information. Observe now the wisdom and the courage with which he spake. "Ye men of Athens, I observe that in all things ye are more religious" than others. He would carry them with him if he could. And he selects this one characteristic as in itself hopeful. And it is better that a man should feel his dependence, and seek to be in communication with One above him, than that he should do neither. Lest after all their care any one superior being should at last have been overlooked, they had adopted the singular expedient of an anonymous altar, which might at least deprecate the vengeance of a disregarded and slighted God. This altar St. Paul, with a wisdom and a skill above man's, takes as the text of his sermon. I am come, he says, to give a name to that anonymous altar. I am come to you from an unknown God, to enable you to fill up that blank space in your devotions. And who then is He? The God who made the world. How then can He be limited to one spot in it? He is the Giver and Preserver of human life: how can He require material offerings as though to support His own? He is the one Creator of all races, assigning to each the duration of its being, and the place of its habitation, and with what object? The 27th verse gives the answer. He quotes from a Greek poet of Tarsus in Cilicia, his own native city, as though claiming for himself a new link of connection with his audience. If we are, as your own poets say, God's offspring, it is derogatory even to man's nature to represent God under material and inanimate forms. Let the very dignity of man cry out against the disparagement of God. There was, he continues, a long and dreary age, during which God seemed as it were to acquiesce in the spiritual ignorance of His creatures. But now He has interposed with a call to repentance. And that call is backed by a threatening as well as a promise. There is a day of judgment. And that judgment will be conducted by a Man, the proof of whose Judgeship is the fact of His own resurrection. Well can we understand that there was that in this address which was at once trifling and shocking in Grecian ears (vers. 32–34). And for this time he departed from among them. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Paul at Athens*:—1. Paul is now "waiting." He needs rest, and so will sit down and be quiet and recover himself. Paul waiting! The two words do not go happily together. He cannot wait. Life is short; the enemy is at hand; the opportunity enlarges; and he who was left in an attitude of waiting begins to burn. A paroxysm (for that is the literal word) seizes his heart as he sees a sight he had never beheld before—a city wholly given to idolatry—one, as an historian tells us, in which it was easier to find a god than a man. "Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image" was ringing in Paul's ears. 2. Athens was wholly given to idolatry. You cannot stop at one idol. One brings another. This law has also its force in higher directions. You cannot stop with one isolated excellence. It is not excellence if you so

use it. Vices go in groups; piety is a whole excellence and not a partial virtue. The Athenians covered their irreligious lives by these religious forms. "Fill the city with gods, and let us live as we like," was the Athenian philosophy—it is ours too! "Start another mission, and let us play what pranks we like under the darkness." "Build five hundred more churches, but let us drink the devil's cup right down to its last hot drop." There are more idols in London than ever there were in Athens; not marble idols, but idols we can hide. Were Paul to come here he would see fashion, fortune, ease, ambition, self-seeking. In mighty, measureless London, for every man is his own idol! Stone idols may be so many marble steps up to the highest altar; but when the heart is its own idol, and its own idolater, nothing can break up the paganism but crucifixion. The Athenian pagan might be led away argumentatively from stone deities to conceptions of deific being and force; but the pagan heart never listens to intellectual appeals. Only one thing can break the heart-idol—"the hammer of the Lord," that can grind to powder the stoniest heart that ever shut out the clemency and love of Heaven. "Not by might, nor by power," &c. 3. Paul did a little introductory work. He always began just where the opportunity permitted him. "He disputed in the synagogue with the Jews," and he found a custom in Athens of meeting in the market-place, which was the general school-house of the city; and there learned men were talking and Paul listened. Having listened, he spoke, as he had a right to do according to Athenian custom, but he spoke so as to bring upon himself a contemptuous name. "What will this seed-pecker say? He is evidently nibbling at something, poor little, small-minded, weak-eyed Jew." "He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods." "Strange, *i.e.*, startling things" (ver. 20). The gospel startles; it never comes easily into any civilisation. Jesus did not come to send peace, but a sword, not quietness, but fire! 4. The Athenians were interested in the matter from an intellectual point of view (ver. 18). That is not religious inquiry. If you want to know what that is, recall the instance of the jailer who said, "What must I do to be saved?" Are we typified by the jailer or by the stoic? Let us be honest with ourselves. If we are in God's house for the purpose of ascertaining God's Word, all heaven will be aflame with light, and every guest at God's table will be satisfied; but if we are here in the Athenian spirit we may be disappointed and mocked. 5. Paul was always ready to speak. But they were learned men, so was he, but not as many men are with unavailable learning, but in his gospel. He asked for no time to prepare. Instantly he said, "Ye men of Athens." That was Demosthenic; the great orator always began his appeal thus. Thus the true preacher can always begin. He cannot always say "Dear friends," for there may be none; "brethren," for that may be an unknown term. There is genius even here. There is a gift of God in little matters as well as in great. Paul was never wanting in tact. Mark the simple dignity of the salutatory form. They were "men"; they met upon a common platform. Then the next, "I perceive that in all things ye are too religiously-minded." Mark the broad and generous recognition. Do not affront the people you intend afterwards to persuade. There are two methods of delivering a country from idolatry. The one is, Jehu-like, to destroy Baal out of Israel; the other is to displace the false by the introduction of the true; not to deride an idol, but to preach a Saviour. So Paul recognises what he sees. "I found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. I will begin where you end. Whom, therefore, ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you." What infinite tact! That is the true method of preaching to-day. You must interpret to men what they do not interpret to themselves. Endeavour to make the most of a man. Every man has upon him this inscription, "To the Unknown," and the Christian teacher has to say, "Then I will make it known to you. Do you ever yearn and desire?" Then such aspiration is the beginning of prayer. Do you suffer for others? You will sit up all night that others may sleep. If so, that is the beginning of sacrifice. Are you dissatisfied with earth and time? Are you filled with discontentment? That is the beginning of immortality. This text of Paul's is in every man; every life furnishes a Mars' Hill from the top of which Christian preachers may preach. The sun does not plant the root, but warms it into fulness of life. The witness of God is in every one of us, and answers to the claim of the written Book. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Paul at Athens:—Greece was the clime and residence of the beautiful. The very air was tempered to delight, and the soul imbibed the same sunny hues as the landscape. The passion for the beautiful, gave to the Greeks a more brilliant mythology than any other nation. Music moulded the flexible language into its own nature,

and it became so plastic that its very swell and modulation were but the waves of song. The arts and sciences danced around humanity, and "stored man's home with comforts, and charmed his senses with all kinds and forms of elegance." Athens was a marble paradise, filled with temples and with gods, whose forms were the very models of symmetry and perfection. What were the feelings which Athens was likely to produce in a mind so accomplished as Paul's? To the splendour of its name, to the charms of its literature, he was no stranger; and his mind was peculiarly alive to every form of beauty. The streets were but long galleries of god-like forms in marble. Athens was the very focus of idolatry, and the apostle witnessed the living magnificence of their worship, the gorgeous attire of their priests—the solemn pomp of their processions—the clouds of fragrant incense which alone could obscure their transparent atmosphere, and the majesty of their theatres. He heard the surpassing melody of their music, and listened to the discourses of their orators; and "his spirit was stirred within him," but only because "he beheld the city wholly given to idolatry." Let me direct your attention to—I. THE PREACHER. He was no ordinary man. His mind, naturally strong, had been strengthened by culture; he had great energy and decision of character. Like the bird of heaven, he was at home in the storm as well as in the sunshine. He was once the greatest enemy of that truth of which he was now the foremost advocate. What a change has taken place in his views and feelings, since when a young man he studied Grecian literature! Just look at him with that volume of Greek poetry in his hand. He is longing for the hour when he shall visit Athens, and converse with the literati, and drink in inspiration from the fountain. He visits Athens; but, strange to tell, he visits that celebrated city as a preacher of the Cross! He is now to contend with the very master spirits of the world, in the very palace of intellect, and in the very sanctuary of idolatry. II. THE PLACE WHERE PAUL PREACHED. The spot where he stood was a rock where in earlier days the supreme court of justice had been held. Though the authority of this court had been abridged by the Roman conquest, still it was reserved for the judges to determine what gods were to be admitted into the temples, and to pronounce sentence upon any who should be guilty of blaspheming the divinities of Greece. If ever the sincerity of the preacher was tried, it was upon this occasion; and if ever Paul displayed intrepidity of character, it was upon Mars' hill. III. THE CONGREGATION. Around him, then, were gathered a multitude, acute, inquisitive, and polished. Never did preacher have such a congregation. There were the philosophers of bower and porch; orators with whom the slightest tinge of a barbarian accent would break the power of the most persuasive discourse; Epicureans who believed the world was created by accident or by chance—men who though they professed to believe in the existence of a God, regarded Him as dwelling in the far-off watch-towers of some distant world, indifferent to His creatures; and Stoics who believe in two principles, God and matter, both eternal, and therefore they virtually denied that there was any creation. There, too, was the priest, astonished at the daring of the preacher; the young Roman who had come to Athens to be educated; the Jew looking on with hatred and fury at the apostate from the ancient faith; and there, too, though afar off and crouching to the ground, was the slave, drinking in the doctrine—strange and new to him, sweet as music to his ears—that God had "made all men of one blood." What must Paul have felt when surrounded by such a congregation! IV. THE SERMON. Nobly did the champion of truth perform his part. He spoke worthy of himself, of his commission, and his congregation. You cannot fail to be struck by the adaptation of this discourse to the congregation. When Paul went into a synagogue he reasoned with the Jews out of the Scriptures. But here were men who believed that the creation of the world was altogether fortuitous; those who did not believe in any creation at all; those who denied that there was any future state. The apostle then set himself to prove to them that there was a God, that this God was the Creator of all things, that there was an overruling Providence, and consequently that there was a judgment to come. We can only seize on some of the leading features of this sermon. How appropriate and judicious his introduction! Since you are worshippers of an "unknown God" it must be gratifying to you, who are such religious people, to hear something concerning Him. From his primary positions the apostle proceeds to draw certain inferences, viz., that God is not confined to any particular place, that God is independent; and the spirituality of the Divine Being. With these reasonings the apostle makes an assertion relative to the duty of man, to seek an acquaintance with God through the medium of His works and ways; and then concludes by

observing, that though God for ages had left the Gentiles to themselves, now He "commanded all men everywhere to repent," &c. V. THE EFFECTS (vers. 32–34). Conclusion: 1. The great propriety of discourses being adapted to the circumstances of the hearers. It is necessary that the preacher should commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God; but where there is a variety of character and circumstances, it is a difficult thing for a minister to adapt himself. But "the truth as it is in Jesus" is adapted to all men's circumstances. 2. Paul's discourse is an excellent homily for these times. There are not a few who are worshippers of an "unknown God"; who attach sanctity to certain places; who suppose that God takes delight in certain words, and in certain postures. Let such study Paul's sermon, and they will find that that very sermon preached eighteen hundred years ago is peculiarly adapted to their circumstances. (*H. J. Bevis.*) *Paul at Athens:* —The practical lessons are:—I. THAT A TRULY GOOD MAN WILL BE SENSITIVE TO THE MORAL EVILS PREVALENT IN THE COMMUNITY IN WHICH HE IS PLACED (ver. 16). Here idolatry was rampant. What are the prevailing evils in London? II. A TRULY GOOD MAN WILL BESTIR HIMSELF FOR THE REMOVAL OF THOSE EVILS. There are those who feel and say much, but do nothing (ver. 17). III. IN DEALING WITH THESE EVILS A MAN WHO IS WISE AS WELL AS GOOD WILL STRIKE AT THEIR ROOT—IGNORANCE OF GOD AND HIS WILL. There was much vice, but Paul said nothing of that. Political and social reforms are good, but what the world needs is regeneration. Make the tree good and its fruit will be good. IV. IN DEALING WITH THESE EVILS TACT IS NEEDED AS WELL AS ZEAL (ver. 22). Paul never committed the gross oratorical blunder of accusing his audience of superstition. What he commended and proved was their religiousness, and having put them in good humour he proceeded to deliver his message. There is a great deal in the way we take hold of people. You must conciliate men before you can convert them. V. IN DEALING WITH THESE EVILS YOU MUST NOT EXPECT UNIFORM SUCCESS (vers. 32–34). (*R. A. Bertram.*) *Paul at Athens:*—The practical lessons which this scene teaches us are—I. THAT THE LOFTIEST EFFORTS OF UNAIDED MEN, CAN PRODUCE NO HIGHER RELIGION THAN A REFINED POLYTHEISM. This is confirmed by the records of all heathenism. Had man been left to himself, he never would have known the true God; and hence the privilege of living in a land where the Triune God is known and worshipped. II. THAT ART AND LITERATURE HAVE IN THEMSELVES NO CONSERVING MORAL FORCE. The citizens of Athens had a poetry, which maintains its precedence to this day; a literature, unsurpassed in eloquence and vigour; an art, developing itself in paintings, and statues, and architecture, which are even now the proudest monuments of human skill: yet just as in the age of Louis XIV. in France, and in the Augustan age at Rome, art and literature were not only powerless to arrest immorality, they absolutely ministered to it. The mind is rightly cultivated only when educated in the principle of personal accountability to God. Hence the danger of a merely secular education. Hence the need of a Christian leaven in our secular schools. III. THAT PHILOSOPHY, ORIGINATING IN HUMAN MINDS, CAN CONSTRUCT NO TRUE SYSTEM OF BELIEF OR DUTY. Philosophy requires three constant factors to its full and true development, viz., a first Cause; a full knowledge of this first Cause; and a full knowledge of man himself. But no human mind can grasp these factors. We must look then above man to get this true philosophy; and we find it in the revelation of God. But "no man knoweth the Father, but the Son, and He to whom the Son will reveal Him"; and Jesus only "needeth not that any should testify of man; for He knows what is in man." So then we reach the fact that in Jesus Christ are "hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." A philosophy which leaves out Christ is like a planetary system without a central sun, a mere series of vortices without a uniting and controlling centre. Philosophy has found out many truths, but not the great foundation truths of God's existence, and attributes, and grace; and man's fall, and helplessness, and need of a Saviour. How, then, should we thank God, that He has revealed all this to us. IV. THAT REPENTANCE IS A PERSONAL DUTY, BASED ON PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY TO GOD FOR PERSONAL SINS. Heathenism knew nothing of sin, as the alienation of the heart from God. Its very gods were but splendid embodiments of sin; and their influence was only to reproduce in daily life the crimes which filled Olympus. It is the religion of Christ only which measures moral character with the unerring lines and in the unerring balances of the Divine law. It is only as we act upon the truth that man is personally responsible to God, and will be judged, that we shall have true views of God, and understand our need of a Saviour. (*Bp. Stevens.*) *Paul at Athens; Christianity in contact with cultivated mind:*—I. THE SUBJECT ON WHICH THE MINISTER OF THE

GOSPEL ADDRESSES MEN IS WORTHY OF THE ATTENTION OF CULTIVATED MINDS. 1. There ought to be no occasion for arguing this point. Paul felt no necessity of showing that the subject was worthy of attention. The Athenians had already expressed their sense of the importance of the inquiry by inviting him to come to the place where he could best address the people. We, on the contrary, are obliged to awaken inquiry, and to show why religion is worthy of profound thought. (1) Among those who, in other respects, would be represented by the Athenian philosophers, religion does not come within the range of their inquiries. They are scientists, jurists, editors, philosophers, &c., not theologians. (2) The great mass of men stop short when they approach the subject of religion in their investigations, even when it would appear impossible that they should not be led to see and to embrace its truths. In astronomy, *e.g.*, such men seem almost to look upon the throne of God; but they will not allow their minds to take the next step, and many an astronomer remains ignorant of Him who made the worlds. (3) When men do come up to the point they find the subject distasteful. They have come into a region where the ideas of duty—retribution, repentance—are likely to be predominant; and they are not attracted by these themes. 2. It is proper, therefore, to show that the subject of religion is worthy the attention of this class of minds. Observe therefore—(1) That it is an avowed principle with such persons, that all subjects are to be investigated. It is a maxim in philosophy that truth is to be followed wherever it may lead us. Why, then, should the astronomer refuse to follow out the revelation when the throne of God seems to stand before him, and admit that there is a God? Why should he always talk about "Nature," and never about "God"? (2) As mere abstract matters, the subjects of religion are as worthy of attention as any that can come before the minds of men. The Greeks, as a people, had evinced their own convictions of this, far more than most other nations. When Grecian sages were thus leading a foreign Jew to the Areopagus to ask him what he had to say on this subject, no man in Athens would feel that this was an unworthy act in the city of Socrates and Plato. No class of people, however advanced in civilisation, act contrary to the dictates of the highest wisdom, when they give themselves to earnest thought about the Creator of the world, the methods of the Divine administration, &c. If these great subjects are not important for man, what subjects can be? (3) The subject of religion pertains, as a personal matter, as really to cultivated men as to the rest of mankind. It does not merely open questions relating to the welfare of society; but it is a subject of personal importance to each individual. II. PAUL WAS IN POSSESSION OF KNOWLEDGE ON THESE SUBJECTS WHICH WAS IN ADVANCE OF WHAT THESE PHILOSOPHERS POSSESSED. In considering this, notice—1. The manner in which Paul approached the subject of his peculiar doctrines. (1) He made no direct attack on their religion. He did not awaken their prejudices, as if his mission was to destroy their temples. (2) He commended their zeal in religion as real zeal in a great cause; and he referred, without any unkind reflections, to the evidence of that zeal exhibited on every hand. (3) He referred to their acknowledged difficulties—to the avowal of their own ignorance or uncertainty, as recorded on the altar. (4) He proposed to reveal the God whom they thus unconsciously adored; to lead them up to the real source of every blessing. (5) He agreed, as far as possible, with the philosophers who heard him, and reasoned from their admitted principles. A truth found in their poetry, though it was heathen poetry, was not the less a truth because it had had such an origin, and because it was not found in the inspired writings of the Jews. So far he was successful. He did not excite their fears. He did not expose himself to contempt. He secured, as he had hoped to do, their profound attention. 2. The doctrines which he made known to them. (1) Those which were based on principles that they themselves held—though in advance of their views. (*a*) The existence of a God—to them the "unknown God." (*b*) The fact that this "unknown" God was the Creator of the world. (*c*) The immensity of God. (*d*) The independence of God. (*e*) The unity of the human race. (*f*) The grand purpose for which certain arrangements had been made in respect to the human race: "that they should seek God," &c. (*g*) The spirituality of God and of religion (ver. 29). (2) The doctrines which were peculiar to the Christian system; the "strange things" in reference to which particularly they had asked an explanation. (*a*) God now commands universal repentance. (*b*) God will judge the world. (*c*) The resurrection of the dead; as derived from the fact that God had raised from the dead Him who was to judge the world. III. THE LESSONS SUGGESTED BY THE DISCOURSE. 1. Christianity does not shrink from investigation. Paul manifested no reluctance, but rejoiced in the opportunity of proclaiming the gospel where it would be most

likely to be subjected to a thorough examination. 2. The history of the world, since Paul stood on Mars' Hill, has made no difference in the relation of Christianity to the world in the matter under consideration. It claims to be now not less in advance of the world than it was then. The world has, indeed, made great progress in arts, science, &c., but it has made no advances in the knowledge of the great truths of religion by the aid of science or philosophy. 3. If Christianity was then, and is now, ahead of the world on these subjects, it may be presumed that it will ever retain this advanced position. 4. This furnishes a strong proof of the Divine origin of Christianity. System after system of philosophy and religion has disappeared. But Christianity has lived through all changes. After all the discoveries and developments of the last eighteen centuries—after all that has been affirmed to be in conflict with the Bible—the hold of Christianity on the world is stronger now, and the belief that the Bible is true is more widespread and deep, than in any past age. (*A. Barnes, D.D.*) **His spirit was stirred in him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.**—*Moral wretchedness of idolatry*:—The great argument for missionary exertion, next to its being the plain command of God, is the spiritual helplessness of those who live under the power of idolatry. This paroxysm of grief which the apostle felt would be excited by—I. THE DISHONOURING VIEWS OF THE DIVINE CHARACTER AND GOVERNMENT NECESSARILY ASSOCIATED WITH SUCH A SYSTEM. Those who think lightly of idolatry speak as if it afforded the same outlet for the religious affections as true religion; that the religious element in man's nature is as effectually cultivated, whether men called the being they worshipped Vishnu, or Juggernaut, or God, seeing the same honour in all cases is intended to the Great Author of the universe. But now, even if this monstrous impiety were conceded, it is sufficient to observe that the attributes with which these gods are commonly invested must for ever forbid the acceptableness of the worship. So far otherwise, God must regard it as worship by which His character is debased, and everything which could inspire filial and reverential sentiments is taken away. II. THE SANCTIONED AND PERMITTED DISREGARD OF THE FIRST PRINCIPLES OF MORALITY. The religion of Greece was chiefly a religion of festivals; and some of these extended to seven days. True, some were simply absurd; but at the majority things were performed of which it were a shame even to speak. With similar accounts our own missionaries are obliged to stain their reports unto this day. Now, it is easy to see that morality can have no existence under such a state of things, because all morals must have as their foundation the will of God. "Be ye holy, because I am holy," appeals to a universal moral instinct; flee from iniquity, because God hateth iniquity—these are the safeguards of all that is pure in our social system. In the case of idolatry, however, this safeguard is removed. It were in vain that the law should forbid a thing as unholy which religion has declared to be acceptable in the sight of God. III. THE UTTER ABSENCE OF ALL RELIGIOUS PEACE OR TRANQUILLITY OF CONSCIENCE. The consideration may address itself, first, to our feelings of humanity. In some respects we know that the worship of the idolater must be a miserable worship. His self-inflicted torture must make existence to be a burden to him. But this belongs less to Athenian than to Asiatic idolatry. We may suppose the mind of the apostle to have been exercised by the absence of religious peace. They know not God; they know not the mercifulness of His nature, the wisdom of His ways, the gentleness of His yoke, the goodness of His laws. I am speaking to men who know something of the comforts of religion. What is the source of it? You feel that a propitiation has been found for your offences; that an exhaustless fund of holy influences is opened to meet every remaining infirmity; and that there is the power of a covenant-keeping God to keep you faithful unto the end. You have troubles; but are not these among those things which work together for the believer's good? But what knows the poor heathen of such consolations? IV. PAINFUL MISGIVINGS AS TO THE FINAL SALVATION OF THESE PEOPLE. Our chief guide upon such a subject must be the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. There does not seem to be an important distinction in that chapter; for though the apostle does seem to leave some hope of salvation for the mere heathen who is without the knowledge of God, is it quite so clear that it leaves a hope of salvation to the idolater? The heathen, it seems to be supposed, will be a law unto himself, and has a power to discern from the things which are seen and made the Almighty's eternal power and Godhead. But suppose, instead of this, he should change the image of the incorruptible God into the image of corruptible man, &c., are we then prepared to say that an idolater hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and

of God? We limit no mercies; but everywhere, as we look on the vast outspread of idolatry, the stern and withering sentence meets us, "Without God, without hope." Oh! must not every heart be stirred up within us at such a spectacle? Conclusion: And now, in applying my remarks to the cause of missions, I must remind you of our three great wants and your three correlative duties. First, we want the means. But not only do we want your money—we want your sons. And then we want your prayers. (*D. Moore, M.A.*) *Paul's moral survey of Athens*:—What did he discover that so intensely distressed him? I. GREAT GENIUS PERVERTED. He saw—1. Developments of great genius. What Jerusalem has been in the true religious culture of humanity, Athens has been in the culture of the æsthetical and reasoning powers of mankind. 2. Perversions of great genius. Though possessing a mind qualified to appreciate the splendid works which lay about him, yet he was thrown into an agony of grief at what he beheld. He had a standard of character unknown to any Athenian sage, and he felt that the æsthetic glory of Greece was but a gorgeous covering which genius had spread over a vast cemetery of moral corruption. Genius wasted—nay, worse than that, employed for immoral and impious ends. There is nothing in mere material civilisation, even in its highest forms, to delight a truly enlightened soul. II. THE GREAT GOD DISHONOURED. With all this display the Athenians had—1. No grand moral purpose in life (ver. 21). Empty theories and idle gossip occupied their chief attention; since they knew not the only true God, they had no grand purpose in life. The deeper and diviner parts of their souls were undeveloped. 2. No love for the true God. Athens, by wisdom, knew not God. "It was easier," says an old writer, "to find a god than a man." All history shows that where the gospel has not gone, man has never reached the true religion, nor felt the higher inspirations of his being (Rom. i.). The best of the Athenian gods were but men, whose passions in some cases were of the most revolting kind. Paul knew that the destiny of the soul depended upon its worship; that if it worshipped any object but God, it must inevitably sink lower and lower for ever. There is but one being that has a claim to the worship of man—the Creator. He claims the supreme homage and service of all souls. His claim is just: no conscience can dispute it. Because the apostle loved supremely this supreme object of worship, he felt intense pain at seeing His righteous claims contemned. "I beheld the ways of transgressors, and was grieved." (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Paul's estimate of the Athenians*:—We are taught by this passage—I. TO BE DEEPLY AFFECTED BY THE MORAL CONDITION OF THE WORLD. 1. Paul's was the excitement of fervent zeal for the honour of Christ. 2. He felt also the outrage done by idolatry to the dignity of human nature. 3. In this excitement the love of souls was not wanting. II. THAT SUCH AN AFFECTION WILL LEAD TO THE USE OF ACTIVE MEANS FOR THE WORLD'S SALVATION. 1. Paul was never ashamed of Christ's gospel. 2. He laid aside all fears of failure. 3. He does not remain inactive at Athens because he has no particular mission there. (*Evangelical Preacher.*) *The moral versus the æsthetic*:—When Howard went forth, on what a great orator has called his "circumnavigation of charity," he visited some of the noblest cities, and passed through some of the most attractive scenery of modern Europe; but neither the splendour and wealth of the one, nor the attractions of the other, could engage his attention; the dungeon and the hospital, where suffering humanity invited his aid, had an interest to his mind which drew him aside from everything else, and made him insensible "to the sumptuousness of palaces and the stateliness of temples," to the curiosity of art, and even to the sublimities and beauties of nature. Cicero tells us that for him Athens had a higher charm than was derived from its magnificent buildings and exquisite works of art—the charm that arose from the memory of its illustrious men, and which made him search out the abodes and favourite haunts of each, and look with intent gaze on their sepulchres. In all large and earnest minds the moral will ever overtop and master the æsthetic; and, save as the latter may in some way be made subservient to the former, such minds will be apt to overlook, if not entirely to under-estimate it. What wonder, then, that Paul, bent on a mission of moral beneficence to which he had consecrated his life, and penetrated with an all-absorbing desire to accomplish a result which he knew to be the noblest and worthiest and most enduring that could be proposed to human exertion, should have been content to bestow only a passing glance on the marble splendours of Athens, and should have been more deeply moved by the gloom which rested on the moral features of the scene, than by all the glory which lighted up its physical and material aspect? As he moved through the city, he beheld how all this wealth of genius was prostituted to the

service of a vain and misleading superstition. (*W. L. Alexander, D.D.*) *Christian unconcern explained:*—"I was speaking with a gentleman who had just returned from a visit to Niagara, where he lived in the Clifton Hotel, which is close to the Falls. He asked a waiter, 'Are you not annoyed by the noise of the waterfall?' 'Positively I don't hear it. When I first came here I hardly heard anything for it; now it is quite quiet to me.' Why is this? Because he is accustomed to it. That is the reason Christians are content to sit with folded hands, looking calmly on while so many of their fellows are gliding down the broad road to eternal death. Rouse yourselves; ask God for Christ's sake to give you grace and strength to 'rescue the perishing.'" (*J. McFarlane.*)

Vers. 17, 18. **Therefore disputed he in the synagogue . . . and in the market.**—*Paul's discussions in the synagogue and market-place:*—I. THE PARTIES WITH WHOM PAUL REASONED. These may be looked on in two aspects:—1. Theologically. (1) The "Jews" were monotheists. They believed in the one true and living God, and in Moses as His great minister. (2) The "Epicureans" were atheists. They ascribed the creation of the world to chance; they had no faith in the one infinite Creator of heaven and earth. (3) The Stoics were pantheists. They confounded the universe with God, or regarded it rather as God. Paul had to deal, therefore, with these three great intellectual systems. Each would require a very different line of argument. 2. Ethically. These three represented three great cardinal moral evils—(1) Self-righteousness in the Jew. (2) Carnality in the Epicurean. (3) Indifferentism in the Stoics. II. THE SUBJECTS ON WHICH HE DISCOURSED—"Jesus and the resurrection." 1. The greatest person in the history of the race. 2. The greatest fact in the history of this person. III. THE EFFECTS OF THE DISCUSSION. 1. Contempt. "What will this babbler say?" Paul was probably no orator in their sense, nor was he of commanding presence. 2. Misconception. They thoroughly misunderstood him. "He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods." 3. Curiosity (ver. 19). This was so far the most favourable result. The apostle's teaching succeeded up to this point in generating in them the desire to know something more about the new doctrine. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *St. Paul in the market-place:*—1. St. Paul seems to have had so little thought of his own dignity, and we find his most efficient work was accomplished when he turned his back upon the synagogue, and went down into the market-place. Yes, hither, rather than to the court or the palace. He did not wait for the people to come to him—he went to them. In the history of the new religion it was always so. The Scribes and Pharisees of John the Baptist's day sought him, but he never sought them. Herod sent for John, but John never hung about the court, and when he was summoned to the royal presence, uttered unpleasant truths with great plainness. Nay, Christ Himself discloses a singular indifference to the reformation of either the religious or secular rulers of the time. And, when we follow the history of St. Paul, we find Agrippa, Felix, and Festus send for the apostle. So that there was no want of opportunity to make an impression in high places—and yet, the new religion resolutely sought the low ones. 2. It has been supposed that this was because the new religion aimed to testify to its sympathy with the masses. It was not aristocratic, it was democratic. Its Founder was not one of the "privileged classes," He was a mechanic. And so it turned away from courts, and went where sorrow and need were most surely to be found. All which is true enough, but by no means the whole truth. The new religion turned its footsteps to the market-place, because it discerned that in the transformation of the passions, hopes, and interests of the market-place was to be found the redemption of humanity. Plato had said that "no relief would ever reach the ills of men until either statesmen became philosophers, or philosophers assumed the government of states." To him the only hope of the commonwealth was in a perfect system of government, perfectly administered. It is what many of us are thinking to-day. But the hope of a nation really lies in the elevation and redemption of individual character among its people; and according to the New Testament, without waiting to reconstruct governments, we must begin by striving for the new-creation of individual character. 3. And, in just so far as it has won any substantial victories, it is thus that the religion of Christ has worked from the beginning. Meantime we cannot overlook the fact that there have gone forward the triumphs of civilisation. When the Church points to what the faith of the Crucified has done for the individual life, the apostles of learning and science point to what these have done for society and the state. And who of us can see this without admiration? But who of us can see

it without seeing something more? With the growth of wealth there has come the growth of poverty; with the multiplication of the arts, the multiplication of evil uses to which those arts may be turned; with the birth of new sciences, there has confronted us the birth of new and hateful vices. Who of us is not awed as he sees the splendours of London or Paris or Vienna? And yet within a stone's throw of some tall palace or some stately museum, what festering courts; what wretchedness and degradation! Is this the product of the highest civilisation, and if it is, how is it better than that barbarism on which, so complacently, it professes to look down? To such questions as these there can be but one answer. There is not a reform, a science, an art, a single step in the purification of our forms of government, that is not a step in the right direction. But the millennium will never come by that road. You may make government as just as was Aristides. You may make the streams of official patronage and power as pure and as wholesome as the sparkling waters of a mountain spring. But you cannot cure a cancer with spring water. You cannot restore the lost reason by means of a wholesome diet and a padded cell. "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." To that spirit, personally, something must speak as with a message from God. 4. And so we find the apostle as the messenger of that spirit, pleading and arguing in the market-place. How hopeless it must have seemed at first! With what a light laugh they must have listened to this "babbler." How useless, his fellow Israelites kept assuring him, doubtless, was any attempt to get a hearing there! It is the same cry now. What are you going to do about the ever-increasing mass of people who are growing up in as genuine heathenism as any that is to be found in Dahomey? How vain to attempt to gain an entrance or to make an impression there! Thank God that the apostle was wiser, and knew better than this. He knew that in the market-place then, as in the tenement now, there beat the same human hearts and ached the same unanswered wants that were throbbing anywhere else. He knew that there was no one so degraded, so hardened but that somewhere in him there was the small crevice through which the truth could find its way. Above all, he knew that the more hopeless was the darkness the more urgent was the need and call for light. And so he begins at the bottom—in the market-place—with the individual soul. 5. This message of the apostle, a personal message to the personal soul, is mine to you to-day. This religion of ours, is it a pastime for Sundays, or is it a message and a mandate for Sundays and week-days alike? Will you hearken to it only here, or will you own its authority in the house and in the market-place as well? If the world is to become better, it must become better because we have consented to become better. In urging such reform it is my business to hold up before you here a high ideal, and to bid you at whatever cost, to strive to realise it. Not unfrequently, I am told, "What is the use of setting up an impossible mark of attainment only to daunt one by the dismal discrepancy of his own endeavours." And yet, who of us would be genuinely contented with any other? When, from those loftier levels, the Master's truth comes trembling down to our souls, there is something in us that answers to it. Even so, I think, at Athens, there were some who were carrying heavy and unshared burdens. With what unspeakable thankfulness, when at last they heard of Him who had come to lift off those burdens, must they have turned to Him and gladly laid them at His feet! (*Bp. H. C. Potter, D.D.*) *The Agora:*—The Agora, in all Greek cities the centre and focus of life, must not be confounded with an ordinary "market." It was one to a certain extent. In one portion there were booths containing common articles of consumption, as well as bazaars for those of luxury. Other parts would be more suggestive of our own Covent Garden; shops for flowers and fruit; vegetables and oranges from the surrounding gardens; oil from the olive groves on the slopes of Lycabettus; honey from Hymettus; even fish from the shores of Salamis and Eubœa. Mingling somewhat incongruously with these, we have the mention of stalls for books and parchments; a clothes booth; a depôt for stolen goods; and the slave-market called "Cyclus." It was, in this respect, a convenient trading centre for the surrounding city. But its main features and use were very different. Architecturally it must have been impressive. It is described by a writer as a "natural amphitheatre." There was the Altar of the Twelve Gods, from which emanated, in varied directions, the streets of the city and the roads of Attica. Here, in one place, was the "Stoa Basileios," "the Royal Porch" dedicated to Aurora; here, in another, is a Stoa dedicated to Zeus, with paintings of various deities by the artist Euphranor. These and similar ornamental buildings rose at all events on two sides, one of which was confronted with the Statues of

the Ten Heroes. Xenophon tells us that, at certain festivals, it was customary for the knights to make the circuit of the Agora on horseback, beginning at the statue of Hermes, and paying homage to the statues and temples around. That garrulous throng whom Paul met here was composed of philosophers, artists, poets, historians, supplemented by a still livelier contingent of gossip-mongers and idlers of every kind which gathered under alcove and colonnade to converse on "burning questions." Moreover, anterior to the art of printing, and when journalistic literature was a future revelation, it formed the only means and opportunity of discussing the politics of the hour. Even the varied colour, blending and contrasted in this babel of confusion, must have been striking and picturesque, if the dress of the modern Greek is a survival of classic ages. Then the Agora opened its gates, not to natives only, but to "strangers" (ver. 21). We can think therefore of "excursionists" and merchants, either in pursuit of pleasure or of gain, or both combined, from other towns and capitals near and distant. Noisy traffickers from Corinth and Thessalonica, Ephesus and Smyrna, Antioch and Damascus; sailors and voyagers from the Alexandrian vessel or Roman galley at anchor in the Piræus. Here and there a Jew with sandalled feet, his long robe girdled round the waist and fringed with blue ribbon. Here and there some soldiers from the barracks—now on foot, now mounted—the flash of their helmets mingling with the red and yellow mantles of the market-women, or with the still rarer keffêih and fillets of the swarthy children of the Arabian or Syrian deserts. What a rare "symposium"; what a singular whirlpool of thought in this "tumultuous Agora!" (*J. R. Macduff, D.D.*)

Certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him.—*Epicureans and Stoics*:—It is a moment of perpetual and universal human interest, this moment of our text, when philosophers of the Epicureans and of the Stoics encountered Paul, the Christian, with his preaching of Jesus and of the Resurrection. For it was the moment when the gospel met the two sides of human life together, and spoke to them together, and contrasted its oneness with their dividedness, its wholeness with their partialness, and showed its mission of reconciliation. Who does not know what I mean when we talk of the two sides of life? Who is so young that he has not had life come up to him in the form of a question with something to be said on both sides? Who is so old as to have outgrown such questions? What day but presents one of them? Does not the great earth itself give you a perpetual parable of your single life, and each single life upon it? How it turns between day and night! I cannot think it is wrong to illustrate in this way Christ's coming to the two sides of life, each true in itself, but partial; both truths, but half truths; each to the other inconceivable, except through the coming of Christ, the higher Light and the Reconciler. Epicureans and Stoics—these two classes of men represented the two opposite points of the sphere of life. Both represented facts, but separated ones. One was a class of men and minds who had started from the very high truth that good was sure to be the highest happiness, and had degenerated quickly into the mere pursuit of happiness and pleasure, as if they were good and would bring good of themselves. These were Epicureans. And their opposites were Stoics, a class of men and minds who had started from the noble truth that the highest good involves and is hardship and bravery, and had as quickly degenerated into mere proud endurance—pride in their own strength as the only good, and scorn of any gentleness or pleasure. One said, "It is a bright world, let us just enjoy it"; another, "It is a hard world, let us just endure it." One would become selfish in luxury, the other selfish in strength and denial; the one was caught in sweetness, the other in bitterness; the one blinded by excess of light, the other by excess of darkness. They were the reverse sides of the globe of life. And yet could anything have been truer or nobler than the facts upon which they each rested? Is not virtue happiness? Is not virtue hardship and endurance? But half truths must degenerate into error. One side of human life by itself must deteriorate and become bad and selfish, and sink just as one side of a scale without a corresponding weight upon the other side must fall. So the happiness of virtue, and the hardness of virtue, had become on either side mere self-enjoyment and self-confidence. So human life must fall into error, however high it begins, unless it encounters some higher life and light. It never has anything except its own one human tendency to rely upon, which runs away with it if not corrected, and the half truth becomes a whole error. The best of lives at its best is one-sided, and alone, without Christ, will degenerate. Its noble tendencies will narrow upon self. It will surely end in meanness and error. Paul, then, meets these degenerate representatives of noble reverse sides of life, Epicureans and Stoics; and they are *together* as they

encounter Paul. In their degenerate form they have a common union—not union in a higher life, but in a lower life, in a common selfishness. Is it a strange alliance? And yet your own single life may show the same thing—the armour under the silk. How much you may endure for pleasure's sake; how you toil selfishly in order to enjoy selfishly; and yet the toil and enjoyment are perfectly out of sympathy with each other. There is nothing in common between them but the thought of self. That hollow union is the best the earthly life can make between the two sides, which say, "I ought to be happy and I ought to endure." The two ideas of enjoyment and endurance go on seemingly as hopelessly separate as ever, whether in one life or two lives. Unless Christ meet them, and their union be in what Paul preached, Jesus and the Resurrection. What happens then? First, this, and it is the great thing which the gospel was meant to do, and I beg your closest attention to it. The gospel is bent on giving the two Divine motives, a Divine Person and a Divine future, Jesus and the Resurrection. It does not announce duties; it brings warm, stimulating motives. It preaches Jesus, who is the deep love of God for you, Him whose love and strength has come from the high heaven for you, come to the deep sin for you, come across the breadth of the world to you, come through the long years to you. Return His love, and you are in the happiness of virtue at once. The happiness of His companionship is the happiness of virtue. In His company you reach that fulness of joy. And now see, it is a happiness which also includes endurance. It does not depend on circumstances. It comes from the love of a Person, of Jesus the Lord. Am I bound to Him? Then I am happy; notwithstanding how self is put down, or how circumstances change. Happiness is not a mere luxury, not a quietness, not a favourable arrangement of circumstances. But it is my friendship with Jesus, which any man can have, and with which any man can endure, and be at once both as good an Epicurean as Epicurus, and as good a Stoic as Zeno. Now turn it over and begin with the other side; not how men think of happiness, but how they think of endurance. Suppose that a man says, "It is hard for me to do my duty, to be dutiful and faithful. I suppose I must just nerve myself to it and go to it as a necessity." He and you are apt to think he is very brave, and is acting just in the right spirit. You let him go off in that way, and even give him your encouragement. But the gospel never left a man in that way. It never told a man to go and do a thing because he had to do it, and had better make the best of it and go with a good grace. But it preaches Jesus as Paul preached Him to the Stoics as well as Epicureans. "Do it, bear it, with Jesus and for Jesus. Go to it out of no necessity, but for the love of the Lord, who sets and leads the toil or suffering, and has borne so much for you. Can you not deny self for Him and His commands?" As the gospel gives no effeminate happiness, so now it gives no bitter bravery, no dreary courage, but a joyful endurance that is happier than any earthly delight in selfish pleasures; and the two sides of life are one in that preaching of Jesus which Paul brought to Stoics and Epicureans. But Paul gave them another teaching—"the Resurrection"; another motive, not only a Divine Person to love, but a Divine future to reach. Enjoyment and endurance had become simply different ways of getting through the present world, and they knew nothing else. The Epicurean said, "This is all there is; let us try to enjoy it as we can." The Stoic said, "This is all I know of; let us try to bear it as we must." But enjoyment and endurance are two very different things when the Resurrection is announced to them, and the Epicureans and the Stoics both encounter Paul. A present opening into a future changes both of them. See what it does for happiness. It makes it no longer the happiness of present possession, but of anticipation and preparation. It makes it active and brave. It is no longer the happiness of a man who sits in the midst of his gathered harvest and eats of his fruits luxuriantly. It is the happiness of one who is enduring the care and toil of preparation and exposure in view of a future harvest. And see on the other side how Paul's truth of a resurrection changed endurance. It is no longer a bit of stern, proud resolution not to give up, to laugh bitterly and bear it hopelessly, but it is a bravery that is happy also in the great hope of result, a crown laid up, a prize at the end of the race. That alone sends cheerful sunlight through the workshop of life, the knowledge that it is a preparation for a Divine future. Do you not believe that Peter went to his preaching, after he learnt that Christ had risen, much more happily than he went to his fishing when he thought Christ was dead, and that he had just to go back and win his daily bread in the old dreary way? One was endurance with a rich future of results, the other was endurance under a mere present load of necessity. The one was happiness, also, the other was bitterness.

So the glad light of a resurrection makes the Christian Stoic as light-hearted as the happiest of Epicureans. So life's two sides help each other, and it is both sweet and strong. (*Frederick Brooks.*)

Vers. 21–31. **Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill.**—*Novelty attractive:*—Yes, the people gathered in crowds round the statue, and looked at it again and again. It was not the finest work of art in the city, nor the most intrinsically attractive. Why, then, did the citizens of Verona stand in such clusters around the effigy of Dante on that summer's evening? Do you guess the reason? It was a *fête* in honour of the poet. No, you are mistaken; it was but an ordinary evening, and there was nothing peculiar in the date or the events of the day. You shall not be kept in suspense; the reason was very simple; the statue was new; it had, in fact, only been unveiled the day before. Every one passes Dante now, having other things to think of; the citizens are well used to his solemn visage, and scarcely care that he stands among them. Is not this the way of men? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Novelties and how to regard them:*—"Did you not say that there was a green rose in this place? There are many lovely flowers here, but I had rather see the green rose than anything else." So said a visitor as he stood in a garden where palms, and aloes, and all manner of rare plants, from many lands, were to be seen in perfection; and we should not be surprised if our reader, in like case, were to make the same observation. Yet, when the green rose was seen, it was at once denounced as nothing at all desirable, not a tenth as beautiful as a red or white rose. Just so, there are many folks in this world who must see that which is special, *outré*, unusual; yet, when they see this freak of nature, or of grace, they turn back to the more usual order of good things with considerable relief, for they feel that "the old is better." It is a pity when a man, especially a preacher, is merely a green rose, with a name for being something remarkable, but with no special excellence with which to maintain a reputation. He attracts only for a moment, but sustains no permanent attention, for there is hardly as much about him as there is in the ordinary unpretending teacher of the gospel. Those wanderers who are always running all over the world after green roses, are by no means so wise as those who are content with the perfume and colour of that flower which grows over their own porch, whether it be red or white. The affectation of the unusual is a trick of the charlatan; the craving after it is the weakness of the shallow-minded. Yet, be it noted, that we do not wish to depreciate the green rose. You see we have almost fallen into that unfairness, but the fault was not intentional. We are glad to have seen it, for as a green rose it has charms of its own. Yet this eagerness to see it, this passing over of lovelier objects, this crying up of one beauty above another, inevitably leads to an undervaluing of that which has obtained undeserved prominence. Your foolish partiality has made your favourite a target for excessive criticism; but we will not yield to the temptation. God has made the green rose, and He makes nothing amiss. Your remarkable friend has his excellencies, and God be thanked for them. Your eccentric preacher has his own adaptations for usefulness. Because you cry him up, we are not going to cry him down. Let each rose display its own colour, and let each man be himself, and let the Lord be glorified in all. (*Ibid.*) *Paul at Athens:*—I. THE AUDIENCE. 1. Jews. The place where he made his first public appearance as a teacher was the synagogue; and his first audience was composed of Jews and devout persons. This was in accordance with the usual apostolic custom of visiting the Jewish place of worship first, and making it the starting-point for more extended labours. Nothing is said about the nature or result of his intercourse with his brethren, save that he disputed with them. He would remind them of their splendid opportunities of bearing witness for God in the pagan city. 2. Common people. Leaving the synagogue, and coming to the Agora or market-place, the apostle had to mingle with a different class, and the subject of discussion would also be different. The Agora of Athens must not be associated with what is called the market-place of a modern town. It was, indeed, the centre of public life, where business was transacted, where busy men moved to and fro, and idlers loitered about. But it was more than that, it was a space decorated with architectural beauties, an attractive place of resort for all classes of the community eager to listen to instruction or hear the news. It was a place where orators and statesmen, poets and artists used to meet for encouragement and stimulus in their several callings. The appearance of a foreigner among such a people, especially if he seemed sociable and talkative, would soon attract a crowd expecting to hear something new. The daily visits of the apostle to the Agora would afford him

ample opportunities of proclaiming new truths in the idol city. 3. Philosophers. The philosophers who encountered him were the Epicureans and the Stoics, both of whom had their schools in the vicinity of the Agora. (1) Epicureans. This sect took its name from Epicurus, who opened a school for the teaching of his philosophy in a garden in Athens; hence his followers were sometimes styled the "Philosophers of the Garden." Epicurus taught that the chief end of man was the attainment of pleasure or happiness; and the way to gain it was the removal of every cause of pain or anxiety. A sound body and a tranquil mind constituted the ideal of Epicurean bliss. The main business of life was to raise the mind above cares. Such was the original aim of this school of philosophy; but its later disciples allowed grosser ideas to enter, and pleasure degenerated into the gratification of the appetites. There was no Creator, and no moral government. There were indeed deities, but they lived in undisturbed tranquillity: serene above the turmoil of the world, careless of mankind. The attainment of bliss like theirs was the main business of man's life on earth. (2) Stoics. The other sect that encountered Paul was the Stoics, so named because Zeno its founder held his meetings in a building called the *Stoa* or porch. This system of philosophy is regarded as a nearer approximation to Christianity than the Epicurean, inasmuch as it seems to possess a glimmering of the Divine Fatherhood, and forestalls the Christian truth that goodness is indispensable to happiness. But while it recognises God as the Author of all, it does so in a Pantheistic sense, as if God were everything and everything God. The God of the Stoic is not a distinct personality, but an all-pervading spirit, inseparable from the works of his hands. And not only so, but he, and all his works, are under a pre-ordained decree amounting almost, if not altogether, to fatalism. Everything, indeed, is the result of Fate, and freedom of will consists in bowing to Fate. The man who yields most completely to this iron law is the perfect man. The aim of this system was to produce a passionless conformity to Fate. The pursuit of this end engendered apathy or indifference to everything alike pleasurable and painful. Such was the array of diversified opinion that Paul had to combat, and he nobly vindicated his trust as a Christian teacher in the face of pagan enlightenment. His experience of men, and his knowledge of philosophy, gave him special fitness to discharge the mission that Providence had laid upon him. 4. Public meeting on Mars' hill. To speak on this venerated spot was a distinction reserved for the foremost orators, and Paul's promotion to that distinction showed the profound impression he had made. The summit of Mars' hill was associated in the Athenian mind with solemn and venerable scenes. There sat the most august of assemblies, to dispense justice and confer on religion. The Areopagite court was the supreme tribunal of Athens on social, political, and religious questions. The judges sat in the open air, and their seat on the summit of the rock was reached by a flight of steps. Somewhere on this reserved and hallowed eminence the apostle took his stand; and whether he was there on his defence, as some suppose, or simply for convenience in addressing a large assembly, no spot could have been more suitable for a discussion on the mysteries of religion. II. THE DISCOURSE. It was no easy task adequately to address the assemblage that gathered to hear him. What theme could be chosen to suit all and benefit all? Their motives were manifold and their tastes diverse. There were the scoffing Jew and the wisdom-loving Greek, the refined Athenian and the rude provincial, the sceptical philosopher and the unsophisticated stranger, the contented Epicurean and the passionless Stoic. We will now listen to the apostle as he attempts to lift his heathen audience out of their ignorance into the knowledge of the true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent. 1. Creator. He begins by setting forth "the unknown God" as the Creator of the world. "God made the world and all things therein." This was an idea entirely new to the speculative minds or the ancient world, and the prominence here given to it shows that, in Paul's estimation, it lay at the foundation of every true system of religion. It was idle to talk of worship if the Being worshipped was not raised above the worshippers by such qualities and attributes as inspired reverence and trust. So that Paul's statement of the fundamental principle of Theism dealt a fatal stab at the views of ancient philosophy on the origin of the world. There could be no compromise between positions so radically at variance; and while philosophies change with the changing generations, the Christian position remains the same as stated from apostolic lips eighteen centuries ago—"God made the world and all things therein." 2. Governor. Advancing a step, the apostle announces the unknown God as the Governor of the world: "He hath made all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the

times appointed and the bounds of their habitation." Here too there was a sharp contrast between revealed truth and the tenets of the schools. Chance, or Fate, said ancient philosophy, appoints to each nation and race its time and place in the world. No, said Paul, there is one presiding Deity, who not only set the world in motion, and gave everything in it life, but who keeps it going and sustains all life, assigning to each man and nation the sphere they are to fill and the length of their stay. The all-controlling providence of God, indeed, follows from the fact of creation. How grand the conception! God marshalling the nations of the earth one after another on the stage of time, appointing their seasons, their work, and the bounds of their habitation, and then withdrawing them when their work is done! 3. Judge. The apostle further declares the unknown God to be the Judge of all men. "He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness." Here is another aspect of the Divine character and work, which carries our thoughts forward to the close of the present constitution of things, just as the reference to creation recalled their beginning. 4. Father. This is another aspect in which the unknown God is set forth. "In Him we live, and move, and have our being, as certain also of your own poets have said, For we also are His offspring." If the ideas of creation, superintendence, and responsibility were unknown to the ancients, much less was the Divine Fatherhood. The quotation referred to does not prove that they recognised God as Father save in the Stoical sense. Cleanthes, one of the poets quoted from, was a Stoic, and Paul, in citing him, not only showed his acquaintance with Greek literature, but his willingness to take up common ground with his hearers whenever that was possible. In doing so, he doubtless gained for himself a more respectful hearing. He adopted the language of the Stoics, but put upon it a Christian meaning. Taking our position, then, in the world as God's children, we can view everything in a different light, no longer repelled by the unapproachable majesty of a Great Creator, but drawn by His parental love. The works of His hand also will have an additional interest for us. 5. Is God knowable? This is the question to which the whole argument was leading up, and the answer is in the affirmative. The main purpose of Paul's reasoning was to show the Athenians that He whom they styled the "unknown God" could be known if they sought Him aright. Though the Divine Being was for a long time pleased to draw a veil over His character and modes of working, it was not intended that He should for ever remain unknown. Indeed, all the arrangements of His providence were such as to lead men to the knowledge of Him. III. THE APPLICATION. The apostle did not content himself with laying down great general principles. Like a practical man, he applied them. And in order to insure success it will be observed that throughout this masterly exposition there is an evident desire to carry his hearers along with him, so that they might be without excuse if they continued ignorant of God. Having thus laid down a few broad principles, he goes on to apply them to the religion and life of the people. 1. Idolatry. The first application is to idol-worship, in which the Athenians prided themselves. It required no small courage and tact to assail with effect such a deep-rooted custom in its very hot-bed. The inference was irresistible. The invisible Godhead cannot be represented in visible symbols; and even though it could, every such effort is here condemned because it is a dishonour to God. Besides, we do not need it any more than a child needs the help of an image to love its parents; and we ought not to attempt it, because we have a personal God and Father, who is near to every soul that seeks Him. Moreover all such externals are not only not helps to spiritual worship, but may become a positive hindrance. 2. Repentance. The next application which the apostle makes of his subject is to repentance, or the need of an inward change, which was never contemplated by the ancient religions. Their whole history was an acknowledgment of impotence to effect such a change, or satisfy the burdened heart. 3. Jesus and the resurrection. One practical question still remained. How were they to find favour with this just and holy God? The answer to this question brings us to the climax of this trenchant appeal. There was only one way of return to God, and that not through images of silver and gold, but through Him who is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His Person. If they must have an image of the invisible God, they had it in the person of His Incarnate Son, who was dead and is alive again, and clothed with judicial authority. IV. THE RESULT. It has often been pointed out that the saving impression made by Paul on this occasion was disappointingly small. Nor need this excite surprise, when we reflect on the peculiar character of the discourse, and especially the sensuous habits of the Greek mind, its philosophic culture and pride of intellect. The haughty cultured

Greek would not readily yield himself to the teaching of a rude barbarian. It is seldom that we are able to see the results of our work for Christ in this world, and no doubt the great apostle never saw on earth the fruits of that day's work. 1. Some mocked. The philosophic mind of Athens would not bend to the simplicity of the gospel. 2. Others procrastinated. They had a passing glimpse of the falseness and hollowness of the present, and they thought the matter worthy of more serious consideration. 3. A few believed. We know the names of only two —Dionysius, a judge of the Areopagite court, and a woman named Damaris, of whom we are told nothing. (*D. Merson, B.D.*) *Paul's sermon on Mars' hill*:— He "declares" to them God—I. IN RELATION TO THE UNIVERSE IN GENERAL. As— 1. The Creator of the universe: "God that made the world," &c. This would strike at once against the Epicureanism which regarded the universe as springing from a fortuitous concourse of atoms—the work of chance: and against the Stoicism, which regarded the universe as existing from eternity. 2. The Ruler of the universe: "He is Lord of heaven and earth." The universe is not like a great machine built to manage itself, it is an order of things kept in being and harmony by the unremitting agency of the Creator. 3. The Life of the universe: "He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things" (*cf.* ver. 28). The deductions which the apostle draws from this are irresistible. (1) That God is unlocalised. "He dwelleth not in temples made with hands." (2) That God is independent. "Neither is worshipped with men's hands as though He needed anything." The heathens thought their gods needed their services. II. IN RELATION TO MANKIND IN PARTICULAR. 1. He gave to all mankind a unity of nature. "Made of one blood all nations of men." There are immense diversities subsisting between the European, the Mongolian, the Hottentot races that have led many scientists to conclude that they have descended from various stocks. Without touching on arguments of a scientific kind, we ground our belief chiefly—(1) On mental resemblances. The faculties of thinking, loving, hating, fearing, hoping, worshipping, self-commending, self-condemning, are common to the race. (2) On Scriptural statements. There is not a single passage in the Bible to suggest a doubt as to the homogenity of the race, and the descent from one pair. The most brilliant names in science have maintained the unity of the race: Buffon, Linnæus, Soemmering, and Cuvier, in natural history; Blumenbach, Müller, and Wagner, in anatomy; Pritchard, Latham, Pickering, among ethnologists; Adeling, W. von Humboldt, and Bunsen, among philologists; and Alexander von Humboldt, "at whose feet all science had laid down its treasures." 2. He appointed to all mankind their boundary in life. "And hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation." There is a boundary for every man in relation to—(1) The place of his existence. The sphere which individuals occupy is a sphere which God has appointed. Every man has an orbit of his own, and that orbit is appointed by Him. The same with nations. Nations have their geographic boundary, and these have been drawn by heaven. Though they may proximately grow out of the diversity of men's organisations, customs, laws, habits, still God hath made them. (2) Time. Men and nations have their day, and the length of that day even to the minute is determined. There is no room for chance in human history. 3. He requires from all mankind the recognition of His existence. "That they should seek the Lord," &c. (1) Man's distance from God. This distance is moral, and is to be overcome by effort on man's part. That they should seek the Lord. (2) God's nearness to man. This utterance is so pregnant as to require a separate discourse. 4. He is the Father of all mankind. "We are all His offspring." 5. He demands repentance from all (ver. 30). (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Paul's sermon on Mars' hill*:—I. GOD THE CREATOR. Paul shows this "unknown" Deity to be "the God that made the world," &c. He was unlike the other gods in these respects—1. There was no limit to His power. For none of the gods did the Athenians claim the power of universal creation. One could do one thing, and another something else, but this God was the maker of the world and all things in it. 2. There was no limit to His dominion. "Being Lord of heaven and earth." Other deities were supreme only in certain localities, or under certain localities, or under certain circumstances, but this God was everywhere, and always Master. 3. There was no limit to His dwelling-place. "Dwelleth not in temples made with hands." The whole universe was His sanctuary. II. GOD THE GIVER. 1. His independency. "Neither is served by men's hands," &c. Other deities, according to their notions, were hungry, and needed to be fed, and were therefore brought costly offerings of food and drink. 2. His outgiving. "Seeing He Himself giveth," &c. God was the Giver, instead of being the

Receiver—like the other deities that were worshipped. The Creator could not be dependent upon the creature. III. GOD THE FATHER. "For we are also His offspring." 1. The brotherhood of men. To the Athenians this was no palatable thought. Proud of their culture and intellectual superiority, they superciliously divided the world into Greeks and "barbarians." Paul set forth this doctrine by showing—(1) The unity of the nations. "He made of one every nation of men." They were not sprung from different sources, but from one source. They were not made of different blood, but of one blood. Having but one Father, the human race is one family. (2) The cause of the creation of nations. "That they should seek God," &c. God created men that they might adore Him. He blessed them with life that they might bless Him. He hungers for their love as a father hungers for the love of his children. 2. The Fatherhood of God. (1) The fact. "For we are also His offspring." To a heathen audience Paul does not quote from the Scriptures, but from one of their own authorities. Truth from any source is truth, and it is best to use that which will find the quickest acceptance. (2) The obligation. "We ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold," &c. God who made living, seeing, breathing, speaking men, how could He Himself be like those lifeless, sightless, breathless, speechless idols? IV. GOD THE JUDGE. 1. The time of repentance. The "times of ignorance" are gone by. God cannot overlook sin any longer on the plea that one does not know. 2. The day of judgment. That day is surely coming. Men then will be judged according to the deeds done in the body. It will be a day of terror to the wicked—a day of rejoicing for the righteous. 3. The Judge. The world once judged Christ—the time is coming when Christ will judge the world. Christ is the Saviour now—the Judge by and by. 4. The people to be judged. They were in the audience before Paul—they are in the audience of every minister of the gospel now. How did those act who were before Paul? (1) "Some mocked." Some now mock at the preacher, or at sacred things, knowing their sacredness. (2) Others did, as the majority of hearers do now—they put off deciding for the salvation of their souls. (3) But there were a few who closed with the offer of salvation. In every revival there are a few who get ready for the day of judgment. But who shall be able to characterise the folly of those who continue to walk in the way of destruction? (*M. C. Hazard.*) **Some new thing.**—*Some new thing*:—A manifest physical, intellectual, and moral weakness was strangely blended with an intense eagerness for novelty. We ordinarily associate a desire for new things with progress, but here that desire is associated with that which is the reverse of progress. This warrants the statement that a desire for something new is not necessarily indicative of progress. Indeed, it may be indicative of regress. It may not be an earnest desire for something better, but a mere restless, uneasy craving for change. To seek the new simply because it is the new, and apart from any consideration of its intrinsic worth, is to go backward rather than forward. I would not disparage legitimate desire for progress. Only an ignorant bigot will assert that "that which is new is not true, and that which is true is not new." Some new things are true, and some old things are false. Let reverent investigation go on. Let it be accorded the widest liberty. To hinder it were intellectual and moral treason. But the contention now is that progress and restlessness are not synonymous terms. It is not the seeking of "some new thing" which is wrong, but the "doing nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing." Indeed, so far from being good, it is evil. It indicates a fevered condition of the system—an unhealthy and morbid state. It begets instability of character and purpose. It leads to superficial ideas and modes of thinking. It withdraws attention from the tried and settled, and directs it to the flotsam and jetsam of daily happenings, the real importance of which is hardly ever discerned till time has them in their true perspective. Much occurred before our time which is of inestimable importance. Men need to-day, not less of the new, but more of the old, a wiser perception of its relative worth. More seriously, this craving for something new often dupes men into the acceptance of old errors. As a matter of fact, most new things are comparatively worthless, not all, but most. Originality is rare. What we call originality is usually eccentricity, and eccentricity nearly always means a screw loose in the intellectual or moral machinery. If an alleged new thing proves to be really good, the presumption is that it is not as new as it was supposed to be. But it not infrequently happens that the so-called new idea is an old error. We are told almost daily that modern thought has shown a belief in miracles to be unreasonable, and yet there is hardly a modern objection to miracles which was not anticipated by Celsus, who lived in the second century. Conversely,

the presumpton is that the old and established ideas are true. Not always, I grant. I would not fall into the opposite error. I would not question the reality or the value of the many great achievements of the present age. But it is a fair presumption that the old is the true. This was so of Athens in the time of Paul. The past was glorious, but the Athenians of St. Paul's day, with all their passion for hearing or telling some new thing, added nothing to the stock of the world's knowledge. For all that we owe to Athens, we go centuries back of those babblers. All history teaches us that progress is as likely to consist in getting back to old standards as in creating new ones. There is real ground for the apprehension that we may become a volatile people, lacking in stability and weight of character. We see this in literature, in the demand for new books, and in the neglect of old ones of tried value. "Robert Elsmere" is a case in point. The book is simply a dressing-up, in popular narrative style, of the stalest and shallowest rationalistic objections to Christianity. Great was the commotion which it excited! Dire were the prophecies of the ruin which it would accomplish in the Church! We see it in science, in the haste with which new theories are accepted and promulgated as facts. Indeed, no matter how wild a theory is, there are always multitudes who are ready to seize it, and to proclaim that all existing institutions must be reorganised in harmony with it. We see this same craving for new things in every-day life, in the restless moving of people from place to place, in the frequency of business changes, in the small talk of society, in the rage of speculation. It seems to be the great object in life of many people to devise something novel, "something we've never had before," the utility of the thing devised being usually a secondary consideration. And we see it especially in religion. Many people do not like the old ideas and doctrines which, after all that can be said, are those that are fairly deducible from Holy Scripture and the faithful preaching of which has wrought such glorious moral and religious changes in the world. They want something new, and the minister who gratifies them is sure to have a large, though unsubstantial following. Multitudes are hurried hither and thither by their craving for change. Their religious convictions are those of the last book they have read or the last person they have talked with. Suffer me in conclusion to make two additional remarks. 1. A disposition to undervalue established ideas or institutions is a sign of a weak mind. A misconception is prevalent at this point. There are some, particularly among the young, who say that they will not accept anything which they have not personally investigated and found to be true; and they pride themselves upon that position, and deem it an evidence of intellectual strength and independence. As a matter of fact, it is simply an evidence of intellectual conceit or moral debility. Has the world learned nothing in all these thousands of years? Has it proved nothing to be true? Does the endorsement of ages create no favourable presumption? A sensible man will no more refuse to become a Christian because he has not had time to investigate for himself the history and claims of Christianity, than he will refuse to become a citizen of the country in which he was born and reared until he has satisfied himself by years of study that the institutions of that country are better than the institutions of other countries. He who declines to avail himself of an electric car, because he has not yet learned what electricity is, is not a wise man, but a fool. 2. In this restless age we need a progressive conservatism, a willingness to accept the new when it is the true, but a holding fast to the old, which has demonstrated its right to be. This gospel which we preach, and in which lies the hope of the race, is not a new gospel. And we love it because it is old, because time has not been able to weaken it or exposure to tarnish it—because all the attacks of earth and hell have not been able to overthrow it. (*A. J. Brown.*)

Ver. 23. **I found an altar with this inscription, To the unknown God. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you.**—*Before the altar of the unknown God*:—1. What was there in Athens to which Paul could appeal? To Jewish prophecy? No one held them in esteem. Should he begin with repentance, faith, Jesus, and judgment? No one would understand his message. Ought he now to overthrow these altars? But destruction is not construction. Ought the nothingness of the gods to be exposed to ridicule? Enlightenment that presents the stone of unbelief for the husks of superstition may train its subjects to doubt, but not to hope. To the apostle the heathen world seemed the groping of a man who is blind. But no man of feeling ever makes sport of a blind man's groping, or strikes the last coin out of a beggar's hand. Paul sought through the streets of Athens to see whether, somewhere, he could not still discover a trace of the footsteps of the living God, some

pieces of the golden thread by which to lead these misled wanderers back into communion with God—and, behold, he has found something: here is an altar with the inscription, To the unknown God: a discovery which affords him as much joy as when he once picked up the words of the Greek poet we find him quoting here. That had seemed to him a feather which the angel, flying through heaven with the gospel, dropped into heathen lands. To the weak as weak, a Greek to the Greeks, the apostle explains this inscription to his hearers with most becoming deference. 2. This altar is a testimony to a grave defection, a longing that impels to seek, a hope fulfilled in Christ. Let us ask—I. BY WHAT MEANS THE LIVING GOD BECAME UNKNOWN? 1. The features have been almost obliterated, but whose image has been stamped upon the souls of men?—Not from the clod, nor from the ape—we are also of His offspring! "God hath made of one blood all nations of men," &c. One blood, therefore one family, one origin, one conscience, one hope: to seek God, every one's mission; to find God, every one's goal! 2. But if we live, and move, and have our being in Him, and if creation manifests His invisible power and Divinity—whence all this uncertain groping, until, brought to a stand, children of men cling to wood and stone? Whence the blindness that changes the clear mirror of nature into a thick veil, whence the insanity that desires to imprison the God over all heaven and earth within temples and images? Paul describes the lamentable process in Rom. i. 21–24. Moral aberration always precedes the spiritual. Sinful inclinations in the heart are the fruitful lap of error. Doubt is a tendency of the character. Strange that amidst this jumble of rage, sensuality, love of money, &c., any room should remain for an altar dedicated even to the unknown God! II. WHEN IS AN ALTAR ERECTED TO THE UNKNOWN GOD? Just as in an impoverished family some jewel is preserved as a reminder of better days, so, in Athens, this one altar was a testimony of impoverishment. Israel could erect an Ebenezer: but this altar is only a monument, confessing: "Hitherto have we gone astray." Its erection indicates home-sickness. According to a tradition, the Athenians built this altar when a plague seemed to threaten never to leave their walls:—there must, they concluded, be some other god whose anger is dangerous, whose favour of importance, to whom therefore it was necessary to rear an altar. 1. It is an hour of fatigue at midnight, the candle has burned down low, and an investigator is dipping into the depths and not finding the goodly pearl, and growing more and more weary, cries, "Boundless Nature, where shall I comprehend thee? Ye sources of all life, for which my withered breast so longs—ye flow, ye quench, and yet I thirst in vain!" Such imploring, outstretched arms—what are they but an altar erected to the unknown God? 2. Now enter yon brilliant room. Surely no sorrow can obtrude here. Nevertheless sighs from an inner chamber announce that "Death has no respect for riches." A child is lying here sick unto death. Why has the anxious father no eye for the pictures that look down from the walls? Why does he not open some of his favourite poets? Why does he avoid that book which convinced him yesterday that there is room for neither miracles nor prayer? The anguish-stricken father throws himself on his knees—before whom? Which god can support him to bear this threatened loss? Oh ye pictures, books, money piles, ye idols that have eyes but no pupils, arms but no help!—at this moment, an altar rises in a corner of the room, faintly traced, "To the unknown God!" 3. Stranger, you have strayed into this house of God—do you know to what end? Do you know that your wandering and your sojourning, your childhood and your manhood, your solitude and your society, your sorrows and your joys, have all been working together to lead you to seek the Lord if haply you might feel and find Him, and to make that dusty altar to the unknown God in the corner of your heart one of reminder and of prophecy? III. IN WHOM DOES GOD MAKE HIMSELF KNOWN? Who shall win earth back to heaven, and reconcile and harmonise divinity with humanity? who is the man in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells, and whose body is a temple, the only one worthy of Divinity? Through Christ the weather-beaten inscription, "To the unknown God," is changed for "To the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." You are advancing to meet this unknown God as a revealed God in Christ Jesus. How? As a Saviour or a Judge? (*R. Koegel, D.D.*) *The unknown God:*—1. Athens was a city illustrious for its learning. But during the century or two preceding the Christian era, intellectual decay had set in, and instead of investigating the true, the people were raving after the new. The distinction between true and false philosophy in every age consists mainly in this—the one loves the new more than the true, the other loves the true more than the new. At this time Paul went to Athens, and the everlasting gospel with him; and in it

there is a perfect combination of the true and the new. He declares unto them the unknown God:—1. IN RELATION TO NATURE. 1. As Creator of the universe. The Greek mind had often but ineffectually grappled with the mysterious problem of the origin of the world. Every school of ancient thought believed in the eternity of matter. Of a creation out of nothing the ancient heathen had not the crudest idea. Mankind seemed to be entirely indebted to Divine revelation for it. God created—(1) The matter of the world. Plato recognised God as the "Arranger of the Hyle." But whence issued the "Hyle"? Plato is mute. But St. Paul teaches that God not only built the world, but made the materials likewise. A child may learn more in five minutes in the first verse of the Bible than recondite sages in their protracted studies. "Through faith we understand the worlds were framed by the word of God." (2) Its laws. Laws are so many windows through which we can glance at God. But over these windows infidelity draws the blinds. Men praise each other for discovering these laws, but are slack to give glory to God for making them. But what is the discovery of a law compared with its invention? 2. Having created the world, God is still present in it as its Sovereign Lord and Director. "Seeing He giveth to all life and breath and all things." The Stoics did not theoretically deny the Divine existence, but they did deny the Divine government. They believed in fate; hence their reckless indifference to all the ills and favours of life. In our day also, law does everything, God nothing. Ancients and moderns alike, after putting the extinguisher on the sun, feel constrained to light a candle. The Bible teaching, however, is clear and unambiguous. Whilst we must insist upon the radical distinction between God and the world, we must beware lest we make this distinction separation. From these truths two valuable lessons are deduced—(1) That "God dwelleth not in temples made with hands." (2) That "He is not worshipped or served with men's hands as though He needed anything." We do not give to Him, He gives to us. "Every good gift and every perfect gift," &c. II. IN HIS RELATION TO MAN. 1. God made man—a truth strikingly new to the Greeks. The Greeks thought that they had grown from the soil. The idea of God cannot be degraded without at the same time debasing the idea of man. The same theory practically is advocated now. God is involved in nature according to the fashionable Pantheism of the age; and man is evolved out of nature according to its anthropology. The apostle further proclaims the unity of the human race. The Greeks viewed themselves as the aristocracy of the world, separated even in origin from all other nations, whom they contemptuously treated as barbarians. 2. God rules men. He did not fling them upon the world to be the sport of chance, but "determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitation." The one object, however, was that men "might seek the Lord, if haply they might find Him." All events were so disposed as to be helpful to mankind in their search after God. We imagine that were the circumstances arranged a little differently, it would result in the spiritual advantage of the nations. But St. Paul declares otherwise. 3. God is the Father of man (ver. 28). God is only the Maker of nature. The white man carries about him God's image in ivory, and the coloured man in ebony, but none the less an image for that. How striking the genealogy in Luke iii.: the son of David, . . . the Son of God. From this homogeneity of nature between man and God the apostle makes a practical inference (ver. 29). Athens abounded in idols, but none of them properly represented God. The Divine likeness cannot be stamped on gross matter, it must have intelligence for its canvas. Consequently man's fault has always been in seeking God among material objects. But inasmuch as we are partakers of His nature, it cannot be that "He is far from any one of us." (1) As to place. There is a sense in which the sun is over ninety millions of miles distant; but there is a sense in which it is nearer us than any other created object. Its beams pierce our frame, its light enters the eye, its warmth pervades the body. "In it we live and move and have our being." In like manner God may be affirmed to be infinitely removed from us; but there is a sense in which He is nearer every one of us than any other being can possibly be (vers. 27, 28). (2) As to His nature. His spirituality and not His omnipresence is the leading idea. In our own spirituality can we best understand the nature of the Deity. 4. God is the Redeemer of men. From the Fatherhood to the Redeemership the stride is not so very great. "And the times of this ignorance God overlooked"—*i.e.*, did not directly interfere. Not that He entirely disregarded the heathen world. That would be a flat contradiction of ver. 26. God often interposed in their geographical and political history, but He left them to work out their religious problems for themselves. The "now" is significant of a change of policy. It is

not a matter of no consequence whether you embrace Christianity or not. "He commandeth you." The gospel comes with all the authority of law. You have broken other commandments, will you persist in breaking this also? Paul's hearers had been all their lifetime endeavouring to atone for sin; now, however, they are bidden not to atone but to repent. "Every man everywhere." The gospel embraces every human being. None are too high to need repentance; none are too low to have it. 5. God is the Judge of men (ver. 31). Paul was now standing on the site of the most venerable court in the whole world. Here Mars and Orestes were tried, and here Socrates was unjustly condemned. What therefore more natural than that Paul should wind up his oration by a solemn reference to the judgment seat of Christ? Yes, there is an awful hereafter, notwithstanding the creed of Epicureans. Oh, the madness of those who spend their day of grace in reckless indifference, saying, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die!" (*J. Cynddylan Jones, D.D.*) *The unknown God:*—In this paragraph we have a graphic though brief description of the character of the men of Athens. "For all the Athenians and strangers which were there, spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing." And when the love of the new gains ascendancy over the love of the true, degeneration is inevitable. The distinction between true and false philosophy, in every age, consists mainly in this: the one loves the new more than the true, the other loves the true rather than the new. But the religious aspect of the city is depicted in more lamentable colours still—"the city was wholly given to idolatry" (on the margin, "full of idols"). Idolatry was also flourishing in this city; but it seemed now as though it had received a new impulse. Why? Because their faith in idols was stronger? No; but because it was weaker. What if they are only the creation of my own over-heated imagination? The suspicion was so humiliating, so blasting in its effects, so awfully barren and withering, that he strenuously attempted to conceal it from himself; he tried to forget his religious bankruptcy in spiritual intoxication. That motto awakes a distinct echo in the heart of every unregenerate man; there also is an altar with the inscription To the unknown God! At this time Paul went to Athens, and the everlasting gospel with him; and in it there is a perfect combination of the true and the new. Glad tidings, true news, is its distinctive appellation. He declares unto them the unknown God—1. In His relation to nature. 2. In His relation to man. These two relations exhaust our knowledge of God; we know Him in none other. These were the topics held in dispute by the philosophers, and to which the Athenians now listen with abated breath. I. GOD IN RELATION TO NATURE. 1. He is the Creator of nature. "God made the world and all things therein." On this point he directs his remarks more especially against the Epicureans—they denied creation. "God made the world." As we look around us we observe that nature is divisible into matter and laws, matter and truths. The Athenian mind had been often grappling with the mysterious problem touching the origin of all things; but notwithstanding all the energy and time expended to solve it, it continued to be shrouded in as much darkness as ever. History, indeed, seems to testify that the human mind, left to its own resources, could never grasp the idea of creation, properly so called. The Epicureans denied creation, and looked upon the world as the effect of the fortuitous concourse of atoms, and these atoms they believed to be uncreated and eternal. Of a creation out of nothing, the ancient heathens had not the crudest idea. Indeed, mankind are indebted to the Bible entirely for it. Not only the work but the idea of creation is Divine. And the truth with which Paul encountered the Epicurean philosophers of old, in the market and on the hill, requires to be reiterated again and again. There is a theory afloat, vindicated by men of unquestionable repute, that sets creation out of nothing among the impossibilities. According to this theory, everything is born. The sun is born, the moon is born, the earth is born. It is averred "We cannot conceive, either on the one hand, nothing becoming something, or on the other, something becoming nothing" (Sir W. Hamilton). The world, therefore, is a Divine evolution? No: says the Bible, it is not an evolution, but a creation. We cannot conceive such an act, say they. Man's conceptions are not God's boundary lines, says the Bible. We cannot explain the process, say they. Then believe the fact, says the Bible. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things that are seen were not made of things which do appear." "God made the world." It existed nowhere before, nor in God, nor in space; it existed in no shape before, nor in germ, nor in development. It is an act of pure creation. As already hinted laws form another important division of nature. Not only God

made the matter of the universe, but also its laws. 2. He is the Lord of nature. "He is Lord of heaven and earth." This truth is addressed more especially to the Stoics—they denied Divine government. They did not deny the existence of the gods; "but they held that all human affairs were governed by fate. Neither did they believe that any good was received from the hands of their gods." This atheistic view the apostle refutes by the heart-inspiring truth that God is the Lord of nature and providence. As the servant is dependent on his master, so is nature on her Lord. What does this imply? That she is not her own governess. Not her own will, but His she follows. Not her own thoughts, but His she expresses. Everything in nature is a manifestation of some thought; but who is it that thinks? Nature herself? No. Fate? No. Who then? God. The sun rises every day to the right moment—who is the thinker? The sun? No; but God. Nature has no thought, no will of her own; she is entirely under the control of God. Neither is she her own support. She lives on the bounty of God, as a child on the table of its father. Nature can originate nothing; she must receive all. Left to her own resources, she would reduce herself to penury in one day. But these truths had a more practical end in view than the refutation of the fallacious theories of philosophers; they were calculated to undermine the idolatrous practices of the populace. "He dwelleth not in temples made with hands." He is the Creator and Lord of nature. What is there in a temple of stones for Him to covet? Were He a forlorn fugitive, an impoverished God, He might be glad of a shelter anywhere. But this is not His condition. He is Lord of heaven and earth, and has the resources of both at His command. "He is not worshipped with men's hands as though He needed anything." The Athenians, in common with all idolaters, supposed religious rites to be established and enacted for God and not for man—for His advantage and not for our benefit. The mistake of the Stoics about God, in respect to nature, was that of all idolaters in respect to religion. They thought it was His prerogative to receive; the apostle teaches it was His property and function to give. "Neither is He worshipped with men's hands as though He needed anything." No; it is not giving, but receiving. As a creature you receive; as a worshipper you receive too. What is your sin? Is it giving too little? No; but receiving too little. II. GOD IN RELATION TO MAN. 1. "He is the Father of man." "We are His offspring." God is the Maker of nature, He is the Father of man; He is the Creator of the brute, He is the Father of man. The popular opinion among the Athenians was, that they were the aboriginals of mankind. But where did they come from? They grew from the earth. According to one of their own writers, "the first men sprung up in Attica, like radishes." And some moderns cherish the opinion, forsooth, that mankind are developed from a tribe of monkeys! Our ancestry has its root in Godhead. Adam is not our first nor our best father, but God. Based on man's Divine sonship are two very important considerations. The first is the universal brotherhood of man. "God hath made of one blood all nations of men." The second truth is the nature of God. "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone." There is a certain resemblance between parent and child; therefore God must be more like men, His children, than any other created object whatsoever. Man possesses reason, will, and intelligence; therefore God must have them in infinite perfection. 2. God is the Saviour of man. "And the times of this ignorance God winked at (overlooked, passed by); but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." 3. He is the judge of man. "For He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained." (*Ibid.*) *The unknown God:*—When he saw that the city was "wholly given to idolatry," *i.e.*, literally covered with idols—*κατείδωλον* referring to the place, not to the people—his spirit was roused; he could no longer keep silence and refrain from proclaiming the message he had come to deliver. Then it chanced that some of the members of the two great philosophic sects, the Epicureans and Stoics, encountered him. Part of these called him a babbler (*σπερμολόγος*), literally a picker-up of small seeds, like a bird, *i.e.*, a collector and retailer of insignificant scraps of information; and others charged him with setting forth strange gods, foreign divinities. I. THE UNKNOWN GOD. There is an unknown God to-day, as certainly as there was in Paul's time; and it is the business of the Christian teacher to declare Him, or set Him forth. In one sense God must always be unknown. The mind of man is finite, and can therefore never comprehend the Infinite. 1. The unknown god of the ancients. It is by no means clear how this altar came to be erected at Athens. By some, it is supposed that Polytheism had

made so many gods by the deification of every human passion, that no more could be thought of; and hence, to cover the whole ground, an additional altar was erected to an unknown god, at the shrine of which the worship should ascend to any possible deity that might have been overlooked. Others suppose that some special benefits had been received by the people, which could not be traced to any of the known gods—hence an altar to the unknown. More probably, however, it arose from some dim conception of a Supreme Being higher than all the gods of mythology, who, while He satisfied a yearning want of the heart, took no hold on the intellect. This would seem to be apparent from Paul's words, that he would declare the very God thus worshipped. In any case, that altar was a tacit but terrible confession of the failure of heathendom. Nowhere perhaps had the intellect risen so high as at Athens. 2. The unknown God of the moderns. Herbert Spencer prates most glibly of the Unknowable, and Huxley worships at its shrine. Tyndal calls religions "forms of force" which must not be permitted to "intrude on the region of knowledge." Matthew Arnold terms God a "stream of tendency by which all things fulfil the law of their being," as though there could be a stream without a source, or things could fulfil any purpose where there was no plan. II. THE RELATION OF THE UNKNOWN GOD TO MAN. It is difficult to understand what relationship we can sustain to the unknown, or at least to learn what the relationship is, if any such there be. Yet those who teach that God is unknown and unknowable recognise some sort of relationship to this unknown Being. The possible relationship may be considered under three distinct heads. 1. Worship. This, in some form or other, is universal. In all ages men have worshipped something. In fact it is difficult to find a stronger instinct in human nature than this one. We have—(1) Worship in ignorance. This is what the Athenians were guilty of. They worshipped without ascribing to the object any definite qualities whatever. (2) Worship of nature. An atheist writing recently in one of the Secularistic journals proposed verbal prayer to nature, and says, "May we not pray or invoke the powers of nature for aid, without any reference to a personal God, calling that power the unconditioned, unknowable Absolute, or what you will; or no name at all? I think so." It is difficult to see what is the object of this prayer, since it is clear that blind forces can neither hear nor answer. But it proves the tendency to worship, even in the atheist. A more mystic form of worship, of an atheistic character, was proposed by the late Professor Clifford, under the name of Cosmic Emotion. The term originated with Mr. Henry Sidgwick; but Professor Clifford used it as a sort of substitute for religion. By it he simply meant the emotion which is called up in the soul when contemplating itself and its moral nature on the one hand, and the mysteries of the universe on the other. But such a worship as this—if worship it can be called—has no cult, and therefore cannot meet the condition required. It is a hollow semblance, nothing more. (3) Worship of abstractions. The Positivists profess to worship humanity in the abstract. What this is, it is difficult very clearly to understand. Humanity in the concrete we know something of, and it is neither exalted enough nor pure enough to satisfy, as an object of worship, the religious nature of man. This form of worship professes to find a cultus in dead heroes and sages. But, to say the least of it, this is a miserable substitute for an Almighty and loving Father in heaven. The worship of nature, or of abstractions, is, after all, but idolatry. Men do not now make their idols of wood or stone, but out of their own wild imaginings. 2. Responsibility. The moral law needs a personal God for its basis. The unknown is no foundation on which to raise a superstructure of ethics. 3. Immortality. Most of those, however, who assert that God is unknown do not believe in a personal immortality at all, but speak of the immortality of the race or of a man's reputation that he may leave behind him. There is no guarantee that the race will remain for ever, if God be taken away; and if there were, such a fact would not meet the wants of humanity. We long for, and aspire after, an eternal personal conscious existence, and nothing less than that can satisfy the soul. III. THE REVELATION OF THE UNKNOWN GOD. "Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you," or set forth unto you. This was Paul's work, to reveal or make known the unknown God. This he was enabled to do by means of—1. The Scriptures. God's real character can only be learnt from the Bible. 2. The Incarnation. This is the only means by which God can be really and truly known. "No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." He hath declared Him in such a manner that the simplest may understand. Do you want to know what God is like? I point you to Christ. There is the revelation

and the Revealer blended in one. (*George Sexton, LL.D.*) *The unknown God*:—The astronomers Le Verrier and Adams, in separate countries at the same time, observing certain motions among the spheres which could not be accounted for by any known cause, concluded that there must be a body not yet discovered somewhere in the regions of space in which the disturbances were observed. Seeking in the direction thus indicated they found the far distant and hitherto unknown world. So Greek philosophy was able, from the appetites and vacancies of the human mind, which all the idols could not satisfy, to determine that there must be some God hitherto from them concealed, to whom these appetites pointed, and without whom they could not be satisfied. Their skill could discover in a general way their need, but they could not by their searching find the missing portion for a human soul. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *The unknown God*:—God is unknown—1. To those who think themselves wise. 2. To those who perform the external acts of worship without seeking God Himself. 3. To those who do not live in Him, but in the world and its lusts. 4. To those who do not desire to find God in Christ. (*Langbein.*) *The unknown God revealed*:—Observe—I. THAT MAN, WHEN LEFT TO THE EFFORTS OF HIS OWN REASON, NEVER DISCOVERS THE CHARACTER OF THE TRUE GOD. The most probable explanation of the inscription is the carefulness of the Athenians not to exclude any God. 1. That there was originally an adequate revelation of God is not properly to be doubted (Rom. i. 20; Psa. xix. 1, 2). In addition to the silent testimony of nature were direct and verbal communications to patriarchs, &c. 2. Nevertheless, the knowledge of God became beclouded, and errors encrouched with fearful rapidity and success. There was a depraved principle in the heart of man urging him to devices, whereby God might be banished from his mind, and his passions set free from control. From this source sprang up idolatry. "They did not like to retain God," &c. (Rom. i. 21–23, 25). 3. This fatal principle which led to the loss of the knowledge of God, prevented it from being restored. Having extinguished the light, it perpetuated the darkness. There were many centuries during which the human intellect was able to open all its resources, and to practise all its powers, but none retraced their steps to the Divine Being. "The world by wisdom knew not God"; "the age of reason" was an age of idolatry, pollution, and despair. 4. With reference to subsequent ages, and our own, the fact and its explanation are the same, as India, China, Africa, &c., testify. If, however, we are pointed to the writings of Deistical philosophers who have professed to argue the existence of God from the light of reason, we are not to be misled by the pretensions of unprincipled plagiarists who have but borrowed the guidance of revelation, without having had the honour to acknowledge it. II. THAT IT IS THE OFFICE OF CHRISTIANITY TO PLACE THE CHARACTER OF THE TRUE GOD IN FULL AND DISTINCT REVELATION. The circumstances just illustrated constituted a necessity for a revelation. Proceeding on this necessity manifestations were given to the patriarchs of the supremacy and grace of the Most High. Then followed the calling of the Jews, the giving of their law, the solemn warnings against idolatry, institutions designed to preserve them from the infection of surrounding nations, and the ministry of the prophets. At length, "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son," and then came the ministry of the apostles. Recognising all this, note —1. That the revelations of God in Christianity are furnished in connection with a method of redemption, from which their clearness and lustre are derived. The purpose of the gospel is to explain and apply a scheme of sovereign mercy by which man is to be redeemed from his apostasy. The existence of such a scheme had been announced immediately after the fall, and was shadowed forth in type and prophecy, and employed, harmonised, and displayed the perfections of God. Hence our Saviour frequently spoke of His work as "glorifying the Father." In the Cross Mercy and Truth meet together, Righteousness and Peace kiss each other, and in that Cross we see that "God is love." 2. That these revelations are designed for diffusion through the world. The earlier dispensations were systems rather of defence than attack, of conservation than conquest. But the gospel was "good tidings . . . to all people." Prophecy announced it as such, tho "propitiation for the sins of the whole world" made it such, and the apostles were sent to preach it as such. III. THAT IT BECOMES THE DISCIPLES OF CHRISTIANITY TO EXERT THEMSELVES FOR THE PROMULGATION AND TRIUMPH OF THEIR RELIGION. The conduct of Paul, whose "spirit was stirred within him" not only to indignation but to service, is an example to all. Consider—1. Reasons which are uniform and permanent in their appeals. The work of promulgating the truth—(1) Has been committed by Christ to His Church as its specific duty. (2) Vindicates and in the

highest measure secures the Divine honour. (3) Imparts exalted happiness to mankind. 2. Reasons which are derived from the peculiarities of our own times—the extraordinary facilities which are now provided for the dissemination of Christian truth. (*J. Parsons.*) *Three books relating to the knowledge of God*:—I. The book of THE WORLD with its two parts—nature and history (vers. 24–26). II. The book of THE HEART with its two parts—reason and conscience (vers. 27, 28). III. The book of SCRIPTURE with its two parts—reason and conscience (vers. 30, 31). (*K. Gerok.*) *Revelation and nature: their witness to God*:—Suppose a scholar searching in some old library were to discover two MSS., which had lain unknown for generations on different shelves. The discoverer examines their contents and is struck with certain peculiarities in the handwriting, which are common to both documents. He also finds that in both there are words and phrases—such as seem the expression of a writer's individuality. Still further, he discovers that many ideas are common to the two pamphlets, and that though different in subject, there is a substratum of thought identical in both. Could he do other than infer that they were the products of the same author? Mere coincidence might account for one or two of these resemblances, but could never explain the great variety and number that are found here. Now the object we have in view is somewhat similar. I. THE SAME ATTRIBUTES WHICH SCRIPTURE ASCRIBES TO GOD ARE TO BE TRACED ALSO IN NATURE. 1. The unity of God. (1) This doctrine runs through the pages of Scripture like a stream of light illumining all things else. Now—(2) Judging from the many religions in the world, one might suppose that nature leads to the conception of many gods. But Polytheism betrays as profound an ignorance of nature as it does of the Divine Being. Let us turn from pagan conceptions to the interpretations of science. All recent discovery is tending to set up one conception of the universe, and that is that one plan is to be discovered, and that one power is working under divers forms. (*a*) See how the two kingdoms, animal and vegetable, correspond, meet each the other's needs, and are evidently parts of one plan. With every breath that we exhale we pour into the atmosphere a gas destructive of animal life. With every inspiration we consume a portion of that element of the atmosphere which is vital to us. But then every vegetable—tree, grass, flower—is absorbing from the air the poisonous carbonic acid and breathing out the vital oxygen. (*b*) But not alone within terrestrial limits is this unity discernible. The spectroscopist has caught the fleeting rays of light from stars and suns, and has wrung from them the confession that these worlds are built up of much the same materials as our own. (*c*) Formerly the various natural forces were regarded as distinct. But experiment has shown that they are one, and are convertible. Electricity can be converted into light, and the light into heat, and heat into motion, or they can be resolved back again, motion into heat, heat into light, light into electricity. What a marvel is this! It is the same power that works everywhere in nature, taking a thousand different shapes; and what is that power but the power of the one God? 2. Every fresh discovery confirms the belief that Infinite Wisdom conceived, executed, and presides over all created things. And the power manifestly pervading the boundless universe is a power so vast that we may well yield to it the title of Omnipotence. 3. When we consider the moral attributes of God, nature yields a feebler testimony than revelation. Nevertheless, though nature needs to be supplemented, its witness coincides with that of Scripture. Take, *e.g.*, the righteousness of God. (1) Though conscience has not always power to compel obedience, it yet sits on the seat of judgment undisputed, and is a convincing evidence of the righteousness of God. For how came man to possess this faculty, which has created a universally prevalent idea of moral obligation? How came man to feel that good is intrinsically superior to evil? The secularist affirms that expediency or the general weal of society has dictated certain courses of action as the wisest and safest, and has dissuaded from others as hurtful to the community. Thus by the power of habit strengthened through the generations, certain actions have come to be regarded as right, others as evil and vicious. And we may grant to this theory a measure of truth. But there is a question farther back. Why has universal experience proved virtue to be conducive to happiness and vice the opposite? The only answer to this must be, that it is in the nature of things, impressed on them by their Creator. (2) And man's inner nature accords with external nature. Wherever we look we find evidence of "a power, not ourselves, making for righteousness." The fall of empires through the corruption of luxury and evil; the prosperity of states whose citizens are virtuous, brave, and true; every life prematurely closed by the ravages of vicious

habits, and every good man's life attests an eternal moral order. Whence, then, this moral constitution? For every effect there must be a cause, and what is in the effect must first have been in the cause. Therefore He who made the world is a Moral Being, and has transferred to His works this moral order, which first existed in Himself. Whatever quality you discover in the work must have been first in the worker. II. THE SAME MODES OF DIVINE OPERATION ARE CLEARLY DISCERNIBLE BOTH IN SCRIPTURE AND NATURE. There is something in a man's work distinguishing it from that of all others, and which is manifest more or loss in all he does. "The style is the man." By his style you recognise an artist's pictures or a writer's articles, though no name be appended to the work. Now there is a style about the Divine works, and this style can be traced both in nature and revelation. Modern science has clearly established that in creation a strict order has been observed. There can be traced a gradual development from lower to higher types of being. And the Bible presents us with a remarkably similar process. In the spiritual education of men a development can be traced. The truths of religion were gradually disclosed, and the world was led on step by step in spiritual culture and enlightenment. Here, then, we have a resemblance of a peculiar kind, which stands out as a distinct evidence of a common origin for both nature and revelation. III. MANY OF THE DIFFICULTIES WITH WHICH SCRIPTURE CONFRONTS US ARE MET ALSO IN NATURE. Take an illustration. The election of the Jewish people to be the recipients of Divine revelation, while the other nations were left in darkness, has often appeared a strange procedure on God's part. Was this consistent with justice and love? The reply to this is that the selection of the Jewish people was not for their own sakes alone, but that through them all families of the earth might be blessed; and that men were not rejected by God simply because they were not Jews. Among all peoples there was light enough to save sincere seekers. A similar election of nations has always characterised God's government of the world. He fixes the bounds of one people on a generous soil, and plants another amid barren snows. He confides to one people to work out some problem on which the world's welfare and progress depend. And for a time that people stand out distinguished by Heaven's favour above all others. To the ancient Greek was given the highest culture of art, to the Roman the highest development of government. To the English race to-day is committed the problem of combining the largest liberty with order and security. (*J. Legge, M.A.*)

Ver. 24. **God.**—All the Indo-European equivalents for God are the same in their ultimate root as the word "day," and signify the brightness of the sky. The Latin *Deus*, the Greek *Theos*, the Sanskrit *Dyaus*, the Welsh *Duw*, and even the English *God*, all come from the same root, signifying the brightness of the sky. This thought has been fixed in the term Jupiter, one of the oldest appellations by which God is known in Europe. Jupiter—what is it? The first syllable *Ju* is the same as the Welsh *Duw*, and means the bright sky. The remaining two syllables mean father. Jupiter is the Latin synonym for the Saxon Sky-Father. As one of our Aryan ancestors stood on the open plain gazing upward, and meditating on the Being behind all phenomena, the Reality at the back of all appearances, he gave expression to the deepest instinct of his nature when he pronounced in articulate language the solemn word "Sky-Father." (*J. C. Jones, D.D.*) **That made the world.**—*God and the universe*:—1. "God that made the world and all things therein." Here is an emphatic denial of all polytheistic and dualistic notions as to the origin and government of the world. 2. "God *made* the world." Here is an emphatic assertion that God is distinct from Nature: it is a product of His plastic hand. 3. God "is *Lord* of heaven and earth"; so that "the lords many," amongst whom the Greeks believed that the presidency and control of the universe are distributed, were but the idle creations of fancy. By these few words the apostle boldly pushed aside a whole host of errors to which the Athenians had given place in their minds, and by which they had been bewildered and injured. (*W. L. Alexander, D.D.*) *The religious use of Nature*:—This must be distinguished from —1. The mere scientific use, which stops with nature. He who handles it as so much matter to be torn apart with analysis and scrutinised with microscope or telescope, often makes the most irreligious use of it, forgetting the Artist in the work of art. 2. The mere sentimental use, which makes nature a nose of wax to be twisted into a mirror of human fancies, feelings, and passions. 3. The commercial use, which sees in nature but so many acres of woodland, or capacities for grain or grazing. Yet there is—(1) A true science, which leads the way for religion to

follow and adore. (2) A pure sentiment, which penetrates the rare though hidden analogies with which God has crowded the natural and spiritual woods; there religion enters to admire and enjoy. (3) And wherever the eye that measures value pursues its calculations the grateful heart may follow, saying, "Fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." The religious use of Nature, therefore, is something beyond science, or sentiment, or material value, but utilising everything that is real and true in each. There is scarcely a greater need than the realisation that God is everywhere. I. THE FOUNDATION FOR THIS REALISATION is in the teaching of the text concerning GOD'S RELATION TO NATURE. He is "Lord of all things." God is over Nature because He was before it and is in it. You cannot touch Nature without touching God. The right use of Nature so related to God must be a religious use. II. THE DUTY AND PRIVILEGE OF THIS USE is seen in the fact that the Scriptures teach THAT NATURE IS DESIGNED TO BE A PERPETUAL WITNESS TO THE WISDOM AND POWER OF GOD. Nature is God's perpetual demonstration of Himself. The crime of idolatry was its first rejection of God in Nature and then debasing His character. III. This duty and privilege becomes plainer when we remember that MAN WAS SO CREATED AS TO BE THE INTERPRETER OF NATURE. For this he was—1. Placed at the apex of the pyramid, last and greatest master-work. 2. Given intellectual faculties competent to understand Nature and its relations. 3. Endowed with a moral character capable of resemblance to the God revealed in Nature. 4. Made a spiritual being capable of communion with God. 5. It must therefore be his mission to be a reflecting surface for the glory of God in Nature. IV. This duty, &c., is seen to be rational because NATURE IS SO MUCH MORE TO US WITH GOD THAN WITHOUT HIM. Without God it is a congeries of vast and uncontrollable forces before which we shudder; with God an ordered system no less majestic, but under the control of a beneficent will. Without Him Nature is senseless; with Him it has a meaning even where we cannot fathom it. V. Plainer yet seems the duty, &c., when we consider THE APPEALS WHICH GOD IN NATURE MAKES TO ALL THAT IS BEST IN US. 1. To our reverence. Best ideas of omnipotence are from God's rule over Nature. 2. God seeks to elevate us by exhibiting in Nature the nobler types of life. Who can be thoughtless in a world packed with thought, careless when everything is replete with arrangement, idle where everything is busy, or frivolous where all is serious? 3. God appeals to the spirit of praise everywhere in Nature, which is again designed to fill us with gladness in and by our gratitude. 4. Even growth in grace is possible by Nature. VI. A religious use of Nature is ESSENTIAL TO A SYMMETRICAL CHRISTIAN FAITH AND LIFE. (*S. T. Scovel, D.D.*) **Dwelleth not in temples made with hands.**—*God's temples*:—I. HEAVEN, where the spirits made perfect are before His throne. II. THE VISIBLE CREATION, in which He has never left Himself without a witness to His power, wisdom, and goodness. III. THE CHURCH, in which the unknown God is a revealed God in the gospel of His Son. IV. MY HEART, in which He desires to dwell by His Holy Spirit. (*K. Gerok.*)

Ver. 25. **Neither is worshipped with men's hands.**—*Contrast between God and idols*:—Idols certainly require the care of human hands. There are still shops in the cities of India and China, with this inscription on their sign-boards, "Here old gods are repaired and renovated." (*Leonhard.*) **As though He needed anything.**—*God has no needs*:—The idol was supposed to be a needy, dependent being, fed by the hands of man. God not so (Psa. l.). Notice the main points of comparison. I. IDOLS ARE DEAD; GOD LIVES OF HIMSELF AND BY HIMSELF. He gives—1. Life. What a gift is life! And what a giver the Author of life! 2. Breath. 3. All things necessary for the sustentation and continuance of both. It is not matter that lives, but God in matter. "This living God" is the Being with whom we have to do; there is a living eye on thee, a judge taking account now. II. GOD IS THE BUILDER OF HIS OWN TEMPLE. The idol is made, then a temple is built, and the idol is put there and chained, that he might not be stolen. God too has a temple; but He is the architect of His own temple, erected it not for Himself but for us; worship is for the benefit of man. It is getting, not giving; receiving, not imparting. Worship may be regarded—1. As the highest exercise of man's nature. Man can never be greater than when he stands before God; a creature can never perform a nobler office than when thus holding communion with God. 2. As the purest influence of man's nature. Sin is put down by this. We must look up, not down; the glance of the eye on the infinite is worth all the talking and troubling our minds about non-essentials in religion. But we must get the

principles from the habit of looking up. 3. As the truest happiness. Have you ever felt happiness corresponding to the high demands of your nature? When your soul has been with God, how little did this world appear then! III. GOD IS THE PROPRIETOR OF HIS OWN SACRIFICE. All dead matter, silver and gold, our body, soul, intellect, affections, hopes, fears, are God's. When we worship we are teaching ourselves a great truth, instructing ourselves in our own dependence on God. IV. GOD IS THE FATHER OF HIS OWN WORSHIPPERS. 1. Paul shows the nature of man. "We are also His offspring." The tree, the elephant, birds, stars, &c., are not like God. They are far from Him, they are matter; He is mind. They are dead; He is living. But we are like God. We have power to think as He thinks, to love as He loves, to be felicitous as He is felicitous. 2. We have the destiny of this nature. "Seek the Lord, if haply they might find Him." Seek Him, so as to feel Him touch the soul. Are you in search after God? Whatever pursuit fails, this will not. It is the only study worthy the soul of man. (*Caleb Morris.*) *God has no needs*:—I. THIS DECLARATION SHEDS CONSIDERABLE LIGHT ON GOD HIMSELF, who is underived, unconditioned, everlasting, and the source of all other life throughout the universe. We have to do with a "living God"; therefore let us have no dead souls or dead services. II. HOW MAY THIS TRUTH APPLY TO THE SCHEME OF REDEMPTION? God is all fulness of being, excellency, and blessing; yet He has condescended to propose reconciliation to men. The advantage here is altogether on the side of men. And what an advantage it is! It is the fulness, the power, of the rich God spreading Himself out through the entire nature of man; so that he feels he is invested with every attribute God possesses. When man is thus brought into union with the rich God, he receives two things which constitute his spiritual life. 1. A consciousness of his relationship to God. A living consciousness that we are "His offspring, in whom we live and move and have our being." That feeling is worth the universe. Man is a child of God, whether he feels it or not; he has not lost his relationship to God. What has he lost by sin? (1) The filial character. All likeness to God's character. (2) Sympathy to the Father. He does not love what God loves, nor hate what God hates. (3) The knowledge of God to a great extent. Not altogether. He is far from God, as an isolated being. Man has not the slightest formal knowledge of Him as his Father. (4) Every disposition to return to God. 2. But when the poor sinner comes to the rich God what takes place? (1) There is a quickening sense of his relationship. He says, "I am not worthy to be called Thy son." Then he says, "Talk to me about my Father." The soul sympathises with God till it has impressed on it God's character. (2) There is a right in all the privileges involved in the relationship (Rom. viii. 17). Think how Christ is the heir of God; think of His position, offices, glory; then imagine yourselves to be in a state of approximation to Him; and then feel what it is to be enriched with the riches of God. III. GOD HAS NO NEEDS. THEN HE IS MORE THAN ADEQUATE TO FINISH THE WORK OF REDEMPTION. If He has all power, He is able to work out men's salvation. Man has not a fixed purpose. God has a clear, definite conception of the Divine scheme of salvation. God is so in love with His purpose of saving man there is no fear of His giving it up. Men often fail in their purposes in consequence of impediments. God, who is the Creator of heaven and earth, has dominion over all things. IV. GOD HAS NO NEEDS. THEN HE COULD HAVE NO MOTIVES IN REDEMPTION BUT GENEROSITY. (*Ibid.*) **Seeing that He giveth to all life.**—*God's bounty*:—He giveth—I. "LIFE," and none but He, the Living One. It is a rill from the Fountain of Life. Growth and other qualities belong to plants, such as circulation of sap and respiration by their leaves; but life characterises man—with its voluntary and involuntary functions, its enjoyments and capabilities, its appetites and instincts, its operations on the world without it, and its conscious possession of its powers within it. Pleasure, glory, and usefulness are bound up with its prolongation. So sweet is it that few choose to part with it, and the cessation of it was regarded by the apostle's hearers as the direst of calamities. He who is our life confers and supports it in His ineffable goodness—for "man liveth not by bread alone." II. "BREATH," which, as the condition and means of life, is, therefore, singled out. Even then the atmosphere was popularly valued as the first of necessary gifts, and, when scientifically examined, its preciousness is not only confirmed, but it becomes a powerful proof of Divine unceasing goodness. For the air we breathe is endowed with many qualities, the loss or disturbance of which must be fatal to life. If it lose its gravity, or if its elasticity be changed or become changeable; if it thicken, and darken, and cease to be an invisible medium; if it be deprived of its compressi-

bility, or if any amount of cold could condense it; if the gases composing it were to vary in their proportions; or if it were not universally present, and what is vitiated by respiration purified and restored—animal existence would be extinguished on the face of the earth. III. And His bounty is immense, for He giveth "ALL THINGS." Whatever we have He has given us—the food on our table, and the raiment on our persons, with ability to win them and health to enjoy them. Nor let any man boast of being the architect of his own fortune; for the materials out of which he builds it, the skill with which he constructs it, and the propitious season which enables him to rear it without pause or discomfiture—are each of them the gift of the one sovereign Benefactor. Discovery, invention, science, art, adventure, commercial shrewdness, literary power, mechanical skill, and political success; the sharp eye that is first to perceive the "tide in the affairs of men"; and the wary enterprise that launches the vessel upon it—are not self-originated. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights." (*Prof. Eadie.*)

Ver. 26. **And hath made of one blood all the nations.**—*All of one blood*:—1. This is not the gospel, but it is the foundation on which the gospel builds—that humanity is one; that race distinctions are superficial, and not radical; that there is a universal brotherhood, originating in the universal Fatherhood of God. This is familiar enough to us, for our common speech is stocked with phrases and expressions which recognise it. But then no man believed in it. Jew and Greek, and Roman and barbarian were alike in this. They had their separate deities and their separate origin. Every people was proud of its own birthright, and deemed itself the elect of its own god, and regarded it as a natural law that they should despise or hate all others. Into this condition of things the inspired message of the apostles came, flinging its living cords over the wide gaps, and binding human society with a new and Divine bond. 2. And the greater our knowledge of men, the more irresistibly is this truth forced upon us. Everywhere there are substantially the same emotions, longings, regrets, some sort of conscience, hope; everywhere man is susceptible to the touch of love, moved by persuasions of kindness, thrilled by the voice of pity. Everywhere man confesses that he cannot live by bread alone, and is everywhere a praying creature. And everywhere there is in man a capacity for growth unlimited. Even among the lowest races, where science has sought, and will for ever seek in vain, for the missing link between the animal and man, proofs innumerable have been given that one or two generations are enough to work a transformation more than magical. Truly God hath made of our blood all nations of men, and the Christ who can redeem any one man is proved by that very fact to be the possible Redeemer of all. 3. How beautifully, and with what profound wisdom, does Paul here acknowledge that universal religious instinct in man which makes humanity one. They have all sought after God, if haply they might find Him, and He has not been far from any one of them. In every religion there has been something true. They have touched His feet if they have not seen His face. Their shrines have been vestibules to His Temple, if they had not been the Temple itself. To-day, in all our mission work we are coming back to the generous thought of the apostle. The heathen world is becoming better known, its religions better understood, its gross errors and undying truths and aspirations more carefully and lovingly distinguished, and, therefore, the scope and nature of our work more clearly and hopefully defined. To understand the souls with which we deal is the first essential of evangelistic work. And verily there is hardly a truth of the Christian revelation which is not, at least, foreshadowed in the religious conceptions of the great Eastern races. We know, alas! too well, that all these things have been buried out of sight under successive layers of corruption. Yet, if we have patience to dig beneath the mass, we are always stumbling upon decayed forms of truth, and it is no little advantage to the missionary to be able to say, "I came not to destroy but to restore and fulfil." Moreover, we are learning to respect those people and not simply to despise them. We are finding out not only that they are lost, but that they are really worth saving. India was the greatest of all empires before the names of Rome and Greece were known. Its people belong to the same Aryan stock as ourselves. All these races have proved themselves capable of all that we have attained, and they have fallen from all that because, as Paul says, though they once knew God, they became vain in their imagination, &c. It is the picture of Eden with a particular rendering. But whenever there is a paradise lost Christ speaks of a paradise regained. Our missionaries

go to their work burning and inspired with an infinite hope, because they go where there are memories of a golden past. What has been may yet be again. They are a people to whom we can confidently say, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." (*J. G. Greenhough, M.A.*) *Mankind are one family*:—I. THE TRUTH OF THIS DOCTRINE. That mankind are one family; that a common origin, and common nature, belong to all nations. 1. We read (Gen. i. 27, 28). Now as we read of no more creations of man, but on the contrary, that after the formation of man, Jehovah "rested on the seventh day, from *all* His work which He had made," it is evident that if we admit the correctness of the Mosaic account of the creation, we must admit that nations of every colour, and of every mode of life, are the descendants of one pair. This I think more specially appears from another statement in this early history (Gen. iii. 20). 2. There is reason to believe from other considerations, as well as from the words of our text, that it was the design of Almighty God, that the human race should spread over and people the whole earth; and one cannot but admire how His providence, by colonisation, adventure, and other means, continues to pursue the same design. 3. The sacred writers often express themselves in such terms as can only comport with the identity of the human species, for which we contend (Numb. xxvii. 16; Rom. v. 12; 1 Cor. xv. 22). 4. Against this doctrine, however, there has been advanced one objection, which, on account of the boldness and the frequency with which it has been put forth, it is proper to notice. It is this—"the difference in colour, form, and manners is so great in different nations of men, as to prove that they cannot have had a common origin." In answer to this objection, it is to be remarked—(1) That between the snowy whiteness of the most delicate European, and the jet black of the negro, there is, in the varieties of the human kind, every conceivable, intermediate shade of colour. And does the objector mean to say that men must have had as many distinct originals as there are distinct shades of colour in the nations of the globe? (2) But perhaps he will choose to rest his objection rather on the conformation than on the colour of the body. But can the objector be ignorant that the different nations of Europe exhibit striking characteristic distinctions in their personal structure and appearance? Have we not an example of this in the Germans and the French? (3) I might insist on the erect stature of man —on the bonal and muscular provisions by which this stature is produced—and on other anatomical peculiarities by which man in all his varieties is essentially distinguished from all the lower animals. And I do so far insist on this, as to affirm that Rousseau, and others, who have intimated that the negro man, and the simiæ of the woods, are only varieties of the same species, either wrote in utter ignorance of this department of physiology and comparative anatomy, or, what is worse, attempted to impose upon the world a wilful, wicked, and most detestable falsehood! (4) With those who seek truth on this question it will be enough to know that all the great features which identify man are found alike in men of every colour and of every clime. (*a*) One of these features is reason. The powers of ratiocination belong to *man* alone. (*b*) Man is the only creature on earth endowed with the gift of speech. (*c*) I pass over the institutions of law and government—the cultivation of science, literature, and the arts—the relations of domestic life—and the strength and durability of the natural affections. But there is another peculiarity of man on which I am bound to insist; and that is, his capacity for religion. I say that man possesses a power to contemplate, love, and worship the infinite Spirit, his Creator and Lord; and that he is the only inhabitant of earth that has this power. To my judgment this is the broad, deep, indelible mark which distinguishes man from the most sagacious of the brutes, more than any other of his characteristics. II. THE ESSENTIAL CONSEQUENCE OF THIS DOCTRINE TO A CONSISTENT AND ACCEPTABLE CHRISTIAN PRACTICE. 1. It is indispensable, in point of fact, to the exercise of a true faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. To suppose that shade of colour destroyed identity of species, were to us a horrid thought! for there is reason to believe that the holy Jesus Himself had not the European whiteness, but rather the Palestinian form and hue; so that if any nation must be excluded from the blessings of redemption on account of the shape of their bodies or colour of their skin, it is the English nation, and in the interdict we have our share! 2. The doctrine I have laid before you is no less necessary to enable us to feel and to act in a right manner in reference to the distinctions of rank and circumstances among men. If the father of a numerous family finds it expedient to appoint one child this task, and another that; and to one a task less easy or less honourable than to another; those children will not, surely, on this account, forget that they are brothers and sisters, that they have

one father, and are equally the objects of his care and love. The use of this allusion is easy. Let the most exalted by riches, rank, office, or fame, keep in mind that he is but man, and never forget the kindliness and respect due from him to the meanest being partaking our common nature! And if there be men who choose to play the tyrant and oppressor—speaking and acting as though more than human blood flowed in their veins—let not this degrade the poor in his own eyes; let him act right in the sight of his God, and time shall show which is the greatest man! 3. It would be wrong were I to omit this further inference; that if all nations were of one blood, it must be in the highest degree criminal for one nation to enslave another. 4. In fine, from the doctrine that mankind are one family I might deduce that whole course of virtuous Christian demeanour which is due from man to man. (1) Justice and integrity to all. (2) Reparation where injury has been inflicted. (3) Forbearance towards the errors and infirmities of men. (4) Assistance to the weak, the distressed, the sorrowful, the aged, the widow, and the fatherless, according to the ability which God has given us. (5) Instruction to the ignorant; in other words, the impartation of the religion of Jesus to them who have it not. To those near us, our own family, neighbourhood, and country, first to be sure; but not forgetting the most distant of our brethren. (*Jas. Bromley.*) *The origin of mankind:*—I. THE FACT. The truth of the declaration will appear, if we consider—1. The great similarity which is visible among the various nations of the earth. They all have the same—(1) Exterior form. (2) Mode of moving. They all walk erect. (3) Use of speech, or power of articulation. None of the lower species have this. (4) Intellectual faculties. The most uncultivated nations appear to possess the same native powers of the mind as the most civilised. (5) Moral dispositions, "they have all gone out of the way, there is none that doeth good, no, not one." (6) Birth, growth, decay, and dissolution. 2. The ignorance in which they have generally been involved for many ages past, and the slow progress they have made in knowledge, learning, and civilisation. 3. The farther back we trace their origin, the more they become blended together and mixed into one. There is no nation but the Jews that appears unmixed. If different nations have originated from different sources, it is very strange that not one of them has been able to retain the knowledge of their distinct origin. But if they are all of one blood this is not strange. II. OBJECTIONS. 1. Some have said it was impossible for one family to spread over all the world. To this I reply—(1) That it was easy for one family to scatter into any inhabitable parts of the earth where they could travel by land. (2) As to those nations who have inhabited Iceland and America, we can conceive of various ways by which they came to these places. It has been conjectured that many islands were once connected to the main land; and that this was the case in respect to the continents. If this be true, then the difficulty is entirely removed. But if this be not true, it is easy to suppose, that those on the continent could devise means to get to the nearest islands. And as navigation was early discovered by this means, they could get to remote islands and continents. 2. Some nations presume to carry their antiquity several thousand years higher than others, such as the Babylonians, Egyptians, and Chinese. But—(1) They have no history or monuments to prove their great antiquity. (2) The most ancient and faithful historians bear full testimony to the contrary. 3. It is farther objected that the great diversity in the customs, manners and complexions of different nations, is inconsistent with the supposition of their common origin. It is easy to answer that all these things may be accounted for by the different circumstances and climates in which they have lived. III. INFERENCES. If it be the truth that all nations are of one blood, then—1. We may justly conclude that the Bible is the Word of God. It confirms the account which the Bible gives of—(1) The Creation, which tells us that mankind sprang from the same two parents. (2) The Fall. Though men have sought out many inventions to account for the universal depravity of mankind; yet the Bible gives the only rational account of it, that by one man's disobedience all were made sinners. (3) The Deluge. The heathen have some dark traditions concerning this awful catastrophe, but they could never give any rational account of it. It cannot be credibly accounted for but on the supposition that all nations are of one blood, universally depraved, and universally deserve destruction. 2. That notion of patriotism which is generally imbibed and admired, is false and unscriptural. One nation has no more right to seek its own interests exclusively, or in opposition to the interests of other nations, than one member of the same family has to seek his interest in opposition to the interest of the rest of the family. All nations are morally bound to seek each other's

interests, and to refrain from doing anything which they deem to be injurious. 3. They have no right to enslave one another. All men have natural and inalienable rights, which never ought to be taken from them by force and violence. 4. God has manifested peculiar care, wisdom, and kindness in fixing the various places of their residence, in the best manner, according to their relations to and connections with each other. And as He fixed the bounds of their habitations, so He fixed their times. That is, the time when every nation should rise or fall, or become mixed with any other nation. It requires great care, wisdom, and kindness in a parent to dispose of his numerous family in the wisest and best manner; it requires more in a prince; but it required far greater in God. 5. God has exercised His absolute sovereignty in a very striking manner. He has made great and innumerable distinctions among the nations and inhabitants of the earth. How differently did He treat the three branches of Noah's family, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau! He has placed one nation in a warm and another in a cold country, one in a rich, and another in a poor. And it is impossible for any one of the human family to be happy in this world, or the next, without seeing and loving His sovereignty. 6. We have ground to think that the world will stand many centuries longer. The earth is far from being fully inhabited. 7. The whole family of Adam will be immensely numerous. If the seed of Abraham will be as the stars of heaven for multitude, what will be the seed of Adam? Their numbers will be beyond human calculation, if not beyond human conception. This immense family are to have one universal and solemn meeting at the Day of Judgment. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*)

The unity of the race:—I. THERE IS PRECISELY THE SAME PLAN IN ALL THE RACES—of bone, nerve, artery, structure, &c. The great functions and organs are the same. If the African had his heart in his liver it would be a tough argument; but what difference does it make that his hair is kinked? The surgeon, the nurse, the dietician will treat him and you exactly alike. Yet you hear men say, "Look at his flat nose. Do you suppose that he is one with the man who has a Grecian nose?" But is not the sense of smell the same in both? The variation of superficial form does not touch the question of unity of function and structure. In fact the differences between one part of the human family and another is no greater than that which exists in a single household where one child is a genius and another practical, one poetic and another prosaic. II. ALL THE RACES OF MEN ARE EDUCABLE. It is not so with the lower animals. You can carry them a very little way in education, and all the rest is trick. But the moment you strike humanity at its very lowest you find capacity of culture. If you take the greatest savages and put them in better relations and conditions they show that they belong to the universal race of man. III. ALL HAVE THE SENSE OF THE BEAUTIFUL. There is no proof that this exists to any considerable degree in the animal kingdom. But sometimes, as among the Indians, you find this sense highly developed in the most uncultured. IV. ALL HAVE THE PERCEPTION OF WIT AND HUMOUR. Man is the only laughing animal in the world. V. MORAL SENSE IS COMMON TO ALL. Where men believe in killing their fathers and mothers they think it right, though their understanding is darkened, and they are misguided, just as a mariner makes his way towards a false light believing it to be true, and thus wrecks his vessel. VI. THE WHOLE WORLD IS SUSCEPTIBLE OF SYMPATHETIC UNDERSTANDING, CO-OPERATION AND LIKE SOCIAL CONDITIONS. It would be impossible to herd together the different races of animals unless you pare their nails, extract their teeth, or stupefy them. But men of all nations can associate. Conclusion: 1. These thoughts are made emphatic by the undesigned tendency to unity which the growth of the world's affairs is producing. The economic and scientific developments of the age are working alike for all the nations. Great mechanical and commercial improvements are bringing the whole world together. The Turk is borrowing civilisation from the European; and the European is bringing more threads of knowledge from Chinamen and Japanese. Mountains and oceans no longer divide. We tunnel the one and throw a nerve through the other. 2. The Church proposes, as it long has done, to move out on this tide. It has made a great many mistakes, but there never has been a time when it did not set its face towards human unity, and teach that God belonged to all men alike. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The unity of the race consistent with its diversities:*—At a public meeting of the Anthropological Society the assertion was made that the aborigines of Australia, the negroes of Africa, and other miserable outcasts did not belong to the human family at all, but were merely a superior kind of orang-outang, or gorilla; that, not possessing souls, they require none of the sympathy and care the friends of missions were so anxious to extend to them.

Immediately a young African requested permission to address the meeting. All eyes being fixed upon him, with a dignified mien and an unfaltering voice, he spoke as follows:—"Mr. Chairman, ladies, and gentleman,—The speaker who has just addressed the meeting thinks that I and my brethren of the negro race are not men because we have curly hair, our craniums are thick, and we have a shuffling gait when we walk. I have lately been down in Dorsetshire, where I observed the farm labourers have a shuffling gait; and I thought that my countrymen, who generally walk much better, might be tempted to laugh at them for their awkwardness if they saw them, but I do not think they would doubt their humanity on that account. And as to our curly hair, I think that need be no disparagement to us, as I have known persons of fair complexion try to make theirs curl without success. With regard to the thickness of our skulls, I may observe, that I suppose our Almighty and All-wise Creator knew what He was doing when he made us so. Our home is in a very hot and sultry climate, where the fiery rays of the sun have great power, and where the inner region of the cranium no doubt requires such a defence. If, by any mistake in our conformation, we had been made with skulls as frail as that of the learned gentleman who last spoke, our brains, under the influence of the heat, might have become as thin and addled as his appears to be, judging from the foolish and unphilosophical statement which he has made, and then it might have been reasonably doubted whether we were men worth listening to." The young negro resumed his seat amid thundering applause; and for once, at least, it appeared to be the general opinion that the black was as clever as the white man. *Gospel aspects of the unity of the race:*—I. THE NATURAL UNITY OF THE RACE. This is—1. Taught in the Bible. 2. Corroborated by tradition. 3. Confirmed by science. (1) A chemist can prove the difference between the human and animal blood, but finds no difference between the blood of negro and European. (2) Philology has reduced languages into a few orderly classes, and these again into a common tongue. This doctrine offers the only solution to the problem of the origin of—(1) Universal depravity with its universal consciousness of guilt. (2) Sacrificial worship which men have always and everywhere practised. II. THE COMMON INTEREST OF OUR RACE IN THE PROVISIONS OF REDEMPTION. The doctrine implies—1. Our common need of redemption as well as a common capacity for enjoying its benefits. "By one man sin entered into the world," &c. 2. That salvation for Adam and his fallen posterity must have been provided for all men. The race existed potentially in "the first man Adam"; when, therefore, redemption was extended to him it was intended to benefit his offspring. He who has "made of one blood all nations" has made our Redeemer a "Ransom for all." III. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH IN RELATION TO THE RACE. 1. This springs out of the conscious brotherhood of man. If we fully believe that we share in the common evils of the Fall, and in the love of Christ, how can any who experience the great salvation avoid all sense of obligation to save others? 2. This is set forth authoritatively by Christ. "Go ye into all the world." 3. The successive openings for missions, and the growing resources of Christian nations are intended to quicken this. (*W. Hansford.*) *Brotherhood:*—This doctrine has three parts—I. THE UNITY OF THE CREATOR. 1. Each nation in the dim past had its own gods, and the belief that they were superior to those of their neighbours. 2. But opposed to this is the revelation of one God, Creator, Universal Governor who is over all, and all in all. II. THE UNITY OF MANKIND. 1. God created man—male and female. 2. This was one act, not divided or repeated at intervals in different places. 3. From this one pair the world has been peopled, through the laws of generation and dispersion. This contradicts the superstition of the heathen in reference to their origin, *e.g.*, the Athenian belief that they were autochthons, springing from the soil. III. THE UNITY OF DESTINY. 1. Man has a common nature, a mind that thinks, a heart that feels, a will that chooses, a soul that never dies. 2. Each nation has the same problems of society, government, and religion, to discover and apply. 3. Each nation is subject to the same diseases, physical and moral, and runs a like career of ruin or prosperity. IV. RESULTS. 1. The purple tide of related blood from one spring writes a common declaration of rights which no Christian is at liberty to disregard. Simply to be a man or woman is to have claims upon the whole race. 2. Nations are so bound together in progress and privileges, material, moral and spiritual, that whatever helps or injures man in one quarter of the globe is ultimately a help or an injury to all. 3. It is the common duty of Christian nations to labour for the general diffusion of religion and civilization, so that peace, art, and science may universally prevail, and every human faculty find unhindered

liberty to develop itself to the glory of God, individual wellbeing, and the good of mankind. (*Preacher's Monthly.*) **And hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitations.**—*Consequences flowing out of the Divine Fatherhood to the race:*—I. GOD, AS THE FATHER OF ALL, HAS, IN A SOVEREIGN MANNER, DISPOSED OF THE DIFFERENT NATIONS OF MEN. As a father disposes of his estate to his sons, and as his simple will determines the allotment of each, so has God "appointed men to dwell," &c. (Gen. i. 28). And if it be asked, Why is this nation here or that nation there? the answer is, Not by accident, but because God so determined it. And if it be still further asked, To what is to be ascribed the mutations of nations, the dying out of some peoples, or their absorption into others? the answer is, The will of God hath determined the times as well as the bounds of the habitation of each. This representation of the apostle—1. Supplies to us a deeper and juster view of the philosophy of human history than is usually suggested. Whilst, on the one hand, we repudiate the doctrine of separate centres of creation, and treat as a fantasy the doctrine of development, we are, on the other hand, taught to turn aside from the opinion that all human varieties are due to mere differences of climate and outward circumstance. The persistency of races—the retention, generation after generation, by whole communities of the peculiar characteristics of the variety to which they belong; and that under the most altered conditions of climate, occupation, food, is against that. Look, *e.g.*, at the Jews, and at the Europeans settled in Africa, or the Africans in North America. 2. Enables us to read and understand aright the world's history. There are some who see in national changes nothing but the results of fixed mechanical laws. Others, again, see nothing but the result of either an ungoverned caprice or of the ordinary passions and tendencies of men. But on neither of these hypotheses can a real philosophy of history be built. We can reach this only by keeping fast hold of the truth, that all human operations are conducted under the superintendence of an infinitely wise and powerful Being, who, without interfering with man's free will, or interrupting any of the ordinary laws of nature, regulates all events according to the council of His own will, and uses all agencies as the instruments of a vast world-plan, of which He alone knows the compass and the details. On these two poles all true philosophy of history turns. If we view man as a mere piece of organised mechanism, we cannot bring the phenomena of his history within the range of modern science at all; if we deny or overlook God's supremacy we are out upon a wide sea, across which no path is drawn, and over which no light rests. 3. Shows us how contrary to the primary order of the world, and the will of the great Father of the race, are all attempts to extirpate races, or to drive people from their native soil, or to take forcible possession of it. God, no doubt, may overrule such deeds; but the deeds themselves are impious. Each nation holds the country it has aboriginally occupied by Divine right—by the will of the common Father. Who can tell how many of the calamities that befal great nations are just retributions for the deeds of rapine and wrong perpetrated in the day of the nation's pride and strength on some weaker or some utterly defenceless people? II. THE DUTY BINDING ON MEN TO SEEK AFTER GOD. This Paul brings in as describing the purpose which God had in distributing the nations, and allotting to each its place and time. 1. By being thus distributed over the whole face of the globe, and placed under the constant superintendence of God, the nations had the entire revelation of God in nature and in providence subjected to their study. 2. That it is man's duty to search after God, is one of the primary truths of morals and of natural religion. In his present state man neither knows God aright, nor are his relations with God such as they originally were. Hence he needs to seek after God that he may enter into right relations and true communion with Him. These words depict man's course in regard to this great matter. Endowed with a religious principle, men feel themselves constrained by the highest wants of their nature to seek after God; and yet, when left to their own unaided efforts, it has ever been only as one who gropes in the dark and at a peradventure, that they have pursued their search. To a few of the higher and purer spirits there came, like angels' visits, ever and anon, brief revelations of the hidden mystery, just and true thoughts of the Infinite. But for the mass of men it was a fruitless groping, until at length, baffled and disheartened, they were ready to carry their homage to any altar that priestcraft or superstition might erect, or at the best, to embody at once their deathless longings and their conscious impotence in an altar to "An Unknown God." 3. To what is this melancholy failure to be traced? Not, the apostle reminded the Athenians, to want of means and materials of success. God, whom they thus haplessly groped after, was,

all the while, "not far from every one of them." Not only are the evidences of the Divine existence and attributes presented in copious abundance on every hand, but the fact that man is the offspring of God supplies to him the most natural help for realising the truth concerning God. For, if man be God's child, he must have a natural capacity for God. And there is thus a solid basis laid in the very constitution of man's nature on which a true theology may be built; and when the page of creation and providence is opened before a being so fitted and prepared to learn the lessons they so abundantly teach concerning God, it can only be through some perversity of his own mind that he fails to attain to the knowledge of God (Rom. i. 20–22). But sin had seduced them from God, so it became the great obstacle to their receiving those right views of God which the phenomena around them so clearly taught. 4. It was thus that the nations were betrayed into idolatry. Nothing can be more absurd in itself than to represent the Great Spirit under the similitude of any creature; and nothing can be more inconsistent than for those who call themselves God's offspring "to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone graven by art or man's device." Who of us would accept any image that human skill could produce as a fit representation of that which really constitutes us—our soul? And this is the true source of all those wrong, deluding, and debasing views of God, by which men are still led astray, even where the light of written revelation is enjoyed. Would that all who shudder at the thought of Atheism were equally alive to the evil and danger of a false, imperfect, or fanciful Theism! (*W. L. Alexander, D.D.*) *God in history*:—He manifests therein—I. His CREATIVE POWER, causing the human spirit to be unfolded in the multiplicity of national spirits. II. His GRACIOUS GOODNESS, giving to each nation time and space to develop its peculiarity. III. His JUDICIAL RIGHTEOUSNESS, appointing to each nation, whether it be Greece or Rome or Israel, the end and limit to its power and prosperity. IV. His HOLY LOVE—the whole history of the world aiming at this that the kingdom of God may come and that men may seek and find Him. (*K. Gerok.*) *God in history*:—The doctrine that God "hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitations," was taught by Moses—"When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the Children of Israel." The periods of their existence have been defined, and its limits mapped out by God. By the periods he means not simply their natural duration, but also the crisis or turning-points in their national experience. And they had many of them in their own history. Not to speak of such epochs as the return of the Heracleids, the religious mission of Epimenides, the deeds of the Alcmæonids, the despotism of Pisistratus, or the usurpation of the thirty tyrants, there had been the battle of Marathon, when Asiatic invasion was repelled by a gallant handful, and, ten years after, the victorious naval action at Salamis—both of them hair-breadth escapes for Athens, and both securing against loss of liberty and degradation into a Persian satrapy. These momentous junctures were the fore-appointment of an unrecognised Protector, who settles the limits of nations; for there is a boundary which they cannot pass, no matter what their ambition, and what the success of their arms. Their own defeats, and the ostracism of so many of their leaders, had shown this. Miltiades the patriot of Marathon, and Themistocles the hero of Salamis, had been sent into exile for misadventures by which the ambitious projects of Greece were limited, and similar had been the fate of Cimon and Alcibiades. Beyond certain termini Athens could not, with all her skill and valour, carry her arms; an unseen arm defined her bounds, and kept her within them. Minerva could not protect: Xerxes had burned her dwelling, and her spear and shield had neither repelled Philip from the north, nor beaten back the Roman warriors from the west. She stood immovable on that rock, defenceless against the invader. The sudden death of Alexander broke into four principalities the huge empire which he contemplated. But the Divine providence is all-embracing, and all history proclaims it. The battle of Zama relieved Italy and civilisation from all fears of Carthage. The Saracen power was thrown out of central Europe at a very critical period, and the tide of Turkish fanaticism was finally checked under the walls of Vienna. He blew with His winds and dispersed the Spanish Armada. Borodino, Leipzig, Trafalgar, and Waterloo set bounds to France in recent times, and Blenheim and Ramillies in days gone by. Bunker's Hill put an end to British supremacy in the older American colonies. And the moral purpose of God in the allocation and government of the different nations was a special one—"That they should seek theLord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far

from every one of us." Why do nations cease to be, and why are their bounds invaded and broken down? Simply because they do not own or follow out this Divine purpose. They deify themselves and forget Him who is above them—live but for themselves, and "feel after" aggrandisement, and not after Him. The Canaanites were ripe for expulsion on the invasion of Joshua, and so were the Jews themselves before the Roman Titus. The liberties of Greece had been struck down on the fatal field of Chæronea, and many a nation has been dispossessed of its soil. No people have an irrevocable charter to it; they possess it only so long as they are worthy of it, and act in harmony with Him who planted them in it. And they are displaced that the new occupant may be put upon its trial, too. In this light may be viewed those conquests which are establishing modern colonies—the conqueror in turn is judged, and will, if God decrees it, be in turn exiled. The Anglo-Saxon has driven back the Celt to the verge of the Atlantic, but the Solave may be commissioned to exercise the same force upon the Anglo-Saxon if he do not service as God's tenant of His lands. And thus God shall be for Britain, so long as Britain is for God. (*Prof. Eadie.*)

Ver. 27. **That they should seek the Lord.**—*God the chief object of search:*—I. IN WHAT SENSE IS IT TRUE THAT GOD IS NOT FAR FROM ANY ONE OF US? He is nigh—1. In the creation around us. 2. In the sense of creaturely dependence and trust. 3. In that He is the Being towards whom the soul tends. II. IN WHAT SENSE DOES MAN FEEL AFTER GOD? 1. In every search for an object of love there is a groping after God. 2. The intense longing after human fellowship is feeling after God. 3. So there is in the instinct of acquisition. 4. In the awful necessity there is in man for worship. III. ANY CERTAINTY THAT MAN WILL FIND HIM? 1. Sin has separated both man and God. 2. Man desired not to retain God in His knowledge. 3. But God wants to find man. Witness—(1) Incarnation. (2) Provision for the new birth. IV. THERE IS NECESSITY LAID UPON EVERY SOUL TO FIND GOD. No matter how wise and cultured, if a man does not find God, he has missed the object of existence. (*B. M. Palmer, D.D.*) *The search for God and its satisfaction:*—I. GOD MADE MAN TO SEEK HIM. 1. Man is by nature religious No one ever discovered light or invented hearing; man saw because he had eyes and heard because he had ears. And religion is as natural as either, because as native and essential. Hence man gets into religion as into other natural things, spontaneously. But to get out of it he has to reason himself into a strange position. No man is an atheist by nature, only by art; and an art that has to offer to nature ceaseless resistance. The atheist does not escape from God, only finds an ideal substitute for Him. 2. Religion being thus native to man, its being is as old as his, and—3. As universal. In his multitudinous faiths he has been blindly fulfilling the Divine decree to seek God. From this point of view the religions of the world have a most touching import; they show men belated, stumbling darkly on, impelled by his Divine home-sickness. The religions of man are like voices which say "Come over and help us." 4. The nature that demands religion responds to it. We know how bad the world has been with its religions, but what would it have been without them? In spite of their falsities they have helped man to live his little life to the measure of his capacity. It and it alone has been able to lift man up to the mountain peak of the Spirit. But if religion is the point where man touches the highest, then it is that which finds, vivifies and directs the best that is in him. It is only as the nature which has come from God returns to Him that it thinks the wisest, does the noblest and becomes the best. II. RELIGION IS NOT ONLY NATURAL AND NECESSARY TO MAN, BUT ALSO TO PEOPLES. When a people has the noblest conception of God its spirit is in its sublimest and most heroic mood. An English ambassador sat at the table of Frederick the Great, with infidel wits who were making sport of religion. Suddenly the talk changed to war. Said the long-silent ambassador, "England would by the help of God stand by Prussia." "Ah!" said Frederick, "I did not know you had an ally of that name." "So please your Majesty," was the swift retort, "He is the only ally to whom we do not send subsidies." There stood the truth confessed. England's best ally is God. A sceptical age is never a great or golden age; nor an infidel people a noble or creative people. For deed, politics, letters, art, religion is a necessity. In seeking for peoples who know not God, our philosophers have to go to cannibals. III. SINCE RELIGION IS SO NECESSARY, THE HIGHER AND PURER THE RELIGION, THE GREATER WILL BE ITS POWER FOR GOOD. History unfolds a wonderful tale. In India a few thousand Englishmen hold empire over more

than two hundred millions of men. Wealth and culture came to the Hindoos ages before they came to us, yet how with that long start do they and we now respectively stand? Why has the Hindoo declined in power as he grew in multitude, while the late-born Saxon has "widened with the process of the suns"? Because the faith of the one grew like an iron band round his spirit full of consecrated falsities, while to the other came a strong yet gentle faith which breathed into him a purer spirit and nobler aims. So while the Hindoo feels as if held in the dread bonds of fate, the Saxon knows himself a son of God, a brother of man, sent to make earth happier and holier. IV. BY WHAT RELIGION CAN MAN BEST FIND GOD AND REALISE THE END OF HIS BEING. Religions may be divided into two classes. 1. Artificial or fictitious religions—those of the individual imagination or reason; "ideal substitutes for religion." To this class belong—(1) The Religion of Nature, that product of the eighteenth century, which, however, was neither a religion nor a thing of nature. It was simply a speculative system so named that it might better offend Christianity. It never was professed anywhere—save by its makers, who were not in a state of nature, but were cultured with the culture of the Christian centuries. This attempt to give us Christianity without Christ failed utterly. (2) The attempt of Strauss to build on our modern physicism a faith in which the universe became the only God. But man can only love the good and trust the right, and as these are the attributes of a person, Strauss failed. (3) The Comtist apotheosis of man. But worship implies reverence. The thinker in his study, heir of a splendid inheritance, may well feel how magnificent are the gifts of humanity; but what has humanity done for the convict or the miserable victim of lust? The religion that man needs is not one that can delight the enlightened only, but one that can save the lost. 2. Real religions—those of history and fact. These may be divided into—(1) The national religions of the past. All round us lie the ruins of the ancient faiths of Egypt, Phœnicia, Greece, Rome. They are all dead, to revive no more: supplanted by the universal and unifying faith of Christ. (2) Turning from the dead past to the living present we have—(*a*) Confucianism: but its prudential wisdom is without the enthusiasm of humanity. Look at it as realised in the people so quick-witted, yet so stationary, and then imagine what it would be were the world an immense Chinese Empire. (*b*) Brahminism—the most awful tyranny of custom and caste, to which morality is unknown, and which can deify the basest as easily as the best. Brahminism universalised could only mean man depraved, and sent wearily to wander through time in search of eternal oblivion and peace. (*c*) Buddhism, numerically the mightiest religion in the world: but in spite of its admirable ethics, a religion without God or hope, radically selfish, and as impotent as selfish. (*d*) Islâm, whose religion does not purify the home and therefore cannot regenerate the race. (*e*) Judaism, which was great only as a prophetic religion, and whose life for the past eighteen centuries has been but a reminiscence. 3. From these imperfect faiths let us turn to that which has created the civilisation and noblest moral qualities of the Western world. Study it—(1) As regards its ideal contents. Take its conception—(*a*) Of God. Such a God as that of Christianity, an eternal Father and Sovereign, infinite personalised love and righteousness, has boundless promise of good and hope for man. (*b*) Of man. The Christian doctrines of man's origin, nature, privilege and destiny are elevating and ennobling as no others are. (2) As regards its actual achievements. Look around; you confront a civilisation that in its high, generous, and humane elements was created by Christianity; that has, to all its ignoble and pernicious elements, in Christianity a merciless foe. It has changed the sinner into a saint, freed the slave, built the hospital and created in every generation a noble army of teachers, reformers, philanthropists. Conclusion: The religion of Christ is the one religion that man needs; it has come from God that it may bring to God. Here lies the secret of its pre-eminence. Others have risen out of man's search for God; this out of God's search for man. (*Principal Fairbairn.*) *Religious nature, and religious character*:—1. The expression "feel after" has reference to what they as God's blind offspring were doing; and "find Him," to what God, never afar off, wants to have them do. In one the deep longings of a nature made for God and religion is recognised; in the other a satisfied state of holy discovery and rest in God. 2. That religious nature and character should be distinguished is important in view of a great religious danger. It used to be the common doctrine that sinful man had no affinity for God, had only an anti-religious nature, and that nothing could be done for or by us till a new nature was given. Now piety is regarded as a sort of natural taste, and multitudes congratulate themselves on being better Christians

than there used to be, on the ground of mere natural sentiment, because better reformers, &c. Where we shall be stranded in this shallowing process is too evident. Christianity will be coming to be more and more nearly a lost fact, and a vapid and soulless naturalism will take its place. I. WHAT IS IT TO HAVE A RELIGIOUS NATURE? Nothing more nor less than to be a man, a being made for God and religion. 1. We are so made as to want God, just as a child wants father and mother. Our nature may not consciously pine after God as an orphan for its lost parents; yet God is the necessary complement of all its feelings, hopes, satisfactions and endeavours. And it hungers none the less truly that it stays aloof from Him and tries to forget Him, even as the starving madman is none the less hungry that he refuses to eat. 2. This something in the soul, which makes God its principal and first want includes nearly its natural everything. It feels the beauty of God, and has the feeling of admiration towards Him. Reason gets no satisfaction till it culminates in Him. Even fear wants to come and hide in His bosom; and guilt, withering under His frown, would only frown upon Him if He were not exactly just. 3. Nor are these things less true under the perverting effects of depravity. Human nature as created is upright; as born or propagated a corrupted or damaged nature, but however much so it has the original Divine impress upon it. The religious nature stands a temple still for God, only scarred and blackened by the brimstone fires of evil. 4. Denying therefore that human nature is less really religious because depraved, it is not to be denied that there are times and moods in which it will be exasperated by the Divine perfections—*i.e.*, when tormented by guilt and resolved on a course which God is known to oppose. But these are only moods. The religious nature has more constant than perverse moods, and is reaching after God in a certain way of natural desire all the while. II. WHAT IT IS TO HAVE A RELIGIOUS CHARACTER. 1. Mere natural desire, want, sentiment Godward do not make it. What does it signify that the nature is feeling after God when the life is utterly against Him? If a man has a natural sense of honour does it make him an honourable man when he betrays every trust? Even a thief may have a good sentiment of justice, and be only the more consciously guilty because of it. 2. To answer the question two things must be understood beforehand. (1) That religious character is more than and different from natural character. It is that which lies in choice, and for which we are thus responsible. (2) That souls are made for God. They are to know Him and be conscious of Him. 3. Assuming these points it follows that man is never in religious character till he has found God, and that he will never find Him till his whole voluntary nature abandoning its own ends goes after Him and chimes in with His principles and ends. God can have no room to spread Himself in the soul when it is hugging itself. III. HOW EASILY, AND IN HOW MANY WAYS, THE WORKINGS OF THE MERELY RELIGIOUS NATURE MAY BE CONFOUNDED WITH RELIGIOUS CHARACTER. 1. The admiration of God's beauty—what is it, some will say, but love? Even the soul's deep throbs of want—what are they but its hungerings after righteousness? And so it comes to pass that religion is the same thing as mere natural sentiment; and the feeling after God substitutes the finding God. But it will not organise a church, or raise a mission, or instigate a prayer. It is exactly the religion of Herod, who heard John gladly and then murdered him. Pilate had the same religious nature, felt the greatness of Jesus, and ended in giving Him up. Felix had the same religion, and Agrippa, and Balaam: the world is full of it—sensibility to God and truth, coupled with a practical non-reception of all. 2. It results accordingly that there are always two kinds of religion; those which are the product of the religious sentiment more or less blind, and those which look to regeneration of character. The religion of the Athenians was of the former kind, as are all idolatries. What an appalling proof of the religious nature of feeling dimly after God, imagining that He is in the sun, the moon, snakes, beetles, &c. Look on these and see how man feels after God: does he therefore find Him? And what but hills of character are these idolatries? 3. Under the guise of Christianity too we may distinguish at least two kinds of religion corrupted by infusions of the same error. One is the religion of forms, where the soul is taken by them as a matter of taste; loves to play reverence under them; the other is a religion of sentiment fed by reason: feeling after God in the beautiful in nature, delighted with Christ's lessons of natural virtue; and praising Him as the finest of all great men. 4. Now the true gospel is that which brings regenerative power, and creates the soul anew in God's image. Any religion that has not this is, so far, a mock religion. The test question, therefore, is—have I found God in my religion? The life of God in the soul

of man—that is religious character, and beside that there is none. (*H. Bushnell, D.D.*)
If haply they might feel after Him and find Him.—*Feeling after God.*—Hassell, in his "From Pole to Pole," quotes the following:—"A company of baptized Greenlanders," says Mr. Crantz, "one day expressed their astonishment that they had spent their lives in a state of such complete ignorance and thoughtlessness. One of the party immediately rose up and spoke as follows: 'It is true we were ignorant heathens, and knew nothing of God and a Redeemer; for who could have informed us of their existence before you arrived? Yet I have often thought a rajak, with the darts belonging to it, does not exist of itself, but must be made with the trouble and skill of men's hands; and he who does not understand the use of it easily spoils it. Now the least bird is composed with greater art than the best rajak, and no man can make a bird. Man is still more exquisitely made than all other animals. Who then has made him? He comes from his parents, and they came again from their parents. But whence came the first man? He must have grown out of the earth. But why do men not grow out of the earth nowadays? And from whence do the earth, sea, sun, and stars proceed? There must necessarily be some one who has created everything, who has always existed, and can have no end. He must be inconceivably more powerful and skilful than the wisest of men. He must also be very good, because everything that He has made is so useful and necessary for us. Did I but know Him, what love and respect should I feel for Him! But who has seen or conversed with Him? None of us men. Yet there be men, too, who know something about Him. With such I would willingly converse. As soon, therefore, as I heard from you of this Great Being, I believed you immediately and willingly, having for a length of time longed after such information.'" *The parable of the climbing plants*:—1. The first peculiarity of the climbing plant to which Mr. Darwin calls our attention is "the slow revolution, in a larger or smaller circle, of the upper extremities in search of a support," and when in their revolutions they are brought into contact with some firm object, they immediately press against it and so twine round it. The plant cannot stand alone, and it begins to reach out after support just as soon as it begins to grow. Do we not witness in these movements an analogy of the outreachings of the soul after God? The soul knows that it cannot thrive alone, that it needs some Power stronger than itself to cling to; and it feels after it if haply it may find it. Blindly, in the dark, the minds of men grope after this Object of their faith. It is not the heathen alone who have this experience. You know, my friend, no matter how irreligious your life may have been, that your heart is often yearning for a good you have not got; that the sense of helplessness and dependence sometimes takes strong hold of you and forces from your heart the cry: "Oh that I knew where I might find Him and lay hold upon His strength!" 2. "On another plant," says Mr. Darwin, "three pairs of tendrils were produced at the same time by three shoots, and all happened to be differently directed. I placed the pot in a box open only on one side and obliquely facing the light; in two days all six tendrils pointed with unerring truth to the darkest corner of the box, though to do this each had to bend in a different manner." The tendril is seeking an object to cling to, the light coming freely from one side shows that no object is there, so the tendrils turn in the other direction; support is nearest on the side where the shadow is. But how does this prefigure our spiritual relation to God? God is light; true, but clouds and darkness are the habitation of His throne. When it is said that in Him is no darkness at all, the darkness is moral; there is in Him no deceit, insincerity, hatred. His character is light, but there are many things about His nature that are dark to us. And it is precisely His transcendent greatness that our trust lays hold upon. We want a Power to cling to whose greatness we cannot compass with our thought. A God whom we could comprehend we could not fully trust. And so it is that our faith turns away from the garish light of human wisdom toward the unfathomed depths of Deity. There is another resemblance here. The darkness is a symbol of God's infinity, of the veiling of His nature from our sight. But it is only by the help of shadows that we see. Look directly at the sun and you can see nothing. It is when your back is turned to the sun that you see most clearly. Our faith, like the tendrils, turns not only toward the darkness that hides God's infinity, but also toward the shadow because in that something of His nature is visible. The shadow not only conceals, it also discloses. You cannot conceive of absolute deity. Your mind is dazzled when you look God in the face, just as your eyes are dazzled when you look on the sun. And men have always found it necessary to learn what God is by looking toward the shadows and the types which

He has given us. The Incarnation is God in the shadow. Our faith finds something here that we can take hold of and cling to. 3. "Knowing," says Mr. Darwin, "that the tendrils avoided the light, I gave them a glass tube blackened within, and a well blackened zinc plate; but they soon recoiled from these objects with what I can only call disgust, and straightened themselves." Here we have not a likeness, but a contrast. Full often the tendrils of our desire fasten upon that which defiles us; and the faith that ought to bind us fast to God's righteousness and power is entwined about some grovelling superstition or some ensnaring sin. 4. "When a tendril," says our teacher again, "has not succeeded in clasping a support, either through its own revolving movement or that of the shoot, or by turning toward any object that intercepts the light, it bends vertically downwards and then toward its own stem, which it seizes, together with the supporting stick, if there be one." So when our spiritual instincts that reach out naturally after God and goodness do not lay hold on their normal support, they, too, are very apt to turn downward and inward, and to lay hold upon that self which it was their true function to bind to a firm support. And when this is done the affections are apt to be turned backward upon self; the man comes to believe only in himself and to worship himself, and the character that is developed is a most unlovely product of egotism and selfishness. 5. "If the tendril seizes nothing," says this naturalist, "it soon withers away and drops off." It is possible thus, by simple neglect, to destroy that part of our nature by which we take hold upon God. The extinction of the faith-faculty is a possible calamity, and it is the direst. How can the climbing plant cling when the tendrils have withered and dropped off? It must thenceforth grovel in the dirt and be trodden under foot of men. And how can the soul lift itself up, when all the faculties by which it takes hold on God have fallen into decay? 6. Let us hear Mr. Darwin again: "Tendrils, soon after catching a support, grow much stronger and thicker and durable, and this shows how much their internal tissues must be changed. Occasionally it is the part which is wound round a support which chiefly becomes thicker and stronger." Is not this, also, true in the higher realm? The instincts of the soul that feel after God are wonderfully strengthened when they find Him, and take hold of His power. Faith grows by exercise. 7. "The tendril strikes some object," Mr. Darwin proceeds, "and firmly grasps it. In the course of some hours it contracts into a spire, dragging up the stem and forming an excellent spring. All movements now cease. By growth, the tissues soon become wonderfully strong and durable." The very character and quality of the tendrils themselves are changed as they thus fasten upon their support, and perform the function to which nature has assigned them. And so it is with these spiritual faculties of ours by which we lay hold upon God. Our trust, instead of being a tender and fragile thing, grows firm and strong and holds us fast to the throne of God with a grasp that the shocks of change cannot break nor the storms of adversity loosen. 8. Once more, "The tendrils and internodes of Ampelopsis have little or no power of revolving; the tendrils are but little sensitive to contact; their hooked extremities cannot seize their objects; they will not even clasp a stick unless in extreme need of support; but they turn from the light to the dark, and, spreading out their branches in contact with any nearly flat surface, develop discs. These adhere by the secretion of some cement to a wall or even to a polished surface. The rapid development of these adherent discs is one of the most remarkable peculiarities possessed by any tendril." I cannot help seeing in this an analogy of that phenomenon of the spiritual life which we so often witness, by which those natures which have but little power of comprehending religious truth—of reaching round it and getting hold of it by their understanding—do yet lay hold upon it in a way of their own, and hold fast to it very firmly too. There are Christians whose faith does not seem to need the leading strings of logic or theology, but mounts right up by its own sure-footed intuition. And it is a blessed thing that those to whom the paths of philosophy are thorny, and the steeps of speculation hard to climb, may thus, by a simple and direct confidence in the Christ Himself, who is to all who receive Him the Way and the Truth and the Life, ascend to the serene and tranquil heights of virtue. (*Washington Gladden, D.D.*)

Though He be not far from every one of us.—*Not far from any one of us*:—This is the leading thought which the gospel presses home upon us in various ways. 1. In His Son Jesus Christ God has drawn near to the world. 2. The Holy Spirit's abode in the heart of the Christian brings God near. 3. But Paul speaks of God's presence in nature. I. DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THE REVELATION OF GOD THROUGH NATURE AND IN THE SCRIPTURES. 1. The revelation in nature is the elder and more

direct, that in Scripture the later and more mediate. 2. God speaks to us by nature in an inarticulate; by Scripture in an articulate voice. "Nature is very beautiful, but she is so unresponsive." 3. Nature speaks more to our feelings and imagination. Scripture more to our understanding. II. NOTE SOME OF THE TOKENS IN NATURE OF GOD. 1. Its effect upon the senses as an evidence of Divine goodness. 2. Its effect upon the emotions giving exquisite pleasure and evoking gratitude towards the unseen worker. 3. Its effect upon the imagination producing the consciousness of the presence of a mind sympathetic with our own. 4. Its effect upon the reason revealing besides God immortality, and creating a sense of sin. III. BUT NATURE CAN ONLY SUGGEST TO US THOSE TRUTHS WHICH WE NEED FOR OUR PEACE AND SALVATION, FOR THEIR FULL EXHIBITION WE MUST TURN TO THE BIBLE. (*E. Johnson, M.A.*) *The nearness of God:*—God is not far from every one of us. I. IN THE NATURE AND ASPIRATIONS OF THE SOUL. "We are also His offspring." "We ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold or silver or stone graven by art and man's device." The art of the sculptor may grave an exact resemblance of the human body, but cannot make a similitude of the soul. And it is in the soul that our child likeness to God is found. He who is the Father of our spirits must be Himself a spirit. And that our spirits are endowed with reason, affection and will, suggests the conception of a supreme intelligence, affection. The same is true of our moral endowments. Our sense of right and wrong (Rom. ii. 15) points upward to a Being of absolute truth and holiness. And so also the desires of our souls are indications of a Being in whose love we may find absolute repose, and from whose resources all our spiritual wants may be supplied. The offspring bear the likeness of the universal Father. It is His witness, His imprint and the mark of our Divine paternity; "in which He is not far from every one of us." II. IN HIS ESSENTIAL PRESENCE. He is omnipresent in His authority and influence, as a king in all his dominions. But His presence is not only influential, it is actual. "In Him we live and move and have our being." He is God "above all and through all and in you all." "He fills heaven and earth." This universal and actual presence of God is, according to Scripture, the source of His perfect knowledge. There is no doubt a sublime mystery in this conception. But I can just as readily conceive of an infinite spirit filling immensity as of a finite spirit filling my own body. Nor is there any kinship between this Divine omnipresence and Pantheism. There is a world-wide difference between saying that God is everywhere, and saying that everything is part of God. The one degrades, the other exalts Him. The one is the foundation of all idolatry; the other lies at the base of all true worship and of all true religion. Let a man realise that he can never be alone, because the Father is with him, and the sublime thought will restrain him from sin, and just in proportion as he apprehends God's wisdom, power and love, it will fill his heart with confidence and his lips with prayer, and undergird his whole being with Divine strength. III. IN THE DAILY WORKINGS OF HIS PROVIDENCE. He has "never left Himself without a witness" to His universal presence. His sun shining alike upon the evil and the good; all the revolutions and order of the material universe, and all the mysterious influences which hold human society together, bear a perpetual testimony to the presence and goodness of God. It is true that men do not always hear this testimony, and that when they hear it they often misinterpret and pervert it. It is easy for us to attribute all these things to the operation of second causes, and even to worship the things that are seen, and it is no less easy to attribute them all to the blind operation of natural law, and to exclude all thought of an intelligent lawgiver. But after all there is in the soul of man an intuitive perception of God and longing after Him. "For He has made of one blood," &c., *i.e.*, He so constitutes their common nature "that they should seek the Lord," &c. And it is to this common religious nature which feels after God that the Scriptures constantly appeal. IV. AS OUR JUDGE. The incompleteness and the disorders of the present life all point forward to retribution beyond the grave. Conscience warns us of it. Hope aspires to it. Fear shrinks back from it. And who shall determine that destiny for us but the God in whose hands our breath is and whose are all our ways? And how near judgment is! There is but a hand-breath between us and death and the tremendous realities which it will reveal to us. The Judge standeth at the door. Our character will be determined, and our condition will be fixed by God in whom we live and move and have our being. V. IN THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL AND IN ALL THE MEANS OF GRACE AND SALVATION. Here it is that revealed religion comes in to supplement and give efficacy to the teaching of natural religion. (*H. J. Van Dyke, D.D.*) *God's nearness to*

man :—1. In relation to this truth our race may be divided into five classes—1. Those who enjoy His presence, like the Psalmist, who said, "When I am awake I am still with Thee." 2. Those who are stolidly insensible of His presence, like those described by Paul in Eph. ii. 12 as being "without God and without hope in the world." 3. Those who are in horrific dread of His presence, like those of Job xxi. 14. "Depart!"—this is the unceasing cry of hell. 4. Those who are in earnest search of His presence (Job xxiii. 3). This class comprehends all earnest inquirers. 5. Those who theoretically deny His presence (Job xxii. 12, 13). But these different opinions and feelings do not alter, even to the shadow of a shade, the fact that God is near. The earth sweeps her majestic course around the sun, though all the priests of Rome deny the fact of her motion. God is—I. LOCALLY NEAR (Jer. xxiii. 24). An absolute existent has no relation to time or place. No metaphysics can explain, no finite thought comprehend, how He can be equally present in all places at the same time; but the denial of it involves philosophical contradictions, undeifies God, and contravenes the plainest and the sublimest teachings of inspiration. Then—1. All men should live under a constant impression of His presence. 2. All attempts at secrecy in sin are to the last degree futile and absurd. 3. Death can effect no local separation of the soul from God. II. RELATIONALLY NEAR. He is the nearest relation we have. He is our Sovereign, overruling all things pertaining to us and our history; our Father, our Creator, who has made every particle of our being; our Proprietor, our Life. We cannot move a muscle, breathe a breath, think a thought, feel an emotion, without Him. "In Him we live and move, and have our being." Two truths are inferable from His relational nearness. 1. That the necessity of the Atonement cannot be satisfactorily argued, to thinking minds, on the remote relationship of God as the Governor of man. 2. That the preservation of man's perfect freedom of moral action is very wonderful. Whilst He moves us, we are morally free in moving. The how of this is the problem with which all thoughtful ages have wrestled hard, and to this hour it remains unsolved. I feel that I am free, and no argument can destroy this feeling. III. SYMPATHETICALLY NEAR. How close is the heart of a mother to her babe! But we are nearer to the heart of God than the babe to the heart of that mother. "Can a woman forget her sucking child," &c. There are three things that show the nearness of His heart to us. 1. His distinguishing goodness in the creation of our existence. He has given us greater capacities for happiness than He has to any other creatures of which we have any knowledge. Sensuous, intellectual, social, and religious enjoyments are ours. 2. His wonderful forbearance in the preservation of our existence. We are rebels against His government as fallen creatures, yet how He forbears (Hos. ii. 8). 3. His infinite mercy in the redemption of our existence. Here is the climax of love. "God so loved the world," &c. Conclusion: It is true that the heart-searching God is thus near us? 1. Then our indifference is more anomalous than the conduct of him who lies down to sleep upon the bosom of a burning volcano. 2. Then how preposterous and wicked is hypocrisy. 3. Then ceremonialists, why be so particular about the rituals, the places, and the times of worship? "God is a Spirit." (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Realising God's nearness* :—We are said to be, known to be, nearer to the sun in winter than in summer. But the increased swiftness of the earth's motion in its orbit, together with the inclination of the axis in the same, prevents the increase of heat that otherwise would be inevitable. The surface of the earth on this account is so much less time exposed to the sun's rays, and so obliquely that the heat is diminished by the nearness. Just so, the world may be nearer to God in position, by providential advantages, opportunities, and in speculative Divine knowledge, nearer, and yet farther from God's love, less affected by His mercy, less warmed and quickened by His light. So it may be with an individual heart. One man may really be farther from God in position than another, and yet have a summer season in his soul; while the other, though nearer in point of every advantage and opportunity, may remain in the dead of winter. The climate of the soul does not depend so much upon the nearness and abundance of the rays, if it is flying swiftly through them, and obliquely turned from them, but upon the steadiness and constancy with which they are received by a heart turned directly towards them. Looking steadily to Christ is the condition of light and life. (*W. Cheever.*) *God's nearness to man: effects of the consciousness of* :—Two men are walking upon the same plain, and each turns his face towards the sky. The light of the sun is shining upon both, but one sees no sun, while the other sees not only light, but the face of the sun, and his eye is overpowered with its glory. What

makes the difference between the two? Not that one is in darkness, and the other in light; not that one is near the sun, and the other far away; not that one has an eye differently constituted from the other; but simply that there is a thin cloud between heaven and the one, and no cloud between it and the other. The latter can not only trace evidence that there is a sun, and that he is up, but has the presence of that sun before his face, and his glory filling his eye. So two men stand in relation to the universal and all-present God. One believes, infers, intellectually knows, that He is; ay, that He is present; yet he discerns Him not: it is a matter of inference, not of consciousness; and though believing that God is, and that He is present, he sins. Another spiritually discerns, feels His presence; and he will "stand in awe, and sin not." (*W. Arthur, M.A.*)

Ver. 28. **In Him we live and move, and have our being.**—*In Him we live and move, and have our being*:—I. WRONG VIEWS OF THE NATURE OF GOD LIE AT THE FOUNDATION OF ALL FALSE THEORIES OF RELIGION.—These are—1. That He is a limited Being, dwelling in temples, receiving gifts from man. This was the popular notion here combated. 2. That He is an infinite Being, but removed from us; the Creator, but not the Moral Governor. 3. That He is the only Being, all that is being merely phenomena of Him; so that there is no separate existence, no self-activity, responsibility, sin, holiness, or hereafter. II. THE TRUE DOCTRINE HERE TAUGHT. 1. That God is a personal Being, distinct from the world; its Creator and Preserver. 2. That He is not far from any one of us, but is everywhere present, beholding, directing, controlling all things; a Being on whom we are dependent and to whom we are responsible. 3. That our dependence upon Him is absolute for being, life, and activity, but at the same time it is consistent with separate existence, liberty, and accountability. III. These are the fixed points in Paul's theism. HOW ARE THESE POINTS TO BE UNDERSTOOD? 1. By the reason. The problem to be solved is how the omnipresent agency of the First Cause stands related to the phenomenal world. (1) The most natural solution is the pantheistic. (*a*) Because it is the simplest and most intelligible. (*b*) Because it has been the solution most generally received. Brahm was the universal substance of which all things are the manifestation. This principle underlay the nature-worship of the Egyptians, and was the esoteric faith of the higher Greek philosophers, and of the Alexandrian school. It reappears among the schoolmen, and is the popular faith of many modern teachers. (2) The rebound from this extreme is Deism—a God extra mundane, but indifferent to any efficiency of His in the events of the world. 2. By the intuitions of our moral and religious nature as enlightened by the Scriptures. (1) That all existence is from and in God. (2) That all life is from Him and in Him, and—(3) All activity, so far that unsustained by Him no second cause could act. IV. FROM ALL THIS IT FOLLOWS—1. That we are always most near God. This presence is one of knowledge, power, approval, or disapprobation. 2. That we are thus dependent for natural, intellectual, and spiritual life. 3. That this consensus of the human and Divine is according to fixed laws, which are, however, under the control of a personal God, who can suspend them at will. If we recognise these laws, and act according to them, we experience their normal working, we become more and more recipients of the life of God. If we transgress them the opposite result is unavoidable. 4. That as our whole being and blessedness is dependent ou keeping the true relation to God, we should be ever on our guard against violating His laws; in all things acting in accordance with His will, feeling our dependence and obligation, rendering Him trust, gratitude, and love. 5. Under all circumstances we are ever in contact with the infinite source of knowledge, being, and blessedness; but the wicked are always in contact with Him as a consuming fire. (*C. Hodge, D.D.*) *In Him we live and move, and have our being*:—In Him—I. WE LIVE. Apart from Him our life would decay, and be extinguished as a flame which had been suddenly deprived of its sustaining element. II. WE MOVE. Apart from Him we are not only inert and helpless, but not even such movement as sustains the life of plants would be possible for us. III. WE HAVE OUR BEING. In Him we are; apart from Him we should not only cease to be what we are, but we should cease to be at all; it is only the hand of God that interposes between us and annihilation. (*W. L. Alexander.*) *In God*:—Let us apply Paul's doctrine to—I. THE WORLD OF MATTER. We are embosomed by mighty forces which we regard merely as God's instruments. But science comes forward as God's interpreter, and indicates with Sir John Herschel the force of gravitation, *e.g.*, as the energy of an omnipresent will. Again, we speak of "dead matter," but

science takes the ultimate atoms which chemistry deals with, so tiny that no microscope can detect them, and gives them free room to move about in—the ten millionth part of the twenty-fifth of an inch apiece, and shows them jostling each other with ceaseless activity, even in the block of stone and the bar of steel; and according to Jevons each one of these airy atoms is probably a vastly more complicated system than that of the planets and their satellites. But according to Faraday and Boscovitch an atom is a mere centre of force. When we have analysed it into its elementary constituents it is alive with energies inconceivably subtle. And all this force is the immediate energy of the omnipresent Creator. "Matter is force and force is mind," says science. So says Scripture. "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made." This solid frame is, in its inmost essence, nothing but a form of the thought of God. II. THE HUMAN BODY. 1. Let us see how the same Divine force holds our physical frame together. Five-sixths of it is water, a creature of that form of force called chemical affinity. Each molecule is a compound of two atoms of hydrogen and one of oxygen. But for the constant action of this Divine force holding the gaseous element in unyielding combination our bodies would become a form of matter as invisible as air. Besides this the processes of growth and repair are carried on unrestingly by this same chemical energy of God ever gluing atom to atom in blood, skin, and bone, &c., under the direction of the master workman we call Life, in whose skill we see the Divine intelligence of Him in whom we live and who renews our substance day by day. 2. And it is wonderful how much God does and how little we do. We breathe because we cannot help it. From a sort of electric battery of cells in the head there streams along the nerves a current of divine force, which works the muscles of respiration, even in spite of the utmost effort of will to hold the breath. We eat and drink, but it is merely as the servant who opens the house door to receive supplies. The nerve current supplies the digestive apparatus with power to convert food into flesh, and works the central force-pump which carries to every part of the system its due supply. What if it were dependent on us to keep the heart beating? And again, in every movement and utterance all we do is by our will to set free the quasi electric force which is in us, but is not ours, by which the appropriate muscles are contracted and our will accomplished. "In Him we move." But a large part of our experience is passive. Hot and cold, bitter and sweet, light and dark, &c. What are we to all these phases of surrounding force but a harp of so many strings responding to the fingers of God in Nature? And then these outward touches of the Divine fingers woke other powers. The pain of fire and the recoil of the flesh are independent of our will, and the operation of a will not our own. So again with our instincts; their automatic power is the immediate energy of the God in whom we live. III. THE MIND. Our thinking is done by means of the brain, as our lifting is done by means of the muscles. In either case we simply press the key. The Divine current of power flows according to the measure of the door we open, whether it be narrow in the case of the peasant or wide in that of the philosopher. IV. THE SOUL. "We are His offspring." His ever-flowing stream it is which fills the tiny pools of our existence. We think; but all the truth we think is His. Our discoveries are His revelations. We desire; but our aspirations are God's inspirations. We pray; but prayer is the circulation of His Spirit through us and to Him again. Ours is the joy of doing good, but it is one with the joy of God in goodness; ours the pain of doing ill, but it is the resistance of God within us to evil. (*J. M. Whiton, Ph.D.*) *Our being in God*:—1. Where is God? Ye will answer, "In heaven." True. Our Lord teaches us to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven"; and what child would not long to be where its father was? Here on earth we cannot see God. In heaven He is seen in His glory. 2. But is God confined to heaven? Many think of Him so, and many wish so, in order that He might give no heed to them and their ways. But God says, "Do I not fill heaven and earth?" The eternity of God contains all time; the being of God, all being; the infinity of God, all space. If we could see Him here as fully as the angels, this too would be heaven. Yet "God is everywhere wholly, and yet the whole of Him is nowhere." For if He were not here wholly, He would be divided into parts; which cannot be. The air surrounds us, and we are in it, although we do not see it, only, at times, the moisture in it. God surrounds us, and we are in Him, although we have no senses to see or feel Him. 3. God worketh in all things around us, working at a distance, or giving laws by which all things should be and fulfil their being. Wherever anything is, or can be worked, there is God. It is not with God as when we build a house, and part off what is without from what is within, that so God should

be shut out by the works of His own hands. He is above, beneath, behind, before them; not a part of them, not immingled with them, nor confused with them; nor are they a part of Him; yet they hinder not His presence. He is not in one way within them, in another way without them; but one and the same God wholly everywhere. 4. But then, since God is everywhere, we move, speak, act, think, in God. This might be the bliss almost of the blessed in heaven. But it has its awful side also. Since we think, speak, act in God, then every sin is committed in God. It cannot be otherwise. You can no more escape out of the presence of God than out of the air which you breathe. God's infinite, unchangeable holiness is sinned against by every sin of every creature, but cannot be injured by all sin. The human feelings which God has given us make men shrink from doing deeds of shame even in this created light. But to God, darkness is light. God not only sees through the darkness, He is in it. There He is, where thou sinnest. Thou canst not turn away from God, except to meet God. Thou canst turn away from His love, yet only to meet Him in His displeasure. Turn, then, in sorrow from thy sin, and thou wilt meet Him and see Him forgiving thee. 5. Yes! so is there a more blessed presence than that through which, in nature, "we live and move, and have our being" in God—nearer, closer, dearer, fuller far, whereby the soul, through grace, may be, or is, in God. God willed, before the foundation of the world, to make us one with Himself in Christ. He did not make us to exist only through Him, or to be encompassed by Him. He willed that we should be in the very closest union of love and of being of which created beings are capable. To this end God the Son, in eternal harmony with the Father's will, took the manhood into God. When men saw our Lord Jesus Christ in the body, they saw Him who was not man only, but God; they saw Him who was, with the Father, one God. And this oneness with us He took, not only to reconcile us to God by putting away the Father's wrath, but to unite us to God in Himself. Marvellous mercy! Yet since God has vouchsafed to do this, stranger were it that God, who is the life of our life, should form us capable of, and yet not give us His love, if we will have it; that He should make us capable of being united with Himself, and not unite us if we will. So hath He not left us. "Whoso dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." "He who is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who is given to us." 6. Since then all is of God, and in God, since we, if our souls are alive, are in Christ and through Christ in God, there is no room to claim anything as our own. To do so were to rob God. But who could wish to? How much more blessed is it to draw every breath of our lives in Him. As in nature, even the strength which men abuse against God is still continued by God, so, in grace, each act wherewith, from the sacrifice of Abel, God has been well-pleased, has been done through the power of His grace put forth in men, and by Him perfected in them. Where then can be boasting, or any thought of anything as our own, or any pleasure in any works as our own? (*E. B. Pusey, D.D.*) *The Omnipresence of God*:—I. ITS NATURE. The simple, popular idea is that God is equally present everywhere. The understanding, however, requires a more particular statement to avoid our conceiving of God as extended. The nature of time and space involved in this conception is among the most difficult of philosophical questions. Happily some of the most simple truths are the most mysterious. We know that our spirits are here and not elsewhere, and yet the relation of our souls to space is inscrutable. So we know that God is everywhere, but His relation to space is past finding out. 1. He is everywhere present as to—(1) His essence, for He does not admit of division. (2) His knowledge, for nothing escapes His notice. (3) His power, as He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. 2. This attribute, therefore, includes the idea—(1) That the universe exists in God. All creatures "live and move, and have their being" in Him. (2) That all the intelligence indicated in nature is the omnipresent intelligence of God. Rational creatures He has endowed with an intelligence of their own. (3) That all the efficiency manifested in nature is the *potestas ordinata* of God. II. ITS CONSEQUENCES. Hence—1. The universe is a manifestation of God. We see God in everything. 2. All events, the falling of a sparrow or of a kingdom; the course of history; the events of our own life, are all manifestations of His presence. 3. We are ever in God's presence. All our thoughts, feelings, acts are open to His view. 4. An infinite Helper and Portion is ever near to us. The fountain of all blessedness is always at hand from which we may derive inexhaustible supplies of life. 5. All sin and sinners are enveloped, as it were, with a consuming fire. They can

no more escape than we can escape out of the atmosphere. III. REFLECTIONS. The contemplation of this doctrine serves—1. To exalt our conceptions of God by making all things the manifestation of His glory and power. 2. To promote our peace and security, because we know that God is everywhere and controls all events. 3. To excite fear. 4. To stimulate joy and confidence. 5. To teach sinners the certainty and fearfulness of their doom. Conclusion: As all religion consists in communion with God, and as all communion supposes His presence, this doctrine lies at the foundation of all religion. (*C. Hodge, D.D.*) **As certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring.**—The quotation has a special interest as being taken from a poet who was a countryman of St. Paul's. Aratus, probably of Tarsus (*circ.* B.C. 272), had written a didactic poem under the title of "Phœnomena," comprising the main facts of astronomical and meteorological science as then known. It opens with an invocation to Zeus, which contains the words that St. Paul quotes. Like words are found in a hymn to Zeus by Cleanthes (B.C. 300). Both passages are worth quoting:—

> "From Zeus begin we; never let us leave
> His name unloved. With him, with Zeus, are filled
> All paths we tread, and all the marts of men;
> Filled, too, the sea, and every creek and bay;
> And all in all things need we help of Zeus,
> *For we, too, are his offspring.*"
>
> ARATUS, "Phœnom.," 1–5.

> "Most glorious of immortals, many-named,
> Almighty and for ever, thee, O Zeus,
> Sovran o'er nature, guiding with thy hand
> All things that are, we greet with praises. Thee
> 'Tis meet that mortals call with one accord,
> *For we thine offspring are*, and we alone
> Of all that live and move upon this earth,
> Receive the gift of imitative speech."
>
> CLEANTHES, "Hymn to Zeus."—(*Dean Plumptre.*)

Man the offspring of God:—This glorious fact in our nature—I. INDICATES CONSTITUTIONAL RESEMBLANCE TO GOD. It means something more than to be God's creatures, like the earth, sea, sky, &c.; but implies resemblance in essential attributes—spiritual personality, intellectual perception, moral sensibility, loving sympathy, spontaneous activity. This resemblance—1. Constitutes man the highest natural revelation of God. Though a mere atom comparatively, he is the brightest reflector of the Infinite. As I see the ocean in a dewdrop, and the sun in a particle of light, I see God in man. 2. Accounts for our power of forming ideas of God. Had we no resembling attributes, His existence would be a blank to us. Had we no personality, love, &c., His perfections would be without meaning. The eagle takes a vaster view of nature than we can; yet it sees no God because not made, like us, in the image of the Creator. II. SUGGESTS THE RATIONALE OF DIVINE LAWS. Why has God given us laws? To restrict our freedom or curtail our pleasures? Do His laws, like those of human monarchs, arise from the policy of selfishness or fear? Is He obliged, like mortal rulers, to guard His throne by legislation? No. His laws are the considerate directions of a loving Father, profoundly desirous that His offspring shall escape all evils, and realise the highest good. He who has the true spirit of a child will always say with the Psalmist, "O how I love Thy law!" If any question this interpretation of the Divine code, let him—1. Carefully examine the character of those laws, and see if he can find one that does not tend to happiness. 2. Consult the experience of the obedient, and see if he can find one who will not say, "In the keeping of Thy commandments there is great reward." III. EXPLAINS THE INTERPOSITION OF CHRIST. What was there in insignificant and sinful man to enlist this? Was it the intrinsic value of the human soul? The soul, it is true, is superior to the irrational universe; but it is inferior, perhaps, to other intelligences; and as compared with the Infinite mind, What is it? I find the reason in the soul's relationship, as the "offspring of God. Parental love amongst men, instead of being cooled by the infirmities of the child, is fired by them. This principle, which is a Divine implantation, enables me to understand, in some humble measures, why the Infinite Father should show

all this wonderful compassion to men. IV. EXPOSES THE ENORMITY OF SIN. What laws are so binding—what authority so sacred as a true Father's? How heinous is sin—1. In relation to God, when you think of Him as a Father! The greatest ingratitude is that which overlooks a father's kindness; the greatest criminality is that which violates a father's precepts; the greatest rebellion is that which contemns a father's authority. 2. In relation to society. We are all brothers and sisters. How enormously iniquitous then are slavery, war, cruelty, and oppression of every kind? V. AIDS US TO ESTIMATE THE TRANSCENDENT BLESSEDNESS OF THE DUTIFUL. The office of a father is to provide for his children. As a guardian, God protects the mind as well as the body, and guards our existence with all its rights and interests. As an educator, He develops all the wonderful powers of our nature, trains us not only for some office in time, but for the high services of eternity. As a nourisher, He has supplies for all wants now and for ever. Conclusion: Man, reverence thy nature! act worthy of thy high relationship; thou art a child of the Infinite. The great universe is thy Father's house. Seek through Christ the pardon of thy sins, and the true spirit of adoption, and thou shalt find at last in the great eternity a "mansion" prepared for thee. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Man God's offspring*:—Man, with few exceptions, has never been able to believe that he stands alone in the universe, a helpless orphan, surrounded by blind and irresistible forces, and hurried onward by inevitable destiny. Wherever the voice of man's nature is allowed to speak, it asserts that he is God's offspring. This fact is demonstrated by—I. MAN'S INTELLECTUAL SUPERIORITY. In his physical nature he is allied to the lower animals; but the intellectual difference between the lowest savage and the highest animal is so great that it can only be accounted for by the text. Man's marvellous powers are seen in his discovery of the laws of the universe, in his forcing from nature her secrets, and in subjecting her to do him service, and above all in his capacity for knowing God. All this raises him immeasurably above all other creatures. II. HIS MORAL NATURE. In all men there is a knowledge of rural distinctions, and as arising out of them the sense of obligation. In some communities this knowledge is imperfect and even perverted, but it is there. It cannot be the result of education, but must be part of the constitution of our nature, because so universal. This fact again puts an impassable gulf between man and all other creatures, and is inexplicable save on the hypothesis of the text. III. HIS RELIGIOUS NATURE. 1. His consciousness of guilt, everywhere demonstrated by sacrifice, shows his alienation from a Being with whom he was once in harmony. 2. His struggles after a purer and higher life are but the effort of God's child to recover a lost condition and relationship. 3. His restlessness and dissatisfaction till he finds rest in God is the culminating proof. Conclusion: Christ has come to lead us back to God, to make us true sons in Him, so that His Father becomes our Father. (*J. Fraser, M.A.*) *Man God's offspring*:—What a blessed doctrine! How high our dignity! how rich our patrimony! Wherever we are, in whatever portion of His universe, we are still in His house—our home. We can never outstep our heritage. The Father has fitted nature not merely to supply our wants, but also to minister to our delight—the glitter of the star and of the dewdrop, the colour and scent of the flower, freshness and beauty for the eye, and song and melody for the ear. Our Father's house is not barely furnished, but richly ornamented. Rocks are piled into hoary mountains and picturesque heights; the woods are budding forth into life in spring, laden with foliage in summer, or swinging their great boughs to the tempest of winter; the sky folds its curtains and trims its lamps; the waters dance in torrents and leap in cascades, as well as fill the seas; there is gold as well as iron, gems as well as granites, the blush and fragrance of the blossom, as well as the sweetness and abundance of the fruit. The human frame, too, has symmetry as well as strength—possesses far more than is merely essential to life and work; the eye, lip, and brow are rich in expression and power. There is not only the power of thought essential to business and religion, but there is the garniture of imagination, poetry as well as science, music in addition to speech, ode and oracle as well as fact and doctrine in Scripture, the lyre of the bard no less than the pen of the apostle. Above sensation there rises the power of discovery—invention blends with experience. In man and around him there is not mere provision for necessities; there are profuse luxuries. "His offspring" walk in the lustre of His love. It rejoices them to know that the power which governs is no dark phantom veiled in mystery; no majestic and all-controlling force—a mighty and shadowless sceptre; no mere omniscience—an eye that never slumbers; no dim Spirit, having

its only consciousness in the consciousness of man—but a Father with a father's heart to love us, and to the yearnings of which we may ever appeal—a father's ear to listen to us, and a father's hand to bless with kind and continued benefactions. And, as we have wandered, shall not each of us say, "I will arise and go to my Father"? Will not He accept the returning child, giving us the adoption of sons, revealing Himself graciously through Christ the Elder Brother, who leads us to cry in true filial devotion, "Our Father which art in heaven"? (*Prof. Eadie.*) *Man God's offspring:*—Man has not ascended from the animal, say rather that he has descended from God. The line of his pedigree points, not downward to the dust, but upward to the skies. "The son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God." "For we also are His offspring"; not the offspring of the chimpanzee. Compare the head of the most uncivilised man with the head of the best-trained monkey, and the difference is immense. What is the capacity of the monkey brain? Thirty-two cubic inches. What is the capacity of the human brain? Ninety cubic inches. You therefore see that the brain of the most undeveloped man, who is not positively an idiot, is nearly three times the capacity of the brain of the most civilised monkey in this or any other country. How to account for the difference? There is a great deal of talking and writing in the present day about the "missing link"—the missing link between the ape and the man. Missing link indeed! It is not a link that is missing, but a whole chain. Human reason is not a development of the monkey brain; rather is it the immediate outcome of the Divine Life. (*J. C. Jones, D.D.*)

Ver. 29. **Forasmuch then . . . we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold.**—*Paul's cumulative argument:*—Up to this verse Paul has made a general statement respecting God. Here he lays down the ground-work of a true and abiding Christian philosophy. The armoury of the Church is in the word "forasmuch." It throws man back on himself, and says, "If you want to know what God is, know yourself." "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think," &c. He made us; as certain of your own poets have said. Then judge the Father by the child; the Creator by the creature made in His own image and likeness, and rise from the human to the Divine—the ascent of reason and the way of faith. Now I know of a surety that the Bible representation of God is true, because it is true of myself. My reasoning is now invincible, because it takes this turn, namely—I. Forasmuch, then, AS WE ARE NOT ENTIRELY COMPREHENDED, even by those who know us best and love us most, even so is God a mystery. II. Forasmuch, then, AS WE HAVE NOT BEEN SEEN by our dearest admirers, we ought not to think that the Godhead can be seen. You have never seen your friend; you have never seen your own self. Any mystery that we find in God we find initially and typically in our own nature. III. As we express our thought and feeling through body and form, so does God. We proceed by incarnation. Forasmuch, then, AS OUR LOVE MUST INCARNATE and embody itself, so as to touch us, we ought not to think that the Godhead is independent of the method which amongst ourselves He has made essential to union and happiness. If we have come upon this doctrine through the deep study of our own nature and ways of self-revelation, when we come to the historical Bethlehem we feel we have only come home. That Bethlehem has been in our hearts, and is the inner circle of our sacred home. IV. Forasmuch, then, AS WE FORGIVE OUR CHILDREN who repent of their sins, we ought not to think that the Godhead is unwilling to forgive. Forasmuch, then, as that man did so to that sinning son, we ought not to think that the Godhead is a carved statue in the sky. "Like as a father pitieth his children," &c. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 30. **The times of this ignorance God winked at.**—*God and the times of ignorance:*—1. Surrounded by the representatives of the great philosophic schools, and with the beautiful objects of Pagan devotion on every side, Paul characterises the error of idolatry as a mark of ignorance. It was a severe thing to say to a people who cherished the past so fondly, and who boasted of their culture; and perhaps not the least irritating thing was that Paul represented his own God—that God so new and strange to his hearers—as tolerating their worship as a matter which in no way concerned His own honour. 2. This raises the difficult question concerning certain things which God has permitted to run their course in past ages, which will not bear the test of even the lowest Christian morality. 3. As we study the Bible history, we see two movements in progress simultaneously. One the natural historic movement; *i.e.*, the progress of a history, like that of Israel, *e.g.*,

according to the natural laws under which nations mature, such as climate, soil, migration, conquest. There are those who refuse to see in Biblical history anything more than this. But mothers detect another influence which gives character and direction to the other—the providential movement, the outworking of a Divine purpose. Thus, where the philosopher sees only the migration of a tribe under some physical pressure, the religious historian hears the Lord say unto Abraham, "Get thee out from thy kindred and from thy father's house." 4. Now, our difficulty arises out of the fact that these two movements are mysteriously intertwined; that God's design works itself out through much which, to an educated Christian sense, is cruel and selfish, and by means of men who fall below even the lower types of the social morality of our day. Certainly, if we were called on to select types of devout servants of God, we should not choose Samson nor Barak, nor even Gideon; and yet they are placed in the New Testament among the heroes of faith. Or, there is that horrible business of the Canaanites, which, in some aspects at least, must, I fear, continue to be a puzzle. Take the matter of genealogy—that line which we should naturally suppose would have been kept absolutely pure—our Lord's human descent. And yet it is not so: Judah and Rahab are both in it. Such illustrations show us that, in the Bible, the natural and the providential currents mingle; so that, to human eyes, God's work in history seems discoloured by human passion and infirmity. 5. Now these facts involve difficulties; but we can nevertheless discover, running through them, some straight tracks leading us to three general principles. I. THAT THERE IS A PROGRESS IN THE DIVINE REVELATION IN THE BIBLE, from limited to fuller revelation, from contracted to expanded views of God and truth. Take—1. The Incarnation. There is a fulness of time which must come before the Redeemer can be revealed; until then there are foreshadowings, types, prophecies. Now, after Christ has come, the same law holds. He plainly tells the disciples, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now," &c. 2. Immortality. How imperfect its revelation in the earlier Scriptures! 3. Spirituality in life and worship. Is there not a distinct progress from a religion which required the complicated apparatus of altars, &c., to that which intelligently accepts the truth that God is a Spirit? So, too, there is a progress from the morality which must be kept to duty by minute precepts, to the freedom with which Christ makes His disciples free, throwing them upon the guidance of the conscience enlightened by His Spirit. II. But this principle necessitates a second—THAT OF ACCOMMODATION. 1. If we read the Old Testament expecting to find New Testament standards and principles in operation, we shall be constantly disappointed and puzzled. When you read the Book of Judges, for instance, you cannot help saying, "These characters are not for my imitation." You cannot help thinking that there is a terrible inconsistency if you do not recognise the facts of progress in and accommodation of revelation to the actual condition of mankind. You cannot expect the full tide of Christian revelation to fit the moral conditions of Israel before Sinai. And therefore we find that God adapts His revelation to them, giving them symbols and rites. What was the revelation of God in human form but an accommodation? Man would not understand God by hearing that God was a Spirit; and so the Infinite took upon Himself the form of a servant. And there is a glory to be revealed; we might as properly ask why God does not fit us at once to receive its full weight? We know simply that that is not His way; that we could not bear it if it were revealed. 2. But this principle goes farther. God gives temporary sanction to certain things which will not stand the test of Christian morality. There is polygamy, for instance, which the New Testament refuses to recognise. Slavery was incorporated into the Mosaic law. God might have brought the ages of Deborah and Samson up to the level of the Sermon on the Mount, but He did not. He might have worked out His purpose by new methods specially devised; but He took men's crudity—the practice of war, &c.—as they were, and let them work themselves out according to the spirit and methods of their age. 3. Christ recognised this fact clearly enough. "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you." What was Christ's baptism by John but a temporary adaptation to crude religious conceptions? What else did He mean by "suffer it now"? Or do not His words point back to a similar accommodation? "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time; but I say unto you something better." III. To these we must add a third principle, without which the whole question would be left in worse confusion than before—viz., THAT THROUGH THIS PARTIAL, GROWING, AND ACCOMMODATED REVELATION, GOD IS CONTINUALLY WORKING TOWARDS HIS OWN PERFECT IDEAL. If you once admit this fact of a progressive revelation, the character of the

revelation must be judged by its general tendency and outcome. Suppose I give a peach-stone to a man who had never seen a peach, and tell him that, if he would plant it, it would yield a delicious fruit; and if, after a few weeks, he should dig it up, and finding the seed just sprouting, should come jeering, and saying, "Do you call that a delicious thing?" you all see what the proper answer would be. Back of the fruit is a long process, and you cannot pronounce upon the meaning or the quality of that process until the tree is grown. Then all becomes plain. So back of the perfect law and manhood of the gospel lies this slow, moral growth of humanity. When you once perceive that the Bible means Christ, that the history recorded in the Bible moves steadily toward Christ, then you may begin to understand that God's toleration and accommodation are simply parts of the process which is to issue in the cheerful subjection of a man in Christ to the perfect law of the gospel. When you want to form a judgment of some great historic man, you read his life backward in the light of his glorious prime. Do you blame his father because he bore with the boy's childish folly, and accommodated his own higher wisdom to the lad's ignorance and crudity? But, with all its accommodations, God's economy is never content to leave the man or the people in the condition to which it accommodates itself. It accommodates itself to raise. Its testimony against sin is clear throughout. There is a very significant passage at the close of Heb. xi., in which these Old Testament saints are ranked among the heroes of faith: "God having provided some better thing for us, that they, apart from us, should not be made perfect." What does this teach but that God's purpose in the education of men does not fulfil itself in any man or generation of men, but in the whole history of mankind. Finally, we must not leave this subject without alluding to the practical conclusion which Paul draws from God's forbearance in past ages: "But now He commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent." In other words, God's tolerance in the past is a warning against presuming on His forbearance in the present. God bore with the crudeness and ignorance of the men of olden time, in order that men of a later and more enlightened day should have no excuse for claiming His forbearance. A very different conclusion this from that of those who make this Old Testament record a ground of attack upon God's character, and a reason for rejecting His later revelation in Christ. As we in happier times read of those old days, our proper sentiment is that of wonder at the patience of God through all these ages, of admiration at the wisdom of His forbearance, of congratulation that He has provided some better thing for us. 2. This history is reproduced, on a smaller scale, in your individual life. You have had your times of ignorance; and though you have had less excuse than they had, yet how your life has been marked by the forbearance of God! What is the practical result of this forbearance? Has it led you to a true estimate of sin? Has it led you to the Lamb of God, which taketh away sin? or are those terrible words of the apostle verified in you, "Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering," &c. (Rom. ii. 4–6). (*M. R. Vincent, D.D.*) *Past forbearance and present duty*:—I. THE EXHORTATION consists of two parts—1. The censure of the past times. (1) They were times of ignorance, and that easily leadeth into error. But now the light of the gospel was brought to them, God did more peremptorily insist upon His right, and commanded them to repent; for the practices of ignorance will not become a time of knowledge (1 Pet. i. 14). There was a time when we knew neither the terror, nor the sweetness of the Lord, but securely lived in sin; what we did then will misbecome us now (Rom. xiii. 12). Sins are more aggravated in times of more full gospel light (John iii. 19). (2) God winked at these times. (*a*) The meaning. Certainly it is not meant that God allowed their idolatries; that would entrench upon His honour, and hinder their repentance. First. Some think it speaketh indulgence. God looked not after them to punish them for their idolatries. Ignorance is sometimes made an excuse *a tanto*, though not *a toto* (chap. iii. 17; 1 Tim. i. 13). Secondly. Others think it speaketh a judgment. God neglected those times, or regarded them not (chap. vi. 1; Heb. viii. 9). To this sense I incline, partly because it is so explained in a parallel place (chap. xiv. 16, 17), because it agreeth with the thing itself (Psa. cxlvii. 19, 20), and because God did punish the ignorance and error of the Gentiles by giving them up to vile affections (Rom. i. 24). But yet I do not exclude the former sense, because though the idolatry of the nations continued for many years, yet God continued many signal temporal mercies to them. (*b*) The necessity and use of this reflection. It is an answer to their cavil (ver. 18), and Paul, as much as in him lieth, taketh off the prejudice of the practice of former times by a prudent and soft censure (1 Cor. ii. 8), and insinuateth

that ignorance doth not wholly excuse those that err, but rather commendeth the Lord's patience. 2. The duty of the present time. The duty pressed is repentance, which is here represented not as an indifferent and arbitrary thing, but as expressly and absolutely commanded, and that universally. II. THE ARGUMENT OR MOTIVE. 1. As propounded. (1) The circumstances. (*a*) The time appointed is put for a certain fixed space of time. The work cannot well be despatched in twenty-four hours. When this time will be we cannot tell, for God hath not revealed it (Matt. xxiv. 36); and therefore it is curiosity to inquire, and rashness to determine (chap. i. 7). It is enough for us to believe the thing, which is not strange to reason, that God should call His creatures to account. (*b*) The manner—"In righteousness." But doth God ever judge the world otherwise than in righteousness? No; but (Gen. xviii. 25). He now judgeth the world in patience, but then in righteousness. (*c*) The person. Why doth he call Christ man, rather than God? First. With respect to the Gentiles' incapacity to apprehend the mystery of the Trinity or the Incarnation; and it concerneth us to dispense truths as people are able to bear them. Secondly. Christ is to discharge this office in the visible appearance of man. As the judgment was to be visible, so the judge (Tit. ii. 13; 2 Tim. iv. 8; Matt. xxiv. 30). Thirdly. This power is given to Christ as a recompense of His humiliation (Phil. ii. 9, 10; *cf.* Rom. xiv. 10, 11). (2) The subsequent proof: "Whereof He hath given assurance to all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead." That is a sufficient testimony to convince the whole world. The Resurrection is a certain proof and argument of the dignity of Christ's Person (Rom. i. 4), and His office and doctrine (John. v. 27–29). 2. What influence this hath upon repentance. (1) The very day appointed inferreth a necessity of change both of heart and life; for how else shall we stand in the judgment who have broken God's laws, and are obnoxious to His wrath and displeasure (Eccles. xi. 9)? (2) From the manner or strictness of that day's account; He will judge the world in righteousness (Eccles. xii. 14). What then is our duty but to exercise ourselves both in faith and repentance, that our Judge may be our Saviour, and it may go well with us when this search is made? (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *Past ignorance and present responsibility*:—I. GOD'S FORBEARANCE IN EARLY DAYS—"The times of this ignorance God winked at." This expression is pregnant with mysteries. It implies a holy God condoning sin, a just God overlooking iniquity. Before we can get at the proper explanation, it will be necessary to examine briefly two points—how God overlooked and why. 1. How God winked at the ignorance of the early inhabitants of the world. (1) He did not give them knowledge. He left them in their original state of ignorance. All knowledge and light must come from Him, the Father of lights. This was not the case with all, but it was the case with the greater portion of the world. (2) He did not punish their ignorance. The great heathen nations had been prosperous and eminent. They were seats of science and art and luxury. And such they were permitted to be. It was only when they came in contact with God's chosen nation that they were made examples of judgment. 2. Why God winked at this ignorance. (1) He desired to develop His plans and schemes for man's salvation. This was to be done through human instrumentality. This process had to be carried on among a simple, ignorant, and rebellious people, and generations and ages had to pass away before it was completed. (2) He permitted a proof to be given to all time, for ever, of the utter abandonment of the human heart to evil and sin, and to show that no man would ever turn from his evil nature and sinful desires of his own accord. The ages of ignorance conclusively prove that no man by searching can find out God. Thus we see the principle of God's forbearance, which is so much better expressed by the words of the text—"winked at." God did not leave the old world in ignorance from mercy, but for the just execution of His purposes. II. GOD'S PRESENT COMMAND—"That all men, everywhere, should repent." The world went on its way until the advent of Christ. 1. The scheme of revelation was completed. 2. The season of discipline was ended. The law delivered to a chosen few was the discipline which had to be endured. 3. The work of salvation was completed. When Christ died, the top stone of the edifice was laid. Thus the consummation of all things having been attained, the way was opened for the universal application of religion. And then came forth the "command" that all men should believe. The sun began to arise, and the darkness was henceforth to be dispelled. And what was the result? A terrible change in the responsibility of man and the policy of God. 1. As to the responsibility of man. There is now no excuse for darkness or ignorance. If man does not hear and obey, the fault is his own. 2. As to the policy of God. He no longer winks

at ignorance or evil. Having removed the cause, He no longer accepts the excuse. With Him now is stern, hard justice. (*Homilist.*) *The gospel age*:—Note—1. God's relation to the world before the gospel age. The ages before the gospel were "times of ignorance" as regards the grand subjects of religion—"the world by wisdom knew not God." This was a guilty ignorance. Outward nature, and the intuitions of their own souls, were sufficient to teach them the knowledge of God; but the means they neglected. This ignorance "God winked at," not that He connived at it, but overlooked it. He dealt leniently with those dark ages. He did not interpose specially, either in vengeance or in grace. This is a question which, if proper to ask, is impossible to solve. We may discover certain useful ends answered by it; and these ends will be sufficient to satisfy us that His forbearance was worthy of Himself. It serves to show—(1) The insufficiency of human reason in matters of religion. God gave human reason plenty of time to exhaust all its resources in endeavours to find Him out. (2) The necessity of a special revelation. Since God gave mankind so many ages to endeavour to find Him out, and they failed, men are left without the shadow of a foundation for supposing that they can do without the gospel of Jesus Christ. 2. God's relation to the world in the gospel age. God's conduct now towards the world is changed. He who overlooked in forbearing mercy the wickedness of past times, now commands "every man everywhere to repent." Notice—I. THE ONE GREAT DUTY OF MAN IN THE GOSPEL AGE. To repent; which means something more than contrition or change of opinion, or renunciation of a habit; it means a change in the ruling disposition of life. Every man is under some ruling disposition, into which you can resolve all the actions of his every-day life. This is the heart of the man. Repentance is a change in this. This reformation of the soul is the one urgent duty of every man. Why? 1. Because it is right. All men, everywhere, are in the wrong, and eternal rectitude demands a change. 2. Because it is indispensable. There is no possibility of being happy without it. II. THE ONE GRAND PROSPECT OF MAN IN THE GOSPEL AGE. The day of judgment. 1. The period is appointed (Matt. xxv.). Who knows when? No one. It will come, perhaps, as the flood came—whilst men are eating and drinking, &c.; or as Christ came—in the deep hush of darkness, when men were all asleep. We know not when, but we know it is fixed. It is registered in His unfulfilled plans. His Providence is getting nearer to it every hour. "God hath appointed a day." It must come. 2. The Judge is appointed. "By that man," &c. This Man has heretofore ever dealt in mercy. Now eternal rectitude is the rule of His conduct. The grand thing that loomed before the gospel was the gospel age itself; the grand thing that looms in the future of humanity now is the day of judgment. What an argument for repentance is this righteous judgment! We must be made right to be enabled to stand in that day. III. THE ONE DEMONSTRATING FACT FOR MAN IN THE GOSPEL AGE "whereof He hath given assurance," either that there will come a day of judgment, or that Christ is the Divine Judge. The latter is the most likely idea. 1. Any teacher, living a holy life, and rising from the dead according to his own announcement, must be Divine. 2. Christ as a Teacher did live a holy life, and did rise from the dead according to His own announcement. Who can escape the inference? (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) **But now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.**—*Repentance*:—Repentance is here urged as the command of the Almighty. In other places it is declared to be indispensable to salvation. Yet men have many objections. At one time they allege that they have done nothing which requires repentance. They have not been guilty of murder, or fraud, or falsehood. At another time it is said that repentance is wholly beyond the power of man; and wonder is expressed that a command should be urged to do that which will never be done but by Divine assistance. At another time it is alleged that the requirement is wholly arbitrary. Why has God chosen these mere emotions of the heart in preference to a correct moral character as the conditions of His favour? Again it is asked, why has God made the path to heaven a path of sorrow? Such are some of the feelings that spring up in the mind when we come to men and urge upon them the duty of repentance. My desire is to convince you that they are unfounded. I. REPENTANCE IS A SIMPLE OPERATION OF MIND UNDERSTOOD AND PRACTISED BY ALL. You cannot find a person who at some time has not exercised repentance; and in the emotions of a child, when he feels sorrow that he has done wrong, and who resolves to make confession of it and to do so no more, you have the elements of all that God requires of man as a condition of salvation. No inconsiderable portion of every man's life is made up of regrets for the errors and follies of the

past. They invade the mind because we feel that we have done wrong, and that we ought to have done differently. They are not arbitrary. They are the operations of the regular laws of the mind; and they are operations which a generous and a noble heart would not wish to check or prevent. If such feelings actually occur on the recollection of the past, it is natural to ask why we should not expect to find them in religion? Further, the mind nowhere else knows emotions so overwhelming as in the recollections of past guilt. And why, then, should it be regarded as fanatical that the soul should be burdened with a sense of guilt when it comes back to God? II. GOD MAY APPOINT HIS OWN TERMS. This is true in relation to everything. Health is His gift; and He has the absolute right—a right which He is constantly exercising—to state to man on what terms it may be enjoyed; and if he does not choose to comply with those terms, God will not depart from His settled laws to give him health by miracle. In like manner, pardon is the gift of God, and He has a right to say on what terms it may be obtained. God is dealing with you in this respect just as you deal with your fellow-men. You will admit no one to your dwelling who does not choose to comply with the reasonable conditions which you may choose to have observed. You are a parent. A child violates your commands. Do you not feel that you have a right to prescribe the terms on which he may obtain your forgiveness? Even if the appointment were wholly arbitrary, God has a right to make it, and man has no right to complain. III. WHEN WRONG HAS BEEN DONE AMONG MEN, THE ONLY WAY TO OBTAIN AGAIN THE FAVOUR OF THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN INJURED IS BY REPENTANCE. You are a father. A child does wrong. Towards that son you cherish still all a father's feelings; but you refuse to admit him to the same degree of confidence and favour as before without some evidence of repentance. You have had a friend. But he betrayed you. I ask any man whether he can receive such a friend again to his bosom without some evidence of regret, and some proof that he will not do it again? IV. IN THE ACTUAL COURSE OF EVENTS UNDER THE DIVINE ADMINISTRATION IT IS ONLY IN CONNECTION WITH REPENTANCE THAT FORFEITED FAVOURS CAN BE RECOVERED. I do not mean to say that repentance will always repair the evil of the past, but that if a man who has done wrong is ever restored to the forfeited favour of God, it will be in connection with repentance. A man has wasted his health and property by intemperance. Is there any way, now, by which health, and domestic peace, and property, and respectability may be recovered? There is. But how? By this course. Why should it be thought more strange in religion than in the actual course of events? V. THE NECESSITY OF REPENTANCE COULD NOT BE AVOIDED BY ANY ARRANGEMENT WHATEVER. A moment's reflection will satisfy any one of this. The law of God requires love to Him as the supreme rule of life. That law man has violated, and the gospel requiring repentance meets him as a sinner, and requires him to return to the love of God. Now no alienated man can come back to this love of God without regret that he wandered away from Him. (*A. Barnes, D.D.*) *Repentance*:—I. ITS NATURE. 1. A true sense of sin. This is naturally the first step, for until an individual has been made conscious of his sin, it is utterly hopeless to expect that he will turn from it. Most men are willing to admit in general terms the truth that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," but few in comparison possess an enlightened and sincere conviction of their personal guilt and impurity in the sight of God. When the Spirit enlightens the mind of the sinner to discern the extent, strictness, and spirituality of the law of God, as taking cognizance of every thought, word, and action, and as requiring absolute perfection in all things, his conscience is awakened to a sense of his transgressions, so that he is ready to sink under the burden of his guilt. 2. Godly sorrow on account of sin. There is a spurious sorrow which does not regard sin itself so much as the misery which is its fruit. It is possible, too, that a man may be really sorry for particular sins, and yet he may be an utter stranger to true repentance. Of this we have a fearful example in the case of Judas Iscariot. But the sorrow of a true penitent is for sin, as committed against God, as rebellion against His rightful authority, as a violation of His holy law, and as a most base, ungrateful return for all his goodness. 3. An apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ to such as are penitent. Had we no reason to cherish the hope that God would pardon our sins, we could never return to Him as sincere penitents, but must inevitably sink into despair. 4. A turning from sin unto God, with a sincere purpose and endeavour to walk with Him in all the ways of His commandments. This constitutes the grand distinction betwixt true repentance and all false appearances. Accordingly St. Paul exhorted both Jews and Gentiles, not only that they should "repent and turn to God," but also "do works meet for repentance."

II. THE MOTIVES WHICH OUGHT TO LEAD US TO IT. 1. A regard to the Divine authority and to our own real interest. No injunction can be more explicit than this which is binding upon all men of every rank and character. Dare we thus pour contempt on His authority, especially now when "the times of ignorance which God winked at" are over, and the Dayspring from on high hath risen over our once benighted land. Consider what must be the consequence of such aggravated guilt. Jesus Christ hath declared, "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." 2. The many encouraging declarations and promises addressed to such as are exercising repentance. 3. The examples with which the Word of God furnishes us of sinners, whose guilt was peculiarly great, but who, notwithstanding, on repentance were pardoned and saved. 4. The great day of judgment. This is the grand reason which the apostle assigns for God commanding men everywhere to repent. (*P. Grant.*) *Repentance*:—I. ITS NATURE. 1. A deep sense of unworthiness to receive the Divine forgiveness. So felt Job, "Lord, I am vile: how shall I answer Thee?" So felt Isaiah, "Woe is me!" &c. So felt Peter, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." So also did Paul, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" 2. Bitter sorrow for past sin. When Peter caught the reproving eye of his Lord his repentance was evidenced by his "going out and weeping bitterly." Paul "was three days, and neither did eat nor drink"; so great was his distress of mind. When the jailor at Philippi was awakened he came trembling. 3. Confession of sin before God. The prodigal went to his father and said unto him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee," &c. "For, with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." 4. A fixed determination to abandon henceforth, by God's help, former sins. Herod heard John the Baptist gladly preach the doctrine of repentance, and he did many things which he enjoined; yet he gave not up his brother Philip's wife, and so his repentance could profit him nothing. Judas, when he saw that his Lord was condemned, is said to have repented, but he afterwards went and hanged himself. 5. Amendment of life, holiness and diligence in the service of God. 6. Restitution. II. ITS OBLIGATIONS. Repent, because—1. God commands it. 2. Because of the atonement made for sin by Christ. Repentance would be of no avail in itself for salvation; it draws all its value from the death of Jesus. 3. Because by virtue of Jesus Christ's intercession the Holy Spirit is now sent down to enable them to obey the command. Repentance, however necessary, is not a feeling which any man can produce when he pleases; it is not a product of the natural mind. 4. Because "God hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained." He who now waiteth to be gracious as our merciful Saviour in the forgiveness of our sins shall then have become our righteous Judge. And that the certainty of this awful event might be strongly fixed in the minds of men, He hath verified it by the amazing miracle of the Resurrection of Jesus. (*R. M. Jones, M.A.*) *Repentance*:—When we think of the prevalence of idolatry and superstition we are apt to ask, Where is the wisdom, justice, or mercy of suffering whole nations for centuries and milleniums to know not the worship of the true God? But all such questions are silenced in the text. God will not call the men who lived in them to such a reckoning as He will call us: they had not the revelation you now have. But though "the times of this ignorance God winked at; He now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." I. WHAT GOD COMMANDS. All men "everywhere to repent," *now*. He addresses idolaters that they should abandon their false gods and become worshippers of the true God. You and I have not to repent in that sense: our forefathers had. But now there is not an altar of Druidical worship to be found. Yet idolatry may exist in the heart notwithstanding. Now, the radical meaning of repentance is change. 1. Of mind. (1) As to God. As to the law of God. (2) As to sin. (3) As to Christ. Some persons accuse preachers of disturbing the minds of our hearers. But we do not bring the things there that are discovered—it is the light that reveals them. 2. Of disposition consequent upon a change of view. That which before was hated is now loved—the Bible, the Saviour, religion. 3. A change of conduct, for if the mind and disposition are changed, the behaviour is changed. Hence the Baptist, when he preached to the people in the wilderness, told them to "bring forth fruits meet for repentance." God, then, commandeth men to repent. He commandeth all men—the poor and the rich—kings and their subjects—the young, the middle-aged, and the old. II. THE REASON WHY THE COMMAND IS GIVEN. 1. The certainty of a day of judgment is taught by—(1) Reason. We observe the conduct of men around us: we sometimes see that the virtuous are rewarded; but

we often see the reverse of that, and if we believe in the Divine government we must suppose there is some state after this in which all these discrepancies will be adjusted. (2) Conscience. (3) The general belief of the Church of God in all ages. (4) The Word of God. 2. The period "appointed." The time is fixed; nothing can postpone it or antedate it. A day is a measured period—so long, and no longer. We know not how long this day will be: "One day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." There will be time enough for a determinate examination of every individual to be judged. The actual arrival of this day is unknown to us. This is wise. The wicked, who presume as it is, would then presume much more; the good would then, in all probability, relax in their zeal and assiduity and painstaking. "Watch, therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh." In one sense, the day of our death will be a sort of rehearsal of the judgment. But the last day is distant, and will take place at the end of the world. If every man were to be judged on his committing a single act of sin, it would throw everything into confusion, and society would be disturbed. All nations of men have certain fixed days—assize days—in which the majesty of law and order are vindicated. It is so in the government of God. 3. The Person who is to preside over the solemnities of that day. The sinner cannot object, because the Man Christ Jesus died to save him; and if He condemns him, he must, indeed, deserve to be condemned. The saint cannot object to that, because he has actually obtained his fellowship with Christ on earth; and, therefore, he sees in the Person of the Judge, his Brother, his Friend, his Redeemer. That is the occasion on which the human nature of Christ will be exalted; that is one part of the reward which the Father will give to the Son for His mediatorial acts. "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." Whoever presides over the solemnities of the judgment-day must be omniscient; He must be capable of estimating the motives and principles which actuate us; He must be a person of perfect equity and absolute perfection; He must, in short, be God. Therefore, the human nature that must sit on the throne of judgment will be the human nature in connection with one of the persons of the Godhead. 4. The process—"in righteousness." There will be—(1) Scrutiny. Those eyes that are like a flame—those eyes that see into all the depths of the human heart will scrutinise every individual character. Oh, what an unfolding of history, character, and conduct. (2) Separation—the good from the bad. And the separation will be so complete that not one sinner will be found in the congregation of the righteous, nor one righteous in the congregation of the wicked. (3) Decision. The sentence upon the righteous shall be, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." This intimates to you the vastness of our future felicity. But then the other sentence is equally strong, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." It is a solemn fact that the sentence which will determine our fate for ever and ever is not unknown; we know it beforehand. Conclusion: We learn a lesson of—1. Confirmation of our faith. 2. Self-examination. Are we prepared for this process. 3. Diligence. (*J. Beaumont, M.D.*) *Repentance:*—I. THE NATURE OF TRUE REPENTANCE. It includes—1. A true sense of sin. This must be the groundwork of all the rest, because it is impossible to hate what we do not feel. 2. The second step of repentance is being affected with a grief and hatred of sin. The former was a selfish feeling; this is a generous passion. The former respects sin as ruinous to the sinner; this regards it as offensive to God. 3. The third step in repentance towards God is an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ and a forsaking of sin. This is properly an act of faith. II. THE MOTIVES TO REPENTANCE. 1. The superior light and information derived to the world by the Christian religion, concerning the rule of righteousness according to which we ought to conduct our lives, suggests a strong inducement to repentance. What signifies the superior excellency of your religion, unless its superiority appear in your life? What avails the light to you, if ye continue to walk in darkness? Unless ye repent, it had been better for you that the kingdom of God had never come amongst you. If ye still walk in the region and shadow of death, it had been better that the Dayspring from on high had never risen over your benighted land. 2. A second motive and encouragement to repentance is the hope and prospect of success. The gate of mercy is set open by the blood of Jesus; and an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, is promised to all those who sincerely repent of their sins, to all who believe and obey the gospel. 3. A third motive to repentance is the assistance of the Spirit, which the

gospel offers. 4. In the fourth place, as an inducement to repentance, consider the cross of Christ, who suffered the punishment due to our sins. How great must be the evil of sin, and how strong the obligation for us to repent of our sins, when such a sacrifice was required to expiate our guilt. 5. It is another motive to repentance that God "has appointed a day in the which He will judge the world." (*John Logan.*) *Nature and necessity of true repentance*:—I. IT EXTENDS TO THE HEART AS WELL AS TO THE PRACTICE. Every true penitent indeed has an affecting sense of the many sins and guilty imperfections of his life; but then his repentance does not stop there, but he looks into the horrid arcana, the secrets of wickedness within | He traces up these corrupt streams to the more corrupt fountain in his heart, from which they flow. David's repentance reached his heart. Hence in his penitential psalm (li.) he not only confesses his being guilty of the blood of Uriah, but that he was shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin, and earnestly prays, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me" (Psa. li. 5, 6, 10). And he is deeply sensible of the want of truth or integrity in the inward parts. II. IN EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE THERE IS A DEEP SENSE OF THE INTRINSIC EVIL OF SIN, AND A HEARTY SORROW FOR IT AS DONE AGAINST GOD. Sin appears to the true penitent as some sorts of poison to us; that is, not only hateful because it is deadly and destructive, but hateful and nauseous in itself. I do not mean that the fear of punishment is no ingredient in true repentance; the love of God and self-love are very consistent, if the latter is kept in a due subordination to the former; and therefore the fear of punishment has great weight even with the evangelical penitent. But I mean the fear of punishment is not the principal, much less the only spring and motive of true repentance: the true penitent hates sin, even when he is not thinking of heaven or hell, but only viewing it in its own nature. He is also deeply sorry for sin, as against God, or as contrary to Him. As rebellion against His authority, as a contrariety to His holiness, as an opposition to His will and pleasure, as a most base, ungrateful return for all His goodness, and as the cause of all the agonies of the blessed Jesus; he hates it, he mourns over it with ingenuous and kindly relentings of heart. Nay, of so generous a nature is evangelical repentance, that the penitent soul never melts so freely, nor bursts out into such a flood of ingenuous sorrows, as when it has reason to hope that a gracious God has freely forgiven it. Then it sees the base ingratitude and complicated vileness of sin, as committed against so gracious a God. God's forgiving the penitent is a reason to him why he should never forgive himself. III. TRUE REPENTANCE EXTENDS TO ALL KNOWN SIN, WITHOUT EXCEPTION. They are all forbidden by the same Divine authority; all contrary to the holy nature of God; all opposite to the obligations of duty and gratitude we are under to Him; and therefore they must be all repented of. This was the character of David—"that he hated every false way" (Psa. cxix. 128). IV. TRUE REPENTANCE ALWAYS INCLUDES REFORMATION. Remember that maxim of the wise man, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy" (Prov. xxviii. 13). Observe, not only confessing, but also forsaking them, is necessary to the obtaining of mercy. The same thing appears from the various expressions used in Scripture to describe repentance. To repent, in the language of the Bible, is to depart from our evil ways; to cease to do evil and learn to do well; to cleanse our hands and purify our hearts: which expressions signify not only sorrow for sin, but especially reformation from it. In vain, therefore, do you pretend you repent, if you still go on in the sins you repent of. V. EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE IMPLIES A BELIEVING APPLICATION TO GOD FOR PARDON ONLY THROUGH JESUS CHRIST. How opposite to this is the prevailing spirit of the world! If they repent, it is to make amends for their sins, and procure the Divine favour by their repentance, and thus even their repentance becomes a snare to them, and one cause of their destruction. In this sense, a bold saying of one of the fathers may be true: "That more souls are destroyed by their repentance than by their sin"; that is, sin is evidently evil, and they are in no danger of trusting in it to recommend them to God. But even their superficial servile repentance has the appearance of goodness, and therefore they make a righteousness of it; and upon this quicksand they build their hopes, till they sink into remediless ruin. I have only two or three remarks more to make for the farther illustration of this subject. 1. The first is, that all the principles of degenerate nature can never produce this generous and thorough repentance, but that it is the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit. 2. The second remark is, that this generous supernatural repentance is not the first repentance of an awakened sinner. No; he is first alarmed with terror and dreadful apprehensions of punishment; and all the

springs of nature are put in motion before these nobler principles are infused, and he is brought to a genuine evangelical repentance. Therefore—3. The only way to attain to this supernatural repentance is to use all proper means to excite the springs of natural repentance, particularly, to reflect upon your sins, upon their number and aggravation and your dreadful danger. My subject is now ripe for an application, and this shall be nothing else but a short illustration of the other parts of my text. And to the great God you must answer for your disobedience. My text tells you God commands all men to repent—all men, of all ranks and characters. This command therefore is binding upon you all. To render the call still more pointed and universal, it is added, "He commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent." Everywhere, in city and country; in palaces and cottages; in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, wherever the trumpet of the gospel sounds the alarm to repent; in this very spot, where we now stand. Here the command of God finds you out, and calls you to repent. Nor are you allowed to delay your compliance. Repentance is your present duty: for "now He commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent": now, when the times of ignorance are over, and the gospels shed heavenly day among you: now, when He will no longer wink, or connive at your impenitence, but takes strict notice of it with just indignation: now, while the day of grace lasts, and there is place left for repentance: now, before you are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and while His Spirit is striving with you: now, while you have time, which may be taken from you the next year: now, while you enjoy health of body, and the exercise of your reason; and your attention is not tied down to pain and agony: He does not allow you one hour's delay; and what right have you to allow it to yourselves? (*S. Davies, M.A.*)

Ver. 31. **Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness.**—*The day of judgment:*—I. THERE SHALL BE A DAY OF JUDGMENT. 1. "A particular judgment." At the day of death the soul hath a judgment passed upon it (Heb. ix. 27; Eccles. xii. 7). 2. "A general day of judgment"; which is the great assize, when the world shall be gathered together (Eccles. xii. 14; Matt. xii. 36; Psa. xcvi. 13). II. WHY THERE MUST BE A DAY OF JUDGMENT. 1. That God may execute justice on the wicked. Things seem to be carried here in the world with an unequal balance (Job xxix. 3; Mal. iii. 15). Diogenes, seeing Harpalus, a thief, go on prosperously, said [that] surely God had cast off the government of the world, and minded not how things went here below (2 Peter iii. 3, 4). Therefore God will have a day of assize to vindicate His justice; He will let sinners know that long forbearance is no forgiveness. 2. That God may exercise mercy to the godly. Here piety was the white which was shot at (Rom. viii. 36). God will therefore have a day of judgment, that He may reward all the tears and sufferings of His people (Rev. vii. 9). III. WHEN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT SHALL BE. It is certain there shall be a judgment; uncertain, when (Matt. xxiv. 36). And the reason is—1. That we may not be curious. There are some things which God would have us ignorant of (chap. i. 7). "It is a kind of sacrilege," as Salvian speaks, "for any man to break into the Holy of holies, and enter into God's secrets." 2. That we may not be careless. "God would have us live every day," saith Austin, "as if the last day were approaching." This is the use [which] our Saviour makes of it (Mark xiii. 32, 33). IV. WHO SHALL BE THE JUDGE? The Man who is God-man. We must take heed of judging others; this is Christ's work (John v. 22) There are two things in Christ which do eminently qualify Him for a Judge—1. Prudence and intelligence, to understand all causes that are brought before Him (Zech. iii. 9; Heb. iv. 13). Christ is "a Heart-searcher"; He doth not only judge the fact, but the heart, which no angel can do. 2. Strength, whereby He is able to be revenged upon His enemies (Rev. xx. 10). V. THE ORDER AND METHOD OF THE TRIAL. 1. The summons to the court (1 Thess. iv. 16). (1) The shrillness of the trumpet. It shall sound so loud, that the dead shall hear it. (2) The efficacy of the trumpet. It shall not only startle the dead, but raise them out of their graves (Matt. xxiv. 31). 2. The manner of the Judge's coming to the bench. (1) It will be glorious to the godly (Titus ii. 13). (*a*) Christ's person shall be glorious. His first coming in the flesh was obscure (Isa. liii. 2, 3). But His second coming will be "in the glory of His Father" (Mark viii. 38). (*b*) Christ's attendants shall be glorious (Matt. xxv. 31). (2) Dreadful to the wicked (2 Thess. i. 7, 8). 3. The process or the trial itself. (1) Its universality. It will be a very great assize; never was the like seen (2 Cor. v. 10). Kings and nobles, councils and armies, those who were above all trial here, have no charter of exemption granted them. They who refused to

come to "the throne of grace" shall be forced to come to the bar of justice. And the dead as well as the living must make their appearance (Rev. xx. 12); and not only men, but angels (Jude 6). (2) Its formality. Which consists in the opening of the books (Dan. vii. 10; Rev. xx. 12). (*a*) The book of God's omniscience (Mal. iii. 16). (*b*) The book of conscience. Men have their sins written in their conscience; but the book is clasped (the searing of the conscience is the clasping of the book); but when this book of conscience shall be unclasped at the great day, then all their hypocrisy, treason, atheism, shall appear to the view of men and angels (Luke xii. 3). (3) Its circumstances. (*a*) Impartiality. Jesus Christ will do every man justice. The Thebans did picture their judges blind, that they might not respect persons; without hands, that they might take no bribes. Christ's sceptre is "a sceptre of righteousness" (Heb. i. 8). He is no "respecter of persons" (Acts x. 34). (*b*) Exactness of the trial. It will be very critical (Matt. iii. 12). Not a grace or a sin but His fan will discover. (*c*) Perspicuity. Sinners shall be so clearly convicted, that they shall hold up their hand at the bar, and cry, "guilty" (Psa. li. 4). The sinner himself shall clear God of injustice. (*d*) Supremacy. Men can remove their causes from one place to another, but from Christ's court there is no appeal; he who is once doomed here—his condition is irreversible. VI. THE EFFECT OF THE TRIAL. 1. Segregation. Christ will separate the godly and the wicked as the fan doth separate the wheat from the chaff, as a furnace separates the gold from the dross. 2. The sentence. (1) The sentence of absolution pronounced upon the godly (Matt. xxv. 34). (2) The sentence of condemnation pronounced upon the wicked (Matt. xxv. 41). The wicked once said to God, "Depart from us" (Job xxi. 14); and now God will say to them, "Depart from Me." "Depart from Me, in whose presence is fulness of joy." 3. The execution (Matt. xiii. 30). Christ will say, "Bundle up these sinners; here a bundle of hypocrites; there a bundle of apostates; there a bundle of profane; bundle them up, and throw them in the fire." And now no cries or entreaties will prevail with the Judge. Conclusion: 1. Let me persuade all Christians to believe this truth, that there shall be a day of judgment (Eccles. xi. 9). How many live as if this article were blotted out of their Creed! Durst men swear, be unchaste, live in malice, if they did believe a day of judgment? 2. See here the sad and deplorable estate of wicked men. (*T. Watson, A.M.*) *The righteousness of final judgment*:—In which words I observe these five particulars. I. First, AN ASSERTION OF A JUDGMENT TO COME. He will judge the world. For the more clear apprehension of the full importance of which it is to be noted that there are two parts of Divine Providence. The former, that by which He takes notice of the actions of men in this life; the latter, that by which He brings men to account in the other world. Which two branches of Providence do mutually infer and prove each other. For on the one hand if there were no such thing as a wise eye of God that strictly observes the actions of men in this world, it were impossible there should be any judgment to come, at least not a judgment in righteousness; for how shall He judge that doth not discern? And on the other hand, if there were no judgment to come, it were to no purpose for God to concern Himself about the affairs of mankind here below. Now this doctrine is the soul and spirit of all religion, and the sinew of all government and society. It is the soul of all religion, for what doth the belief of a God signify (although we should imagine Him to be never so great, glorious and happy) if He will not trouble Himself with government; in short, if He will neither reward nor punish; virtue is then but an empty name. And it is the sinew of all government; for it is certain that plots may sometimes be laid so deep that no eye of man can discover them. And there may be such a potent confederacy of wicked men, as that they shall outface human justice, in which case, what shall keep the world from running into confusion, and becoming an hell upon earth, but the discerning eye and steady hand of Providence? II. The second observable in my text is, THAT THERE IS NOT ONLY A JUDGMENT TO COME, BUT THAT THE DAY OF IT IS DETERMINED. "He hath appointed a day wherein," &c. To adjourn to no certain time is, I think, to dissolve the court; and to appoint no day is to disappoint the business; the Almighty, therefore, hath appointed an express and solemn time for this great transaction. And indeed it is worthy of observation, that in all the great passages of Divine Providence He hath passed such an immutable decree upon them, that the time of their event can be no more casual than the very things themselves. So Exod. xii. 41, the servitude of the children of Israel was determined to four hundred and thirty years, and the text tells us "that when the four hundred and thirty years were expired, even the self-same day departed all the host of the Lord out of the land of

Egypt." Again 2 Chron. xxxvi. 21, God had decreed to punish the nation of the Jews with seventy years captivity in Babylon, and precisely upon the expiration of that term, when the Word of the Lord spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah was finished, God put it into the heart of Cyrus to proclaim them liberty. III. The third observable, namely, that as the day of judgment is set, so THE PERSON OF THE JUDGE IS ALSO CONSTITUTED AND ORDAINED; "He will judge the world by that man whom He hath ordained," &c. And as all circumstances of time, place, and persons, are evidences of fact, and assurances of the principal business, so doth this particular designation of the Judge further confirm the certainty of the judgment. And not only so, but it also opens to us the great depth of the Divine goodness, especially upon these two considerations. 1. In the first place, it is wonderful decorous and becoming the Divine Majesty, and righteous towards the person of our Saviour, that He who humbled Himself to take our nature upon Him, and thereiu to fulfil exactly the Divine law, should in reward of this obedience and humiliation be exalted to be the Judge of the world, which He died for (Phil. ii. 9). 2. Again, secondly, it wonderfully displays the Divine goodness towards us, that He should be appointed our Judge, that hath been, and yet is in our nature, that hath felt our infirmities, conflicted with the same temptations, and that withal had so much love to us as to die for us. That the Divine Majesty will not oppress us with His own glory, nor employ an archangel to pass judgment upon us, who as He hath had no commerce with a body of flesh and blood, cannot have sufficient compassion of our infirmities. IV. In the fourth particular of my text, HE HATH GIVEN ASSURANCE UNTO ALL MEN IN THAT HE RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD. But how doth that assure us of this great and comfortable point? It is true the resurrection of our Saviour did denote Him to be some great and extraordinary person, but that is no sufficient argument that He shall be Judge of the world; the evidence therefore lies in this, our Saviour, Christ Jesus, whilst He was in the world, had often declared that He was appointed by God to judge the quick and dead, and appealed to His resurrection as the great proof of this. V. There is one particular more in my text that deserves especial consideration, and that is THE MANNER OF THIS JUDGMENT, OR RATHER THE MEASURES THIS JUDGE WILL PROCEED BY AT THAT GREAT JUDGMENT, AND THAT IS IN RIGHTEOUSNESS; He will judge the world in righteousness. Now in order hereto, we must first settle the Scripture notion of this phrase "righteousness" or "in righteousness." And that which I first observe to this purpose is this: Nowhere in all the Scripture doth righteousness signify rigour. I say there is no such use of this word in Scripture, when applied to God's dealings, no, nor yet when it is applied to men; a severe, harsh, rigorous man is so far from being a righteous man in the style of Scripture, that He is quite under another character. But to come home to the business, the full of my observation touching the Scripture notion of the phrase in my text is this, that δικαιοσύνη, or righteousness, is always used there in a comprehensive sense, so as to take in not only justice and uprightness, and impartiality, and the like, but also goodness, kindness, equity, clemency, candour, and mercy. "In righteousness shall He judge the world, and the people with equity (Psa. xcviii. last verse). Where, as world and people are equivalent expressions, and interpret each other, so are righteousness and equity made to be expressive of each other. Now agreeably to this notion, I will, by the guidance of the same holy Scripture, endeavour to represent the measures of that great day. 1. Christ Jesus, the Judge of all the world, will not at the last day proceed arbitrarily with men, but according to known laws; that is, He will not absolve and save any merely because He hath decreed so to do (Rev. ii. 23; 2 Cor. v. 10). Indeed in this world God doth deal by prerogative, and dispenses the means of grace as well as other favours, as He pleases, from whence it comes to pass, that greater advantages are conferred upon some people than other, but this is not the case at the end of the world, when God comes to demoustrate His justice and righteousness. And besides, wherefore is the Judge said to be the searcher of hearts, if He proceed proleptically upon bare resolution or determination? Why is He said to separate the sheep from the goats, if He make a distinction without a difference? Why is it called a fiery trial if there be no discrimination; and in a word, if He save and damn by prerogative? 2. The Judge of the world will not be partial, or use any respect of persons; that is, He will neither acquit nor condemn any man or men whatsoever, in consideration of external circumstances. As for kindred and family, the Jews were wont to bear themselves in hand with their lineage and descent, that they were Abraham's seed. God will sooner exert His omnipotency in the most improbable miracle that ever He wrought, than admit an

unholy person into heaven upon the pretence of kindred and consanguinity. And as for sect and opinion, it is notoriously evident that there is no opinion so orthodox, nor party so canonical, but an evil man may be of it, and at that day nothing will pass current for the sake of the public stamp upon it, but according to the intrinsic value; for all shall be weighed in the balance of the sanctuary. To this head I refer also, that this righteous Judge is capable of no fondness or indulgence, will be wrought upon by no flattery, will value nothing that men can either do or suffer for Him without an holy temper, an habitually pious and virtuous life, and such qualifications inherent as fit a man for the kingdom of heaven. 3. So just and righteous will be the proceedings at this great tribunal, that as no man shall be saved for the righteousness of another, so neither shall any man be damned for the sin of another, but every man shall bear his own burden. Whatever it may please the Divine Majesty to do in this world, where His inflictions are not so properly revenged or the expletion of justice, as methods of mercy to reclaim men from sin; yet most certainly at that day the sons shall not bear the iniquity of the fathers, but every man shall bear his own burden, and the soul only that sinneth shall die. 4. This Judge of all the world will at that great day candidly interpret men's actions, and make the very best of things that the case will bear. Now touching this the tenor of the whole gospel assures us that our merciful Judge will not watch advantages against men, will not insist upon punctilios, but principally looks at the sincerity of men's intentions (Matt. xxv. 34). But that which I principally note in this place is the benignity of His interpretation, for when the righteous say, "Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered," He replies, "Inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of these," &c., as if He had said, I know the sincerity of your intentions, and I take notice of the virtuous temper from whence those actions of yours proceeded; 'tis the heart I value more than the thing done, or the opportunity of doing. 5. The admirable equity of the great and final judgment is this, That the glory and happiness of good men in the other world shall be increased proportionably to the measures of their difficulties, sufferings, and calamities here in this world. The apostle tells us, "That as one star differeth from another in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead." (*J. Goodman, D.D.*) *Judgment inevitable*:—When the buried city of Pompeii was unearthed, there was found in a little stone room a circle of men lying dead around a table. They had been invited as watchers before a funeral, to remain with the corpse through the night, while the fatigued relatives rested. According to custom, a feast had been prepared as an offering to the departed spirit. These disinterested and honourable friends thought to help themselves to a moiety of the delicate provisions, and were led on to eat the viands and quaff the wine. Just in the midst of their unholy revel the ashes began to fall, the sulphurous vapours poured in, and they were strangled in the act. The city was soon covered deep under the discharge from the burning mountain—buildings all concealed, streets all filled up; and so two thousands of years passed on. Now that whole transaction, in all its dishonesty and unutterable meanness, has reached the light. The bodies of the watchers and the body of the dead they pretended to watch were lying together there in the midst of the excavations. Ages rolled away before men's eyes saw it, but God the All-seeing was aware of the infamous cheat from the moment it was perpetrated. Oh, how sober, and yet how startling, will be the disclosures of secret iniquity, hidden sins, Sabbath hypocrisy, and ungenuine life, in the great light of the future judgment, as it comes to reveal them in the dawn of eternity! (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The resurrection a judgment*:—There are two moments in the history of this world in which the veil is drawn off from God's government, and it is seen, without any doubt or confusion, how He gives judgment clearly and decisively on the side of goodness and truth. One of these moments is of course to come, the other is past. God, indeed, is far from leaving His judgment without witness in the history of the world. God rewards and punishes now. But human life, as we look at it from the outside, is still full of darkness and perplexity. The perfect and final and manifest clearing up of God's judgment on what men think and do is not now. It is not till the end and time of mortality, when the Judge sits upon the throne, that this will be pronounced, so that none can doubt it. And in the course of the world there is but one other such occasion like it in its awfulness, like it in its clearness. It was when He who had been condemned as a sinner for the cause of truth and goodness, was raised again by the glory of the Father on the third day. Christ suffered for righteousness, and in Him righteousness was justified before the world, and in anticipation of that great day when righteousness shall finally triumph. Many men,

before and after Him, have suffered for righteousness, but their righteousness was left to the varying and contradictory judgments of men. It seemed, as far as present experience went, as if they had found only evil, by keeping innocency and cleaving to the thing that was right. It was faith only that dared to trust against the melancholy resignation of experience. But in Christ the spectacle which had in others been only begun was shown also finished. The world had often looked on the sight of righteousness defeated and overthrown; it had seen the beginning of its course, but not how it was to end. But, for once, in Christ there was shown to men on earth both the beginning and the end. Never before had such righteousness suffered. On the other hand, never before had it been so unanswerably justified. "Now is the judgment of this world," said our Lord, when He was about to suffer. The world had doubted whether God did judge and rule the course of things on earth. "Where," it had asked, "was the God of judgment," and in the person of Jesus Christ, the representative of the human race, the challenge was answered; the world itself was to be judged. In Jesus Christ the boast of wickedness was made in all its insolence. But in Jesus Christ the proof of righteousness, of righteousness in man's real nature, was not put off till the world to come. In that tremendous breaking through the laws of mortality and death, we see the answer to the challenge of the world, and may be sure that it will be well with the righteous. Of this God hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised "the crucified from the dead." I am not sure that we always adequately understand how strong a faith it must have needed before Christ rose to believe this in earnest. Good men did believe it. The Psalms are full of this belief; but they are full, too, of its difficulty. They trusted like children to their general confidence in the goodness of the Lord, in spite of death; they were sure that, somehow or other, they would "see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." But to us the proof has been given. And I am not sure that we always understand how, even still, that faith needs all the support which God has given it. The power of sin is unabated. The righteous and the sinner seem left alike to find their way through life. But when our hearts fail us, when the world mocks us, let us go back as Christians did in the days of the apostles, to the open, empty grave of the Lord—let us rise up in thought and feeling to the unspeakable preciousness of that foundation-stone of all human hopes—"but now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." No triumph of evil now can equal what happened when He suffered for us and was put to shame; "but now is Christ risen from the dead"—"now is the judgment of the world." (*Dean Church.*)

The day of judgment:—The day when Lord Exeter was tried for high treason; the day when the House of Commons moved for the impeachment of Lord Lovatt; the day when Charles I. and Queen Caroline were put upon trial; the day when Robert Emmet was arraigned as an insurgent; the day when Blennerhasset was brought into the court-room because he had tried to overthrow the United States Government, and all the other great trials of the world are nothing compared with the great trial in which you and I shall appear, summoned before the Judge of quick and dead. There will be no pleading there "the statute of limitation"; no "turning State's evidence," trying to get off ourselves, while others suffer; no "moving for a non-suit." The case will come on inexorably, and we shall be tried. You, my brother, who have so often been advocate for others, will then need an advocate for yourself. Have you selected him? The Lord Chancellor of the Universe. If any man sin we have an advocate—Jesus Christ the righteous. It is uncertain when your case will be called on. "Be ye also ready." (*T. De Witt Talmage.*)

Whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.—*The doctrine of a future judgment confirmed by the resurrection of Christ:*—I. AN EXPRESS DECLARATION OF GOD concerning a future and general judgment. He hath appointed a day wherein He will judge the world. It must be owned that the natural proofs of a judgment to come, had it not been made an article of our faith, are very strong and cogent. The promiscuous distribution of the blessings and evils of this life to wicked and good men. The triumphs of injustice, and notorious oppression of right, and that not for a short time, but for a course of many years, have been all along made an argument that the Judge of all the earth will one day do right, and justify the wise though unsearchable methods of His providence in this world, by rewarding the innocent and bringing the successful and presumptuous sinner to condign punishment. And indeed there is nothing more true or certain in fact than what Solomon observes (Eccles. viii. 14, &c.).

But though this and several other proofs, which are drawn from natural religion, of a judgment to come should be allowed not only highly probable, but very evident, it must be owned, notwithstanding a great happiness to mankind in general, that God has been pleased to make this natural principle an article of our Christian faith. For by this means those who are not able to reason justly on the nature of things, or to carry on a long train of proofs, are convinced of the truth of a future judgment upon the authority of God. II. THE JUSTICE AND EQUITY WHEREWITH GOD WILL PROCEED IN JUDGING THE WORLD—"He hath appointed a day wherein He will judge the world" in righteousness. The justice of the proceedings at that day will appear in this, that God, in rewarding and punishing men, will make a more visible distinction between the wicked and the good than He ordinarily does in this life. Herein also lies the justice of the great and last court of judicature that no partial record shall be had to any persons on account of their superior quality, fortune, or other advantages in this world. To show the impartial execution of justice at that day, we have a particular enumeration of the men of the earth who have abused their power, their authority, or wealth to sinful ends, and a very lively image and the horror of despair which will then seize them (Rev. vi. 15–17). III. THE DESIGNATION OF THE PERSON WHO IS TO BE OUR JUDGE. "That Man whom He hath ordained." It might perhaps have been thought more suitable to the awful solemnity of the last day, and the dignity and glory wherein Christ will then appear, if He had been described in the character of Judge as the Son of God, the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, or in those other magnificent terms wherein He is so often spoken of in the prophetical writings. But still it is more suitable to the state and condition of mankind, and His tender compassion towards them, that when He speaks of coming to judge the world He should rather give us an idea of His human than His Divine nature. For indeed, when we consider the infinite persecutions of the Divine nature, and at what an infinite distance our sins have separated us from it, had the eternal God Himself, without the interposal of a Mediator, thought fit to convene the world in judgment before Him. Alas! the best of men would have been so oppressed with the thoughts of His glory, and their own demerits, that they must of necessity, even under their best grounded hopes, have sunk into great despondency of mind. He that has assumed our nature, and done and suffered so much for us in it, will certainly show all the lenity and tenderness to it which the terms of evangelical obedience will admit. IV. We have here a very particular and extraordinary circumstance to convince us of THE TRUTH AND CERTAINTY OF CHRIST'S COMING TO JUDGE THE WORLD, and that is by His resurrection from the dead. The miracles which were done by our Saviour throughout the whole course of His ministry carried a sufficient proof and attestation along with them of the truths which He taught, for no one could have done those things which He did in the most open and public manner without the assistance of a Divine power. Now this being one great article of the religion He came to preach and establish that God has appointed a day wherein He will judge the world, it may be said, What need was there of any further witness to confirm this article? Or why, when it was sufficiently confirmed before, was there so great stress laid on the resurrection of Christ for the proof of it? But still there was something peculiar in what related to the resurrection of Christ which rendered it an argument of the truth of His religion more proper to persuade the generality of men and to convince gainsayers than the rest of His miracles. For—1. He had Himself appealed to this testimony as one great proof and characteristic of His Divine mission and authority (John ii. 16). And therefore, besides that His resurrection was a miraculous and extraordinary event, exceeding the powers of nature, it was an argument of His being inspired with a prophetic Spirit, and that God, who alone appropriates to Himself the knowledge of future events, was in this respect also with Him. 2. The caution which the Jews used to prevent, if possible, the resurrection of Christ, gave the greater force to the arguments we draw in proof of our holy religion from it. So that His very enemies, who would fasten so chimerical an imputation upon Him, must confess at least that His resurrection could not be effected by it, but that He was raised by a power truly Divine. 3. Again, whereas it might have been objected that His other miracles were done before people of obscure and mean circumstances, before a company of illiterate Galileans, and the credulous multitude upon whom it is no difficult matter for men of parts and dexterity at any time to impose; though this objection is easily answered, from the public manner of our Saviour's working His miracles, and His propounding them afterwards to the examination of His greatest enemies, the Pharisees, yet in

His resurrection the very ground of these surmises is quite removed. There could be no artifice used on so remarkable and extraordinary an occasion. 4. There is something in the very nature of the thing itself apt to persuade men, from the resurrection of Christ, that the doctrines which He taught were true, and that He was the Messiah, the Son of God. For though every miracle is above the ordinary course and powers of nature, and supposes certain changes of bodies which cannot be accounted for according to the established order of things; yet where all the bodily powers of a man are rendered incapable of acting, and all the springs of life are entirely broken, it still seems less conceivable how He should either be able to work any change upon other bodies, or to restore His own body again to life. Conclusion: 1. If God has appointed a day wherein He will judge the world, let us have it often in our thoughts, and carefully practise the duties preparative to it. 2. If God has appointed a day wherein He will judge the world in righteousness, then it highly concerns us as we expect to stand in judgment before Him, to take care that we live and die in a holy and righteous state. 3. Since our Blessed Saviour, in speaking of the last judgment, is pleased more peculiarly to style Himself the Son of Man. This consideration will mightily fortify all true penitents against those black and desponding thoughts which are sometimes apt to arise in the minds of very good men. How great or numerous soever our sins have been, yet if we have humbled ourselves before God, and truly repented of them, we know that the blood of Jesus Christ is sufficient to expiate their guilt. 4. As by the resurrection of Christ we have a more full and express assurance of a future judgment than we could have had from the mere light of reason, let this consideration excite us to walk worthy of so bright and glorious an evidence. Let us resolve to live, not as persons that have some probable notions and conjectures about such a thing, but as men who fully and in earnest believe that we must one day appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad. (*R. Fiddes, D.D.*)

Vers. 32–34. **And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked.**—*Mocking at the truth:*—"This has been one of the worst nights," says Mr. Bampton, an Indian missionary, "I ever endured. Mockery! mockery! cruel mockery, almost unbearable! I talked for a while, and was heard by some, on the blessings to be enjoyed by faith in Christ, when a man came with a hell-hardened countenance, and that peculiar constant laugh which I can hardly bear. The burden of his cry was 'Juggernaut is the foundation! Juggernaut is completely God! Victory to Juggernaut!' He clapped his hands, he shouted, he laughed, and induced the rest, or a great part of them, to do the same. On the ground of reason I fear no one, and rage I commonly bear very well; but these everlasting laughing buffoons are nearly too much for me. It is my own great care, that amidst a reviling, laughing crowd, I do not seem abashed." (*Biblical Museum.*) *Sneering* is the natural fault of the predominance of the mere intellect unaccompanied by any corresponding growth and liveliness of the moral affections, particularly admiration of moral excellence. (*T. Arnold, D.D.*) **We will hear thee again of this matter.**—*Fatal procrastination:*—In the cathedral at Genoa there is an emerald vase which is said to have been one of the gifts of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon. Its authentic history goes back eight hundred years. The tradition is that when King Solomon received it he filled it with an elixir which he alone knew how to distil, and of which a single drop would prolong human life to an indefinite extent. A miserable criminal, dying of slow disease in prison, besought the king to give him a drop of this magic potion. Solomon refused. "Why should I prolong so useless a life?" he said. "I will give it to those whose lives will bless their fellow-men." But when good men begged for it the king was in an ill-humour, or too indolent to open the vase, or he promised and forgot. So the years passed until he grew old, and many of the friends whom he loved were dead; and still the vase had never been opened. Then the king, to excuse himself, threw doubt upon the virtues of the elixir. At last he himself fell ill. Then his servants brought the vase that he might save his own life. He opened it. But it was empty. The elixir had evaporated to the last drop. Did not the rabbi or priest who invented this story intend to convey in it a great truth? Have we not all within us a vessel more precious than any emerald, into which God has put a portion of the water of life? It is for our own healing—for the healing of others. We hide it, we do not use it—for false shame, or idleness, or forgetful-

ness. Presently we begin to doubt its efficacy. When death approaches, we turn to it in desperate haste. But the neglected faith has left the soul. The vase is empty. *The effects of the sermon*:—Learn—1. That whatever might be the diversity in the positions, talents, and sentiments of men, the doctrines of the true religion are important to all. To the "Jews," "Epicureans," and "Stoics," the apostle proclaimed the same doctrines. 2. That whatever might be the power with which the great verities of the true religion are urged, a necessary and uniform result is not to be expected. The same tool, wielded by the same hand, and with the same force and skill, could produce the same effect upon the same species of stone, metal, or timber; but the same doctrines urged by the same man, at the same time produce widely different results in the same place upon the same congregation. Here are three moral classes:—Some amongst his audience heard him —1. WITH DERISIVE INCREDULITY. "Some mocked." The Epicureans would especially do this. They denied a future state, and regarded death as an eternal sleep. Three things would probably induce them to ridicule this doctrine. 1. It stood opposed to their preconceived notions. Many a sceptic rejects Christianity on this same ground. How foolish, how arrogant is this! Are their little notions the measure, the sum of all truth? 2. It was apparently improbable to them. Are not the generations of men reduced to dust? Have not the particles of which their bodies were composed been wrought into the texture of every species and form of plant and of animal life? Where are the symptoms of a resurrection? But how foolish this! The men who saw the priests endeavouring to level the walls of Jericho, by blowing in the rams' horn, would probably "mock" them on this account, but the walls fell notwithstanding. Lot seemed as one that "mocked unto his sons-in-law," when he warned them of the approaching judgment; but the tempest of fire came albeit, &c. 3. He who proclaimed the doctrine to them was not a recognised teacher. He did not belong to their school. He was a poor Jew. What did he, therefore, know about these things? II. WITH A PROCRASTINATING RESOLVE. "Others said, We will hear thee again of this matter." Probably these were some of the Stoics, who believed in a future state, and who were disposed to give the subject a little attention at some future time. This procrastinating of the subject of religion is exceedingly foolish, because—1. It is, of all subjects, the most important. 2. Because an important step towards its reception has been taken when an interest has been created. 3. Any portion of future time is very uncertain, and even should it be vouchsafed, the existing interest may never be renewed. A "more convenient season" may never come. III. WITH PRACTICAL FAITH. "Howbeit certain men clave unto him," &c. These two names suggest—That Christianity is alike suited to both sexes. Let the woman stand as the representative of the intuitional power, and the man as the logical. Or let the woman stand as the representative of those who have to attend to the more private and domestic duties, and the man as the representative of those who have to be out in the open world—in the field, the market, the shop, the senate-house —battling with difficulties. Christianity is great enough for the greatest, and simple enough for the simplest. Conclusion: From the whole we may learn—(1) That the gospel is moral in its influence upon the world. It does not bear man down by violence and force. (2) That the gospel is not to be restricted to any class. (3) That ministers should not despair for want of success. Though some deride and some procrastinate, some will believe. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) **So Paul departed from among them.**—*Paul's adieu to Athens*:—He leaves Athens—I. HAVING CONSIDERABLY ALTERED ITS SPIRITUAL CONDITION. 1. He left it a new stimulus to thought. He gave to their understandings a new theory of the universe, a new method to happiness, a new manifestation of God. 2. He increased its responsibility. Responsibility is measured by privileges. Athens had been highly favoured; but Paul gave more of the Divine in thought to them than all their philosophers. O Athens, better a thousand times that Paul had never entered thee than that thou shouldst fail in the new-imposed responsibility! II. WITH A HEIGHTENED ESTIMATE OF CHRISTIANITY. The apostle made a great experiment in taking the gospel to Athens. He had undoubtedly heard about their great sages, and was perhaps acquainted with their systems of thought. He had no doubt received a deep impression of the inventiveness, energy, and æsthetics of their intellect in the architecture and statuary of their city. How will such men, he may have asked, regard the tale I have to tell them of Jesus of Nazareth? But after his sermon on Mars' Hill, all these misgivings would give place to an unbounded confidence in the glory of his message. Christianity has been tested by every school

of philosophy, every grade of intellect, and by every system of religion, and it has always come forth the triumphant power. How unbounded, therefore, should be our confidence! III. NEVER PERHAPS TO VISIT IT ANY MORE. There is something very affecting in a parting of this kind. It was affecting to see Moses leaving Pharoah to meet him no more until the judgment; the young lawyer leaving Christ, going away sorrowful; and now Paul leaving Athens. Though he would not return to them again—1. He had discharged his conscience, and was clear of their blood. 2. He would be engaged in the diffusion of the gospel. He was off to Corinth, and thence on, for his gospel was a gospel for humanity. 3. Though he would not return to them again, he would anticipate meeting them at the retribution. He had told them of a day of judgment, and on that day he would meet them. (*Ibid.*)

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