THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR.

ST. JAMES.

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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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ST. JAMES.

London:
JAMES NISBET & CO., BERNERS STREET, W.

INTRODUCTION TO THE EPISTLE OF ST. JAMES.

WHO WAS ST. JAMES?—Three persons bearing this name (Jacobus) occupied prominent positions in the early Church. One, the son of Zebedee, was martyred by Herod (Acts xii. 2). The second is described in the four lists of the apostles as the son of Alpheus. He was one of the original twelve, and never during the time covered by the New Testament narrative is said to have been an unbeliever. The third is the James, the Lord's brother, of Gal. i. 19, who was certainly the Bishop or President of the Church of Jerusalem, to whom St. Paul, on his return from his third journey, "went in; and all the elders," it is said, "were present." That he was the Superintendent or Bishop of the Church at Jerusalem is also evident from this, that he presided at the meeting or council in which it was ruled that the Gentiles should not be called upon to submit to the Jewish law. Now the question arises, Did these two names—James the son of Alpheus, and James the brother of the Lord—belong to the same person? This view is attended with the difficulty that the James who, with three others—Joses, Simon, and Judas—is called by the Nazarenes "the brethren of Jesus," was certainly not a believer when Jesus taught in the synagogue at Nazareth some time after the calling of the apostles, and when the people scornfully asked (Matt. xiii. 55), and later on when it is said (John vii. 5). But if he was not the son of Alpheus, of whom was he the son? We cannot tell with certainty the name of his father, but we can tell with the utmost certainty the name of his mother—that she was a certain Mary who stood by the Cross, and is four times said to be the mother of James. We will begin our examination with the first notice (Matt. xiii. 55). The second notice is in the same Gospel (xxvii. 55, 56). Taking these passages together, as being in the same book and from the same hand, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the James and Joses were the same as those mentioned in Matt. xiii. 55, and that this Mary was their mother. The notices in St. Mark are the same, and lead to the same conclusion, only that in Mark xv. 40 we read, "Mary, the mother of James the Less and of Joses," and (xvi. 1) Mary, the mother of James. In St. Luke (xxiv. 10) we read, "Mary, the mother of James," "mother" being supplied. Now this Mary is called in John xix. 25, the (wife) of Clopas. If the Clopas is the same as Alpheus, then the Apostle St. James was one of the original twelve, and the inferences we have drawn from the fact that the Nazarenes claimed him as on their side, rather than on the side of Jesus, falls to the ground, and must be otherwise accounted for. St. James must have been either the Apostle James, the son of Alpheus, or the son of a Mary, in all probability the sister of the Virgin, who stood by the Cross, but the name of whose husband has not been preserved. (*M. F. Sadler, M.A.*) The questions, whether St. James the Less was an apostle, and what is the precise relationship which is expressed by his appellation, "the Lord's brother," exercised the ingenuity of many learned writers in the earlier ages of the Church, who possessed ancient documentary aids for the solution of them which are not now extant. It would therefore be presumptuous to dogmatise on these two points. Rather we may reasonably believe that a providential purpose may be subserved even by the

uncertainty which surrounds them. The Holy Spirit, if He had been so pleased, might have made them perfectly clear by a few additional words in Holy Scripture; but He has not done so. He foreknew the doubts which would arise in the Church in regard to these questions. There is therefore a moral in His reserve, a meaning in His silence. And what is that? Perhaps by such difficulties as these He designed to make us more thankful for those essential veritics of saving doctrine which are fully revealed to us in Holy Writ. There seems also to be a special lesson to be learnt from the particular questions which have now passed under review. The Holy Spirit has thrown a veil over the personal history of the Blessed Virgin. He has not clearly disclosed to us the precise nature of the relationship which is indicated in Holy Scripture by His own words, "the Lord's brethren," "the Lord's sisters." And why was this? Might it not be in order to wean our hearts from laying too much stress on carnal relationships, even to Christ Himself? Might it not be for the purpose of reminding us of the high and holy nature of our own privileges as brethren and sisters of Christ, by virtuo of our own incorporation in His mystical body, and our relation to our Heavenly Father by filial adoption in His ever-blessed Son? Might it not be for the sake of inculcating more forcibly that holy and joyful truth which Christ Himself vouchsafed to declare to us when He said (Matt. xii. 48–50; Luke xi. 27, 28)? This divine truth—that brotherhood to Christ consists in obedience to His heavenly Father—is the sum and substance of this Epistle written by St. James, the Lord's brother. (*Bp. Chris. Wordsworth.*)

To whom was the Epistle Addressed?—It was to the Jews of the Dispersion, to the Hellenists, that St. James addressed this Epistle; to those who were non-resident in the land of Judæa, as distinct from those who were resident there; to Grecising Jews as distinct from Hebrews. They were at this time a mixed assembly in a religious point of view, as a large infusion of Christianity had spread among them through the information brought to the various centres of their sojournings by the visitors who came up to Jerusalem at that memorable Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the apostles, and from other sources. St. James makes reference to these believers as the poor, humble, tempted, beloved brethren. The sharp line of distinction between the synagogue and the Church had not yet been drawn; the Christian Jews at Jerusalem attended the services at the temple, and those of the Dispersion worshipped in the synagogues, holding, it is most probable, a gathering or after-meeting of their own body at a different hour. To this custom, it is likely, Heb. x. 25 refers. Thus our Epistle, when read, would be read in the synagogue where all met together, and thus be heard of all, both Jewish non-Christians and Jewish Christians: the former were to appropriate the rebukes, the latter the consolations of the Epistle. With this view all the parts of the Epistle are consistent with each other, and the extremes of praise and invective, in themselves so irreconcilable, each receive their own allotment and proper direction. The general tone of the letter is decidedly one of severe reproof, at times rising to prophetic denunciation, relieved by tender utterances of love and whispers of consolation: the former adapted to the majority of the attendants at the synagogue, who were non-Christians, and the latter to the minority, who had in different degrees of light received the doctrine that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah. (*F. T. Bassett, M.A.*)

The Place and Time of Writing.—As to the place of composition there is not the shadow of a doubt. Even if there were not an unbroken consent of all historical, traditional, and legendary notices as to the continued residence of the Bishop of Jerusalem in the city which was, in modern language, his see, the local colouring of the Epistle would indicate with sufficient clearness where the writer lived. He speaks, as the prophets of Israel had done, of the early and the latter rain (v. 7); the hot blast of the Simoon (i. 11), the brackish springs of the hills of Judah and Benjamin (iii. 11), the figs, the olives, and the vines with which those hills were clothed (iii. 12)—all these form part of the surroundings of the writer. Storms and tempests, such as might have been seen on the sea of Galilee, or in visits to Cæsarea or Joppa, and the power of man to guide the great ships safely through them, have at some time or other been familiar to him (iii. 4). (*Dean Plumptre.*) With regard to the date of the Epistle, opinions are more divided. That it was written before the destruction of Jerusalem will follow as matter of course from what has already been said. But there are two other termini, with reference to which it is important that its place should be assigned. These are—(1) the publication of the doctrine of

St. Paul respecting justification by faith only; and (2) the apostolic council in Jerusalem of Acts xv. With regard to the former, it seems most improbable that, supposing ch. ii. 14 ff. to have been written after St. Paul's teaching on the point was known, St. James should have made no illusion either to St. Paul rightly understood or to St. Paul wrongly understood. Surely such a method of proceeding, considering what strong words he uses, would be, to say the least, very ill-judged, or very careless: the former, if he only wished to prevent an erroneous conception of the great apostle's doctrine—the latter if he wished to put himself in direct antagonism with it. It is much more probable that all which St. James says respecting works and faith has respect to a former and different state and period of the controversy; when the Jewish Pharisaic notions were being carried into the adopted belief in Christianity, and the danger was not, as afterwards, of a Jewish law-righteousness being set up, antagonistic to the righteousness which is by the faith of Christ, but of a Jewish reliance on exclusive purity of faith superseding the necessity of a holy life, which is inseparably bound up with any worthy holding of the Christian faith. With regard to the other question, as to whether the Epistle must be dated before or after the council in Acts xv., one consideration is, to my mind, decisive. We have no mention in it of any controversy respecting the ceremonial observance of the Jewish law, nor any allusion to the duties of the Judæo-Christian believers in this respect. Now this certainly could not have been, after the dispute of Acts xv. 1 ff. The date of the Epistle is therefore probably about 45 A.D. (*Dean Alford.*)

THE OBJECT OF THE EPISTLE.—The main purpose of St. James in this Epistle was to preach to the Jews of the Dispersion the same doctrine of conviction of sin that the Baptist, and our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount, had preached to the Jews in the land of Judæa, with the same object in view, to lead them through humiliation and godly sorrow and sore compunction to see their last estate before God, and so he prepared them for the reception of that gospel which in all its fulness of mercy and free grace proclaims through Christ pardon, peace, and life, without money and without price, by His blood-shedding and all-righteous merits. (*F. T. Bassett, M.A.*) The Epistle was evidently called forth by the state of the Churches as reported to James by those coming up from time to time to Jerusalem, who spoke of the worldliness, pride, and inconsistency, the partiality, bigotry, and formality, the discontent, censoriousness, and contentiousness which characterised many who professed to be believers, and which hindered the progress of the gospel in Palestine as well as beyond it. These faults his Epistle is well fitted to correct. But he writes to them, not merely as a prophet to rebuke, or a moralist to instruct; he is anxious above all that they should not hold the faith of the gospel as a mere barren dogma, or in unrighteousness, but rise through it into a purer and nobler life, and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, exemplifying the good way of life by works in meekness of wisdom, by patient endurance, and by loving beneficence He seeks also to prepare them for days of coming trial by directing their thoughts to the coming of the Lord, when their deliverance and reward would be complete; and urges them, though scattered abroad, to live as citizens of the one kingdom foreshadowed by their ancient nation and established by the Son of God—a kingdom of righteousness and peace. (*W. Ormiston, D.D.*) The character of the Epistle is a mixed one; consolatory and hortatory for the believing brethren; earnest, minatory, and polemical against those who disgraced their Christian profession by practical error. Even in chap. ii. 14–26, where alone the writer seems to be combating doctrinal error, all his contention is rather in the realm of practice: he is more anxious to show that justification cannot be brought about by a kind of faith which is destitute of the practical fruits of a Christian life, than to trace the *ultimate ground*, theologically speaking, of justification in the sight of God. (*Dean Alford.*)

THE STYLE OF THE EPISTLE.—The language is not only fresh and vivid, the immediate outflow of a deep and earnest spirit, but at the same time sententious and rich in graphic figure. Gnome follows after gnome, and the discourse hastens from one similitude to another: so that the diction often passes into the poetical, and in some parts is like that of the Old Testament prophets. We do not find logical connection, like that in St. Paul; but the thoughts arrange themselves in single groups, which are strongly marked off from one another. We everywhere see that the author has his object clearly in view, and puts it forth with graphic concreteness. (*J. E. Huther, Ph.D.*) As mild language is suited to tender

feeling, so strong feelings produce strong language. Especially, the style acquires emphasis and majesty by the climax of thoughts and words ever regularly and rhetorically arrived at, and by the constantly occurring antithesis. (*Kern.*) The writer ever goes at once *in medias res;* and with the first sentence which begins a section (usually an interrogative or imperative one), says out at once, fully and entirely, that which he has in his heart; so that in almost every case the first words of each section might serve as a title for it. The further development of the thought, then, is regressive, explaining and grounding the preceding sentence, and concludes with a comprehensive sentence, recapitulating that with which he began. (*Wiesinger.*)

GENUINENESS AND CANONICITY OF THE EPISTLE.—It is not quoted in any of the Apostolic Fathers, though there appears a reminiscence of Jas. i. 5–7 in the "Pastor of Hermas" (bk. ii. com. ix.). There seems no clear quotation from it in Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, or Tertullian. The only references in these Fathers are to passages which are common to it and other parts of the New Testament, as to ii. 8. The first undoubted reference to it is in Origen's "De Principiis," bk. i. chap. iii. (Jas. iv. 17). He also quotes St. James's Epistle by name, citing ii. 20. Eusebius classes it amongst the books respecting the canonicity of which doubts were entertained ("Eccl. Hist." iii. 25). The Epistle is found in the Syrian Version (Peschito), though that version does not contain 2 and 3 John, Jude, and Apocalypse. It was recognised as canonical by the Council of Carthage, A.D. 297, and was quoted by some of the most illustrious of the Greek Fathers—Athanasius, both the Cyrils, Gregory, Nazianzen, Epiphanius, &c. At the time of the Reformation the doubts respecting it were revived, particularly by Erasmus, Cajetan, Luther, and others, and since by Grotius, Wetstein, Schleiermacher, De Wette, and others. It is to be remembered that, though most holy and practical in its teaching, no doctrine, or in fact, no moral aspect of Christianity depends upon it. Its assertion of the necessity of works only follows up the still more emphatic teaching of St. Paul on the same matter. It contains no allusion to the Atonement, to the Resurrection, to the Christian Sacraments, to the laying on of hands either in confirmation or ordination, and no theory of Church government, and no historical allusion; so that it presents less opportunity for citation than any other book of the New Testament. (*M. F. Sadler, M.A.*)

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CHAPTER I.

VER. 1. **James, a servant of God.**—*St. James and his Epistle* :—This Epistle, although Luther stigmatised it as "an epistle of straw," has many claims on our regard. It is the first Christian document that was given to the world, the earliest of all the New Testament Scriptures. It is more like the writings of the Old Testament than any other contained in the New, and forms a natural transition from the one to the other. To St. James the gospel of Christ was simply the true Judaism, Judaism fulfilled and transfigured. It was the law of Moses, which St. Paul called "the law of bondage," transformed into "the law of liberty." It was the beautiful consummate flower of which the old economy was the bud, the perfect day of which that was the dawn. The first special claim of the Epistle is, then, that it presents us with the earliest view of the truth as it is in Jesus which obtained in the Christian Church; and the second is, that it was written by that "brother of the Lord" who was the first bishop, *i.e.*, the first chief pastor, of the first Christian Church, viz., the Church of Jerusalem. And this "James the brother of the Lord" had much, not of the mind only, but of the very manner of the Lord. The style of St. James is precisely that of his Divine "Brother"—plain, simple, direct, pungent, and yet instinct with poetic imagination. The Epistle opens, as most of the apostolic letters open, by announcing the names of the writer and of the persons to whom it was addressed: "James . . . to the Dispersion." This was the ancient epistolary style in private as well as in public correspondence. We have many instances of it in the New Testament, as, for instance, in Acts xxiii. 26, "Claudius Lysias to the most excellent governor Felix." "James" had a history, and so had "the Dispersion"; and by his history he was marked out as the very man to write to the Jews who were scattered abroad. James was a Jew at heart to the day of his death, though he was also a Christian apostle. Who, then, so suitable as he to instruct men who, though Jews by birth and training and habit, had nevertheless embraced the Christian faith? After the death and resurrection of Christ he became the bishop and pillar of the Church in Jerusalem—a Church which was as much Hebrew as Christian; a Church which shook its head doubtfully when it heard that Gentiles also were being baptized; a Church from which there went forth the Judaisers who dogged St. Paul's steps wherever he went, hindered his work, and kindled a tumult of grief and indignation in his heart. And these Judaisers carried with them "letters of commendation" from St. James, and were for ever citing the authority of "the Lord's brethren" against that of St. Paul. It may be doubted whether he ever really approved the generous course St. Paul took. It is quite certain that, to the end of his life, he was as sincerely a Jew as he was a Christian. Till he was put to death by them, the Jews, the very Pharisees of Jerusalem respected and honoured him, although they hunted many of the Christians, and especially their leaders, to prison and the grave. Writing soon after James had passed away, an ecclesiastical historian tells us that he was holy from his mother's womb. He drank no wine nor strong drink, and no razor ever came on his head. He alone was allowed to go into the holy place of the temple, the shrine sacred to the priests. He was so long and often on his knees that they grew hard like a camel's. When a religious crisis arose, and

the Pharisees heard that many were going astray after Jesus, they came to James of all men—the brother of Jesus and the bishop of the Church!—to beg that he would recall the people from their errors, so entirely did they regard him as one of themselves. On the feast-day they placed him on the front of the temple, and adjured him to tell the multitude, since many had gone astray after Jesus, what the true way of salvation was. They were thunderstruck when he gave testimony to the Son of Man as the Lord and Christ foretold by the prophets; but, as soon as they could believe for wonder, they rushed upon him, crying, "Woe! woe! Even the Just One is deceived!" They cast him down from the temple, and beat out his brains with a club. His testimony to Jesus as the Christ can hardly have been very zealous if the Pharisees regarded him as one of themselves, and put him forward to speak against the Son of Man. The fact seems to be that he never regarded Jesus as more than the Jewish Messiah, or the gospel as more than the fulfilling of the law. He did not see that, when a law is fulfilled, it gives place to a higher law. But whatever the defects we may discover in St. James, it is obvious that these very defects adapted him to be an apostle to the Jews. He may have quietly won many to the faith whom a man of a more catholic spirit would have alienated. At least he could help to make the men of Jerusalem better Jews; and that, after all, was the most likely way to make them Christians. But what sort of Jews were those to whom this letter was addressed—the Jews of "the Dispersion"?—and wherein did they differ from the Jews of Jerusalem? When the Jews returned from their captivity in Babylon they left behind them the great bulk of their race. Only a few poor thousands returned; hundreds of thousands preferred to remain in the lands in which they had been settled by their conquerors. As they multiplied and prospered they spread, until they were found in most of the great centres of commerce and learning in the ancient world. So, too, the Jews who had returned to Judæa also multiplied and grew, till the land became too strait for them. Their fathers had been farmers and wine-growers, each tilling his own acres or dressing his own vines. But the sons were compelled by their growing numbers to build cities and to embark in manufacture and traffic. Meanwhile the great heathen empires—Persian, Syrian, Egyptian, Greek, Roman—had thrown the whole world open to them; and of this opening they were quick to avail themselves. It was inevitable that travel and intercourse with many men of many races should widen their thoughts. They could not encounter so many new influences without being affected by them. The influence they most commonly met, and to which they yielded most, was that of Greek thought and culture. Though they retained the faith and the Scriptures of Moses, they read them in a more philosophical and cosmopolitan spirit. Now, if we picture these foreign Jews to ourselves—these "twelve tribes in the Dispersion," as St. James calls them, just as we might speak of "the greater Britain beyond the sea"—if we picture to ourselves these men, far from the land of their fathers, dwelling in busy, populous cities, where they were compelled to hold daily intercourse with men of other creeds and customs than their own, where, so to speak, a larger, freer current of air tended to disperse the mists of local or racial prejudice, we shall readily understand that they were more accessible to new ideas, and especially to any new ideas which came to them from the land of their fathers, than their brethren who remained at home breathing the loaded atmosphere of their ancient city, into which the movements of the outside world could seldom penetrate. The Christian ideas, the good news that *He* was come for whom their fathers had looked, would be more impartially weighed by these Hellenised and foreign Jews than by the priests and Pharisees who dwelt under the shadow of the temple, and felt that, if Jesus should increase, they must decrease. Nor would the catholicity of the Christian faith, its appeal to men of every race, be so offensive to the tribes of the Dispersion as to the Jews of Judæa. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *The ministry of James*:—I. A MINISTRY CONSCIOUSLY AUTHORISED BY GOD. The pledge of our soldiership, the credentials of our ambassage, are to be found chiefly within us, not without and around. II. A MINISTRY AFFECTIONATELY ADDRESSED TO ALL. The true ministry never seeks to limit its love to one Church, or to square its sympathies to one sect. No scattering, either of denomination or distance, hinders the desire that all may be taught, comforted, sanctified, saved. III. A MINISTRY OCCASIONALLY WROUGHT BY WRITING. Some things are noticeable about the ministry of writing as compared with that of speech. 1. It is wider in its scope. 2. It is more permanent in its form. 3. It is frequently more easily discharged. Parents, friends, all who write to dear and most distant ones, can discharge a ministry thus. (*U. R. Thomas.*) *Service the true idea of a Christian life*:—The world is

full of servants of one kind and another. 1. Many are servants through the force of their worldly position. 2. Through the weakness of their intellectual and moral natures. 3. Through the dominant force of an evil passion. 4. Through their effort to pursue a Christly method of life. By striving to bring our daily life into conformity with the Saviour's, by endeavouring to become pure in our nature, spiritual in our ideas, reverent in our dispositions, and unselfish in our activities, we enter upon the highest service of which a human soul is capable. I. IT IS A SERVICE DEDICATED TO THE SUPREME BEING OF THE UNIVERSE: "James, a servant of God." 1. It is a service dedicated to God. 2. It is a service dedicated to the only Saviour of mankind: "And of the Lord Jesus Christ." 3. This service requires the divinest attitudes and truest activities of our moral nature. It must be—(1) Sincere in its motives. (2) Pure in its effort. (3) Willing in its obedience. (4) Eternal in its duration. The moral relationships of the soul are deeper and more enduring than any other. 4. This service confers the highest dignity upon the moral nature of man. 5. This service presses itself upon our moral nature with the most emphatic claims. (1) That God is our Creator. (2) That Christ is our Saviour. II. IT IS A SERVICE DIRECTED TO THE MORAL CONSOLATION AND INSTRUCTION OF THE SORROWFUL. 1. James recognises the sorrowful condition and painful circumstances of those to whom he wrote. 2. The service of James was rendered effective by the ministry of the pen. III. IT IS A SERVICE INTENSE IN ITS CONVICTION AND PERSONAL IN ITS REALISATION: "James." IV. IT IS A SERVICE MOST JUBILANT IN ITS INSPIRATION: "Greeting." 1. It is jubilant because united to the highest source of joy and hope. 2. Because it has to console the world's sorrow. 3. Are we all engaged in this service? (*Joseph S. Exell, M.A.*) *Servants of God and Christ*:—Men are the servants of God either generally or particularly. Generally, they are all the servants of Jesus Christ whosoever profess His religion and promise their service unto Him in the general calling of a Christian. Specially, they are called the servants of God and of Christ who in some chief calling do homage unto God and promote His kingdom. So princes in commonwealths, preachers and ministers in the Church of Christ, are servants of God and of Christ in special service. If we were princes, prelates, angels, yet this is the height of all glory, to rejoice in the service of Christ. Who are we, and what are our fathers' houses, who can imagine greater glory than to be servants unto Christ? 1. Now, this name of servant must teach us humility, that we submit ourselves to Christ, whose servants we are, and for His sake and by His example to serve one another, whereunto He exhorteth (Matt. xx. 25–27); whereunto His example in washing His disciples' feet serveth (John xiii. 4–7, 10, 17). Submit yourselves one to another, deck yourselves inwardly in lowliness of mind, for God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble. Hereof our profession and calling putteth us in remembrance, who are servants by calling, to serve God in spirit and truth, and to serve one another in the fear of God. 2. By our service we are furthermore taught what we owe unto Christ Jesus our Lord, even all service, which is the end of our redemption and cleansing by Christ from our sins (Luke i. 74, 75). Let us, then, in the fear of God, confess Him with our mouths, praise Him with our tongues, believe Him with our hearts, glorify Him in our works, and in all things serve Him as it becometh us; for—(1) He hath made us, and not we ourselves; (2) He hath redeemed us, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but by His own blood; (3) He saveth us from death and delivereth us from peril and trouble; (4) He advanceth us to glory. 3. Servants ought to imitate such virtues as they find to shine in their masters. We are the servants of Christ; we are bound, therefore, to imitate His meekness, patience, humility, love, long-sufferance, liberality, kindness, forgiveness of offences, and the like virtues, which shone in the whole life of Jesus Christ. 4. Servants must attend upon their masters' will, wait their leisures, rely upon their care for them, seek all necessaries at their hands; so we, the servants of Christ, must do His will in all things, wait His leisure patiently for our deliverance, depend upon His provident care, and in all our necessities have recourse to Him by prayer. 5. That St. James entitleth himself the "servant of Christ," he doth not only intimate that he was the servant, the minister and ambassador of Jesus Christ, the Prince of all the princes of the earth, but also giveth us to understand how carefully he had executed that office unto him committed; and if we diligently peruse the writings of the apostles we shall find them no less, in consideration of their faithfulness, in performing their duties, than in regard of their high callings, to have termed themselves the servants of Christ. 6. In that he calleth himself the "servant of Christ" he teacheth us that as many as will be the true servants of Christ must addict them-

selves wholly unto His service, because no man can serve two masters, God and Mammon, Christ and Belial. 7. That he professeth in open writing that he was the servant of Jesus Christ, and that in those dangerous days when wickedness flourished and Christian religion was persecuted: it teacheth God's saints that they must never be ashamed to confess Jesus Christ. (*R. Turnbull.*) *A servant of God and of Christ*:—James is not only God's servant by the right of creation and providence, but Christ's servant by the right of redemption; yea, especially deputed by Christ as Lord, that is, as mediator and head of the Church, to do Him service in the way of an apostle; and I suppose there is some special reason for this disjunction, "a servant of God and of Christ," to show his countrymen that in serving Christ he served the God of his fathers, as Paul pleaded (Acts xxvi. 6, 7), that in standing for Christ he did but stand for "the hope of the promise made unto the fathers, unto which promise the twelve tribes, serving God day and night, hope to come." (*T. Manton.*) *Moral relationship better than carnal*:—James, the Lord's kinsman, calls himself the Lord's "servant." Inward privileges are the best and most honourable, and spiritual kin is to be preferred before carnal. (*Ibid.*) *Service*:—1. The truest relation to Christ is founded in grace, and we are far happier in receiving Him by faith than in touching Him by blood; and he that endeavours to do His will may be as sure of Christ's love as if he were linked to Him by the nearest outward relations. 2. It is no dishonour to the highest to be Christ's servant. James, whom Paul calls "a pillar," calls himself "a servant of Christ"; and David, a king, says (Psa. lxxxiv. 10). 3. The highest in repute and office in the Church yet are still but servants. 4. In all services we must honour the Father and the Son also (John v. 23). Do duties so as you may honour Christ in them; and so—(1) Look for their acceptance in Christ. Oh! it would be sad if we were only to look to God the Father in duties. But now it is said that "in Christ we have access with boldness and confidence" (Eph. iii. 12), for in Him those attributes which are in themselves terrible become comfortable; as water, which is salt in the ocean, being strained through the earth, becometh sweet in the rivers, that in God which, out of Christ, striketh terror into the soul, in Christ begets a confidence. (2) Look for your assistance from Him. You serve God in Christ—(*a*) When you serve God through Christ (Phil. iv. 13). (*b*) When you have an eye to the concernments of Christ in all your service of God (2 Cor. v. 15). (*c*) When all is done for Christ's sake (2 Cor. v. 14). (*Ibid.*) *"A servant"*:—He makes no mention of his apostleship. The explanation may be that it was not called in question, and so did not require to be vindicated or asserted. This title may have been a kind of official designation, indicative, not only of his personal character, but also of his ministerial calling, or it may simply have been expressive of his devotion to the work and will of God in common with all His true people. In either case it was of a simple, unassuming description. He comes down to a level with the rest of his brethren. He claims no distinction but what the whole of them, in substance, possess (Psa. cxvi. 16). And yet, while in this respect low, in another how high the title here taken! We never can get beyond it; no, not in a state of glory—not when at the perfection of our being. No creature, not even the archangel nearest the throne, can climb higher; nor does he desire. It is said of the redeemed inhabitants of the new Jerusalem, "His servants shall serve Him." "And of the Lord Jesus Christ." Here comes in the distinctively Christian element. The Old Testament saints might be, and often were, honoured by being called "the servants of God." James had much of the spirit which animated these ancestral worthies. In his character and habits he resembled one of the ancient priests or prophets. But by what he thus added he marked out himself and his fellow-disciples from all who preceded. The two parts were perfectly consistent, the two masters but one in reality. (*John Adam.*) *"A servant of God," &c.*:—This title conveys more than the general notion of one who believes in and obeys God and the Lord Jesus Christ. The call he had received, the mission and special field of labour assigned him, are also embodied in the term. It is equivalent to the "servant of the Lord" of the Old Testament, a designation with which only a few of the members of the Hebrew Church were honoured, who were raised up by God for some specific work: the founding of a covenant, as in the case of Abraham and Moses: the inaugurating of some step in advance, or the introduction of some new phase or development of the system, as in the case of Joshua, David, and Zerubbabel. Thus St. James had a special service entrusted to him, which appears in this very Epistle to have been to make an appeal to a particular section of his brethren. (*F. T. Bassett, M.A.*) *An argument*

for the Deity of Christ:—If any modern teacher were to sign himself "a servant of God and of Calvin," or "of Arminius," should we not shrink as from a wanton blasphemy, and charge him with having spoken of a mere man as though he were "the fellow of the Lord of hosts"? Judge, then, what James meant when he described himself as equally bound to the service of Jesus and of God. (*S. Cox, D.D.*)

Scattered abroad.—*The dispersion*:—What scattering or dispersion is here intended? 1. Either that which was occasioned by their ancient captivities, and the frequent changes of nations, for so there were some Jews that still lived abroad, supposed to be intended in that expression, "Will he go to the dispersed among the Gentiles?" (John vii. 35). Or—2. More lately by the persecution spoken of in the eighth of the Acts. Or—3. By the hatred of Claudius, who commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome (Acts xviii. 2). And it is probable that the like was done in other great cities. The Jews, and amongst them the Christians, being everywhere cast out, as John out of Ephesus, and others out of Alexandria. Or—4. Some voluntary dispersion, the Hebrews living here and there among the Gentiles a little before the declension and ruin of their state, some in Cilicia, some in Pontus, &c. (*T. Manton.*) *God regards the afflicted*:—God looks after His afflicted servants: He moveth James to write to the scattered tribes: the care of heaven flourisheth towards you when you wither. (*Ibid.*) *The dispersion*:—James had in view Jews, not simply as such, but as Christians; that is, believers of his own nation. They were his special charge; and that it was to them he now wrote, is evident from the nature and design of the Epistle. They were the true Israel. They were the seed of Abraham, not after the flesh only, but also after the Spirit. They were the proper representatives of the holy nation; and as such may have been indicated by the language here used. While they were directly addressed, the Gentile converts were not excluded, for they formed with them one Church and community. Nor did the apostle fail to make most pointed references to the state of things among their antichristian brethren—a state of things by which they were more or less injuriously affected. Their outward condition, as thus scattered abroad, was a kind of reflection of the spiritual condition of God's people in all lands and ages. They are strangers and sojourners on the earth; they are wanderers, wayfarers, at a distance from home, and engaged in seeking a country. They are citizens of heaven; their Father's house and native land are there; their inheritance and their hearts are not below, but above. Their present state is one of dispersion. (*John Adam.*) *The dispersion*:—The pilgrim troops of the law became caravans of the gospel. (*C. Wordsworth.*) **Greeting.**—*Peace heightened into joy*:—When Hebrew met Hebrew, the one saluted the other with "*Peace* to you"; for they had learned that the real blessedness of life was to be at peace with all the world, themselves, and God. But when Greek met Greek, the one saluted the other with "*Joy* to you," the Greeks being lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of peace. Of course, when they used this salutation, they did not always recognise its full meaning, any more than we, when we say, "Good-bye," always remember that the word means, that it is a contraction of, "God be with you." But St. James both compels his readers to think of its meaning, by continuing, "Count it all joy when ye fall into manifold trials," and at once proceeds to put a higher, a Christian, meaning into the heathen salutation. His joy, the joy he wishes them, is not that pleasant exhilaration which results from gratified senses or tastes of which the Greeks were conscious when things went to their mind; nor that heightened and happy consciousness of the sweetness of life which they held to be the supreme good. It was rather the "peace" for which the Hebrew sighed; but that peace intensified into a Divine gladness, elevated into a pure and sacred delight. It was the joy which springs from being restored to our true relations to God and man, from having all the conflicting passions, powers, and aims of the soul drawn into a happy accord. It was that fine spiritual essence which radiates new vigour and delight through all the faculties and affections of nature when we stay ourselves no longer on the changeful phenomena of time, but on the sacred and august realities of eternity. A peace all shot through and through with the rich exhilarating hues of gladness, this was the "joy" which St. James invoked on the twelve tribes of the Dispersion. (*S. Cox, D.D.*)

Vers. 2–4. **Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.**—*The Christian's duty in times of trial*:—This positive injunction of the Christian ethics may seem too difficult, if not impossible to be obeyed. And even if the natural repugnance to suffering can be vanquished, the moral sense still shrinks from what is here com

manded, to rejoice in temptation. The paradox is not to be removed by violently changing the established meaning of the word, which never means affliction simply, but in every case conveys the idea of a moral trial, or a test of character. A temptation, to which patience is the proper antidote, must be specifically a temptation to impatience, a rebellious temper, to which we are tempted by a state of suffering. We must, therefore, understand the words as having reference to those providential trials of men's faith and patience in which they are rather passive than active, and under which their appropriate duty is not so much resistance as submission. But even these trials and temptations are not to be sought for or solicited. It is not the mere name, or pretence, or some infinitesimal degree of joy, that believers under trial are to exercise, but "all joy" as opposed to none, and to too little, and to every kind of counterfeit. So far from repining when you fall into divers trials, "count it all joy." But as we know, both from Scripture and experience, that no "chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, and that afterward (ὕστερον) it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. xii. 11). This is perfectly consistent with the form of expression (ὅταν περιπέσητε) which might even be translated to mean "when" or "after," "ye have fallen into divers trials." This precise determination of the time at which the joy is to be exercised, as not the time of actual endurance, much less that of previous expectation, but rather that of subsequent reflection—I mean subsequent, if not to the whole trial, yet at least to its inception—this may throw some light on two points. The first is the paradoxical aspect of the exhortation to rejoice in that which necessarily involves pain and suffering. The paradox, to say the least, may seem less startling if we understand the text as calling upon men to rejoice, not that they are suffering, or while they suffer, although even this does not transcend the limits of experience, as we know from the triumphant joy of martyrs at the stake, and of many a lowlier believer on his death-bed, but that they have suffered, that it has pleased God, without their own concurrence, to afford them the occasion of attesting their fidelity, and submission to His will. The other point on which the same consideration may throw some light, is the choice of an expression which, although it primarily signifies no more than moral trial or a test of character, in general usage does undoubtedly denote a positive solicitation to do wrong. For even in this worst sense of temptation, it may be a subject of rejoicing, not beforehand, no, nor in the very crisis of the spiritual conflict; but when that is past, looking back upon the fearful risk which has been escaped, not merely with gratitude for its deliverance, but with unaffected joy that there was such a risk to be delivered from, because it has now served to magnify God's grace, and at the same time to attest its own fidelity. Just as the soldier, who would have been guilty of the grossest rashness, if he had deliberately thrown himself into the way of a superior enemy, may—when unexpectedly surrounded and attacked, he has heroically cut his way through—rejoice, not only in his safety, but in the very danger which compelled him to achieve it. But the joy experienced in the case before us is not merely retrospective, but prospective also. It is not an ignorant or blind joy, but is founded in knowledge, not only of the principles on which men ought to act, but of the consequences which may be expected from a certain course of action or of suffering. The trials or temptations of the Christian are the test of his faith, both in the strict and comprehensive sense. They put to the proof his trust in God, his belief of what God says, of what He promises. But in so doing, they afford the surest test of his whole religious character. Specific trust in God's veracity and faithfulness cannot be an insulated act, or habit. It must have its causes and effects homogeneous to itself in the man's creed, in his heart, in his life. But it does not merely furnish present evidence of faith. It produces a permanent effect upon the character. It generates a habit of patient endurance in the way of God's commandments. For of patience, as of faith, it may be said that it cannot stand alone, independently of other graces of Christian character. The principle of active and passive obedience is the same. He who will not do God's will cannot endure it in a Christian spirit. He can only endure it in the way of punishment. Evangelical patience carries with it evangelical obedience or activity. It therefore comprehends a very large part of practical religion, and to say that it is matured by trial is to say that trial or temptation, in the sense here put upon the term, is an important means of grace, of spiritual growth, and instead of being angrily complained of as a hardship, ought not indeed to be desired any more than medicines, especially when composed of poisons, should be used as ordinary food; but when administered, without our agency or even option, by the Great Physician, should be

thankfully submitted to, and afterwards rejoiced in, as a potent agency of God's appointment which produces great effects, not by a sudden change, but, as the original expression seems to mean, by a gradual and long-continued process; for the trial of our faith "worketh out," elaborates, and as it were laboriously cultivates a habit of persistent obedience and submission to the will of God, both in the way of doing and suffering. That the patience thus commended is not a sluggish principle, much less a mere condition of repose, but something active in itself and tending to activity in others, is evident enough from the apostle's exhortation not to hinder it in its operation, but to let it have its perfect work or full effect. Could this be said of mere inertia, or even patient nonresistance? All this affords abundant room for wise discrimination. It is evidently not a matter which can be conducted to a safe issue by mere audacity or force of will, by cutting knots which ought to be untied, which can neither solve themselves nor be solved by any intellectual force short of wisdom in the highest sense. This wisdom, the idea of which was familiar to the wisest of the heathen, has been realised only in the school of revelation. And woe to him who undertakes, without it, to solve the intricate and fearful problem of man's character and destiny! (*J. A. Alexander, D.D.*) *Christ's school of suffering*:—Luther has somewhere made that fine confession, that there were chiefly three things which had introduced him into the depths of true divinity, and which he was, therefore, accustomed to recommend to every one as proved—viz., silent meditation on the Word of God; persevering and ardent prayer, together with the Word of God; and inward and outward attacks on account of the Word of God. It is trial which must arouse the spirit plunged into earthly concerns, and benumbed by the influence of the world out of the sleep of security, and point him to that Word which leads the foolish to wisdom, the sinner to righteousness. Besides, in many cases, especially in the days of carnal ease, the flame of prayer, even on the altar of the regenerated man's heart, would burn out, if trials, returning from time to time, did not carry fresh wood to stir anew the fire of devotion. It is only by struggling that the inward life can become strong: it is only in the storm that the stem of life and godliness can take deeper and firmer roots. I. In Germany it is one of the requisites of civil law, that he who wants to become a citizen SHALL PASS THROUGH THE POPULAR SCHOOL. They, therefore, speak of a legal school-duty which no one is permitted to shun. There is, also, such a duty in the kingdom of God. He who wants to become a citizen of that kingdom must not refuse to enter the school of suffering which the Lord Himself has instituted on earth, and sanctified by His example. Already, as the natural descendant of Adam, the first sinner, every one has to carry his share of the common misery which weighs on humanity, and cannot avoid it. But what for the natural man is only a constraint laid upon him from without, is, in the case of the Christian, spiritualised and glorified into a deed of voluntary obedience. "The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord. If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." "We must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God." They declare the duty of suffering to be a general law of the Christian life. If, therefore, we look into the roll of the citizens of the heavenly kingdom, we do not find there a single one who had not, in the school of suffering, to resolve heavier or easier tasks, and been obliged to stop longer or shorter there. You have, therefore, no right to complain, if the Lord takes you into the school of suffering, and there assigns you your task. You thereby only fulfil an obligation incumbent upon you as a citizen of the kingdom of God. You will not wish to be exempt from what is the lot of every one. Yea, it is an honour for you to belong to a school through which have passed the prophets and the apostles themselves, and out of which are come the first-fruits of the creatures of God. II. The peculiarity of each school arises out of THE FIXED AIM TRIED TO BE ATTAINED WITH THE PUPILS, AND FOR WHICH, THEREFORE, ALL SCHOOL ARRANGEMENTS ARE CALCULATED. Thus, the burgher-school wants to form able burghers; the practical school, clever tradesmen; the military school, gallant soldiers; the college, intelligent servants of the state and of the Church. In a similar manner, Christ's school of suffering pursues a fixed aim. He wants to form His pupils into thoroughly-qualified men; in short, He wants to make nothing less of them than princes and priests in the kingdom of the immortal God. His patience and His obedience, His meekness and His humility, His firm faith and His persevering hope, His victorious fight and His glorious perfection, are to be reflected in the trial of their sufferings, so that He may be able to behold in them the true followers of His spirit, and sharers of His glorious life. From this point of view the apostles

considered their sufferings, and by this the sharpest sting of them was broken, and the bitterest cup was wonderfully sweetened. "We always bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." We are sorry to perceive that this apostolical apprehension of sufferings has become so rare among us. If faith can only lay hold on that thought, the burden of suffering is thereby diminished, and we are able to say, with St. Paul, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." III. But, besides the aim of the school, there must, in each well-regulated establishment, also exist A FIXED PLAN AFTER WHICH TO PROCEED. If there is to be progress in the studies of the pupils, a well-pondered plan must not be wanting, by which is determined in what gradation the various branches are to be imparted, and what method of teaching must be observed. For Christ's school of suffering, too, there is a fixed plan according to which the pupils are treated. It is in good hands, for it has been made by Him who gives term and measure to each thing, and always remembers that we are dust and ashes. As soon as the height fixed by Him is reached, the waters will fall again, the storm will abate, thou wilt again perceive the dry land, and thy soul will be permitted to thank the Lord on her harp, that He has been the help of thy countenance and thy God. (*W. Hofacker.*) *Trials*:—I. TRIALS ARE A COMMON CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE. 1. Numerous. They come one after another in quick succession, attack us at every point, and, by reiterated importunity, wear out resistance. A continual dropping wears the stone, and blow after blow shatters the fortress. 2. Diversified. The trials are addressed to the different elements of our nature, and are brought to bear on the ever-varying conditions of our life. 3. Combined. They conspire to encompass and overthrow, with such close and serried ranks that there seems no way of escape, and the sorely beset sufferer says, "All these things are against me." 4. Intensified. Often, in the case of Christians of every age, the trials which befall them are more grievous from the time, place, and manner of their occurrence—sufferings inflicted through those that are dear, or when weakened by age or infirmity, and removed from the sympathy and succour of friends. II. TRIALS ARE A NECESSARY CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE. They are designed to reveal to us our own sinfulness and weakness, to discover the graces of the Spirit, to prove the strength of our faith, the ardour of our love, the constancy of our devotion. Like the tree which becomes the more firmly rooted by the blasts which toss and twist its branches, the believer only clings more tenaciously to his Lord when his soul is tried by affliction. III. TRIALS ARE A COMPLETION OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER. What but lives thus perfected by the chastening hand of God can bow cheerfully beneath poverty, feeble health, and dark days of discouragement, or bear up under calumny and vexatious opposition, or wait and work even though the promise tarry and the blessing seems withheld? In proportion as we endure, we obtain grace in fullest measure, and adequate to every demand or emergency. IV. TRIALS ARE A SOURCE OF CHRISTIAN GLADNESS. The conscious joy of trials springs from the results which follow them. 1. The honour conferred. Suffering for Christ is a gift of favour. 2. The comfort imparted. A stronger sense of assurance is wrought in the soul, and when trials are peculiarly severe, often a foretaste of future felicity is obtained, and martyrs are more than conquerors. 3. The usefulness achieved. The silent heroism and calm endurance of the sufferer are often more effective in maintaining and spreading the truth than the logical reasoning and persuasive eloquence of the preacher. (*W. Ormiston, D.D.*) *God's school of trial for the good*:—I. THE DISCIPLINE OF THIS SCHOOL SHOULD BE CHEERFULLY MET. 1. Because trials test our faith. 2. The working of faith develops patience. 3. Patience tends to completeness of character. II. THE ADVANTAGES OF THIS SCHOOL ARE OBTAINED BY PRAYER. 1. Spiritual excellence is the chief subject of prayer. 2. The great God is the only object of prayer. 3. Unwavering confidence is the power of prayer. (*U. R. Thomas.*) *The function of trial*:—"Count it all joy" means, "Count it nothing but joy," "Count it pure joy," "Count it the highest joy," when trials of many different kinds surround you. They had trouble enough, and therefore they might have joy enough, if they could but learn the secret of extracting joy from trouble. And why should they not learn it? It is simple enough. A paradox to the thoughtless, it is an axiom with the wise. For "trial" means "test." And it is as we are tested that we learn our own weakness, learn what and where it is, and are set on correcting it. The gospel affirms that we are infected with a moral weakness, or disease, of which our sorrows are the natural result, and of which they may become a sovereign remedy. For the sorrows bred by sin dispose us to hate and

renounce the sin which produces them. The sorrows that disclose unsuspected weakness set us on seeking a strength that shall be made perfect in weakness. Nay, even the sorrows which involve shame and remorse have a cleansing virtue, if only our sorrow be of a godly sort. "But the Jews of the Dispersion," it may be said, "were not suffering for their sins, but for their virtues, for their faith in Christ and their obedience to His law!" True; but in suffering for our faith, may we not also be suffering for our faults—for the weakness of our faith, for instance? The faith of these Jews must have been weak and immature. It may be that, but for the "many trials" which the hostility of the world and the synagogue brought upon them, they would have remained very imperfectly Christian to the end of their lives, even if they had remained Christian at all. Their trials put them on their mettle. When nothing was open to them but publicly renouncing Christ, or cleaving to Him, their choice was clear, their duty plain. They must cleave to Him; and, cleaving to Him, they would be driven closer and closer to Him by the very opposition designed to detach them from Him. On one point, happily for us, St. James is quite clear: viz., that tribulation is discipline; that by the divers trials which befall us God is making, or seeking to make, us perfect and complete. And where can we find a more inspiriting view of tribulation than this? It is God, our reconciled God and Father, who appoints these tests, God who applies them. And therefore we may be sure that they come for good ends. "The proving of your faith worketh patience, *i.e.*, it results in a firm and steadfast constancy, in a fidelity which can face all allurements and fears. "Tried" and "faithful" are all but synonyms in our common speech, so close is the connection between trials and fidelity. But if our trials are to produce this constant and faithful temper in us, we must "let patience have a perfect work." Since chastening is grievous to us, the danger is that we should seek to escape it as soon as we can, forgetting that only "he that endureth to the end will be saved." The acid that tries the gold bites the gold, or rather, it bites the alloy in the gold. Tests are painful; and they make unwelcome calls on our fortitude. We must therefore let patience have her perfect work, we must suffer our constancy, our fidelity to God, to be exposed to many and searching trials, if we would reap the full benefit of our trials. And what is this full benefit? "That ye may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing," or lacking *in* nothing. The full benefit of trial is, that, if we endure it with a patient fidelity, we become mature men in Christ Jesus, nay, complete men, lacking nothing that a Christian man should have and enjoy. And what higher reward could possibly be set before a reasonable and religious being? What we want, what we know we want, most of all, is to have our character fully and happily developed, its various and often hostile affections and aims absorbed and harmonised, by having them all brought under law to Christ. To become such men as He was, and to walk even as also He walked, is not this the supreme end of all who call and profess themselves Christians? is it not our chief good, our highest blessedness? (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *Joy in serious trial*:—In "Count it all joy," *i.e.*, "Consider it as nothing but matter for rejoicing," we miss a linguistic touch which is evident in the Greek, but cannot well be preserved in English. In saying "joy" (χάραν) St. James is apparently carrying on the idea just started in the address, "greeting" (χαίρειν), *i.e.*, "wishing joy." "I wish you joy; and you must account as pure joy all the troubles into which you may fall." It is just possible that "all joy" (πᾶσαν χάραν) is meant exactly to balance "manifold temptations" (πειρασμοῖς ποικίλοις). Great diversity of troubles is to be considered as in reality every kind of joy. Nevertheless, the troubles are not to be of our own making or seeking. It is not when we inflict suffering on ourselves, but when we "fall into" it, and therefore may regard it as placed in our way by God, that we are to look upon it as a source of joy rather than of sorrow. The word for "fall into" (περιπίπτειν) implies not only that what one falls into is unwelcome, but also that it is unsought and unexpected. Moreover, it implies that this unforeseen misfortune is large enough to encircle or overwhelm one. It indicates a serious calamity. What St. James has principally in his mind are external trials, such as poverty of intellect (ver. 5), or of substance (ver. 9), or persecution (chap. ii. 6, 7), and the like; those worldly troubles which test our faith, loyalty, and obedience, and tempt us to abandon our trust in God, and to cease to strive to please Him. The trials by which Satan was allowed to tempt Job are the kind of temptations to be understood here. They are material for spiritual joy, because—1. They are opportunities for practising virtue, which cannot be learned without practice, nor practised without opportunities. 2. They teach us that we have here no abiding

city, for a world in which such things are possible cannot be a lasting home. 3. They make us more Christlike. 4. We have the assurance of Divine support, and that no more will ever be laid upon us than we, relying upon that support, can bear. 5. We have the assurance of abundant compensation here and hereafter. St. James here is only echoing the teaching of his Brother (Matt. v. 11, 12). In the first days after Pentecost he had seen the apostles acting in the very spirit which he here enjoins, and he had himself very probably taken part in doing so (Acts v. 41. *cf.* iv. 23–30). St. Peter (1 Pet. i. 6) and St. Paul (Rom. v. 3) teach the same doctrine of rejoicing in tribulation. There is no inconsistency in teaching such doctrine, and yet praying, "Lead us not into temptation." Not only is there no sin in shrinking from both external trials and internal temptations; but such is the weakness of the human will, that it is only reasonable humility to pray to God not to allow us to be subjected to severe trials. Nevertheless, when God in His wisdom has permitted such things to come upon us, the right course is, not to be sorrowful, as though something quite intolerable had overtaken us, but to rejoice that God has thought us capable of enduring something for His sake, and has given us the opportunity of strengthening our patience and our trust in Him. This doctrine of joy in suffering, which at first sight seems to be almost superhuman, is shown by experience to be less hard than the apparently more human doctrine of resignation and fortitude. And here it may be noticed that St. James is no cynic or stoic. He does not tell us that we are to anticipate misfortune, and cut ourselves off from all those things the loss of which might involve suffering; or that we are to trample on our feelings, and act as if we had none, treating sufferings as if they were non-existent, or as if they in no way affected us. He points out to us that temptations, and especially external trials, are really blessings, if we use them aright; and he teaches us to meet them in that conviction. And it is manifest that the spirit in which to welcome a blessing is the spirit of joy and thankfulness. St. James does not bid us accept this doctrine of joy in tribulation upon his personal authority. It is no philosopher's *ipse dixit*. He appeals to his readers' own experience: "Knowing that the proof of your faith worketh patience." "Knowing" (γινώσκοντες), *i.e.*, "in that ye are continually finding out and getting to know." The verb and the tense indicate progressive and continuous knowledge, as by the experience of daily life; and this teaches us that proving and testing not only brings to light, but brings into existence, patience. This patience (ὑπομονή), this abiding firm under attack or pressure, must be allowed full scope to regulate all our conduct; and then we shall see why trials are a matter for joy rather than sorrow, when we find ourselves moving onwards towards, not the barrenness of stoical "self-sufficiency" (αὐτάρκεια), but the fulness of Divine perfection. "That ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing," is perhaps one of the many reminiscences of Christ's words which we shall find in this letter of the Lord's brother (Matt. v. 48). (*A. Plummer, D.D.*)

The power of trial:—It is absolutely essential that a teacher of moral ethics should be—(1) Of joyful disposition; (2) Competent to lead men into the depths of Christian character. I. THE POWER OF TRIAL TO OCCASION CHRISTIAN JOY. 1. The trials to which these Jewish Christians were exposed. Though Christian people are not now called to endure persecution, yet they are not without their individual trials; though they hear not the shouts and clamour of an invading foe, they are subject to the ravages of death; though they are not exposed to the intrigue of the political marauder, yet they are liable to the crash of commercial panic; though they are not exposed to the invective of an enraged countryman, yet they are liable to the calumny of the idle gossip. 2. There was in the trials of these Jewish Christians an element of temptation. (1) These temptations were numerous—"divers." They were persecuted; their homes were plundered; their property was pillaged; they were exposed to poverty; they were liable to assassination. (2) Variegated—"divers." There was a blending in them of hope and promise; there was the fortune of war, and the promise of their countrymen to lure them. (3) Precipitous and all-surrounding—"when ye fall into." Grief comes unexpectedly. 3. These trials were to be made the occasion of joy. The Christian life is a grand paradox. In temptation it is in hope; in pain it is in gladness; in sorrow it is in joy; in old age it verges on immortal youth. 4. These Jewish Christians were addressed in the language of deep sympathy. St. James knew that they were in trial, and felt it his duty to write to console and guide them. Some men object to letter-writing; they cannot write even to sorrowing friends. Where are their brotherly instincts? We are near to Christ when trying to aid the sorrowful. II. THE POWER OF TRIAL TO TEST CHRISTIAN FAITH. 1. Trial tests the reality of Christian faith. If under

it we manifest the nobler moral qualities of the Christian character; if we are calm in thought, resigned in temper, prayerful in spirit, and patient in disposition, our faith must be genuine, as such graces are only the outcome of a veritable heart-trust in the Saviour. 2. A tried faith is a potential influence within the soul. No one can estimate the power of a faith that has survived the ordeal of temptation to give energy to a soul, beauty to a character, charm to a life, and influence with the world at large. III. THE POWER OF TRIAL TO DEVELOP CHRISTIAN PATIENCE. 1. Patience consists in a calm waiting for the unfolding of the Divine will and providence. 2. Patience should be constant and progressive in its exercise —co-ordinate with every trial, superior to every distress, gathering new energy from its continued exercise. IV. THE POWER OF TRIAL TO ENHANCE THE PERFECTION OF MORAL CHARACTER. St. James is not writing of the perfection of unrenewed human nature, but of the sublime possibility of Christian manhood. He is writing of a life that is animated by faith, that is cultured by deep sorrow, and that is capable of holy patience. (*Joseph S. Exell, M.A.*) *All joy in all trials*:—James calls the converted among the twelve tribes his brethren. Christianity has a great uniting power: it both discovers and creates relationships among the sons of men. It reminds us of the ties of nature, and binds us with the bonds of grace. Whatever brotherhood may be a sham, let the brotherhood of believers be the most real thing beneath the stars. Beginning with this word "brethren," James shows a true brotherly sympathy with believers in their trials, and this is a main part of Christian fellowship. If we are not tempted ourselves at this moment, others are: let us remember them in our prayers; for in due time our turn will come, and we shall be put into the crucible. Remembering the trials of his brethren, James tries to cheer them, and therefore he says, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers trials." It is a part of our high calling to rise ourselves into confidence; and it is also our duty to see that none of our brethren despond, much less despair. The whole tendency of our holy faith is to elevate and to encourage. The message of the gospel is one of gladness, and were it universally received this world would be no longer a wilderness, but would rejoice and blossom as the rose. I. THE ESSENTIAL POINT WHICH IS ASSAILED by temptation or trial. 1. It is your faith which is tried. It is supposed that you have that faith. You are not the people of God, you are not truly brethren unless you are believers. It is this faith of yours which is peculiarly obnoxious to Satan and to the world which lieth in the wicked one. The hand of faith is against all evil, and all evil is against faith. Faith is that blessed grace which is most pleasing to God, and hence it is most displeasing to the devil. He rages at faith because he sees therein his own defeat and the victory of grace. Because the trial of your faith brings honour to the Lord, therefore the Lord Himself is sure to try it that out of its trial praise may come to His grace by which faith is sustained. It is by our faith that we are saved, justified, and brought near to God, and therefore it is no marvel that it is attacked. Faith is the standard bearer, and the object of the enemy is to strike him down that the battle may be gained. It is by our faith that we live; we began to live by it, and we continue to live by it, for "the just shall live by faith." Hold fast, therefore, this your choice treasure. It is by faith, too, that Christians perform exploits. Faith is the conquering principle: therefore it is Satan's policy to slay it even as Pharaoh sought to kill the male children when Israel dwelt in Egypt. 2. Now, think of how faith is tried. According to the text we are said to fall into "manifold temptations" or into "divers temptations"—that is to say, we may expect very many and very different troubles. In any case these trials will be most real. Our temptations are no inventions of nervousness nor hobgoblins of dreamy fear. Ay, and note too, that the trials of Christians are such as would in themselves lead us into sin. A man is very apt to become unbelieving under affliction: that is a sin. He is apt to murmur against God under it. He is apt to put forth his hand to some ill way of escaping from his difficulty: and that would be a sin. Hence we are taught to pray, "Lead us not into temptation"; because trial has in itself a measure of temptation, and if it were not neutralised by abundant grace it would bear us towards sin. I suppose that every test must have in it a measure of temptation. Did ever a flower of grace blossom in this wretched clime without being tried with frost or blight? Our way is up the river; we have to stem the current, and struggle against a flood which would readily bear us to destruction. Thus, not only trials, but black temptations assail the Christian's faith. As to what shape they take, we may say this much: the trial or temptation of each man is distinct from that of every other. That which would most severely

test me would perhaps be no trial to you; and that which tries you might be no temptation to me. This is one reason why we often judge one another so severely, because feeling ourselves to be strong in that particular point we argue that the fallen one must have been strong in that point too, and therefore must have wilfully determined to do wrong. This may be a cruel supposition. "Divers trials," says the apostle, and he knew what he said. And sometimes these divers trials derive great force from their seemingly surrounding us, and cutting off escape. James says, "Ye fall into divers temptations": like men who fall into a pit, and do not know how to get out; or like soldiers who fall into an ambuscade. II. THE INVALUABLE BLESSING WHICH IS GAINED BY THE TRIAL OF OUR FAITH. The blessing gained is this, that our faith is tried and proved. The effectual proof is by trials of God's sending. The way of trying whether you are a good soldier is to go down to the battle: the way to try whether a ship is well built is not merely to order the surveyor to examine her, but to send her to sea: a storm will be the best test of her staunchness. They have built a new lighthouse upon the Eddystone: how do we know that it will stand? We judge by certain laws and principles, and feel tolerably safe about the structure; but, after all, we shall know best in after-years when a thousand tempests have beaten upon the lighthouse in vain. We need trials as a test as much as we need Divine truth as our food. Admire the ancient types placed in the ark of the covenant of old: two things were laid close together—the pot of manna and the rod. See how heavenly food and heavenly rule go together: how our sustenance and our chastening are equally provided for! A Christian cannot live without the manna nor without the rod. The two must go together. Sanctified tribulations work the proof of our faith, and this is more precious than that of gold which perisheth, though it be tried by fire. 1. Now, when we are able to bear it without starting aside, the trial proves our sincerity. 2. Next, it proves the truthfulness of our doctrinal belief. 3. Next, your own faith in God is proved when you can cling to Him under temptation. Not only your sincerity, but the divinity of your faith is proved; for a faith that is never tried, how can you depend upon it? 4. I find it specially sweet to learn the great strength of the Lord in my own weakness. The Lord suits the help to the hindrance, and puts the plaster on the wound. In the very hour when it is needed the needed grace is given. Does not this tend to breed assurance of faith? 5. It is a splendid thing to be able to prove even to Satan the purity of your motives. That was the great gain of Job. I reckon that the endurance of every imaginable suffering would be a small price to pay for a settled assurance, which would for ever prevent the possibility of doubt. Therefore, when you are tempted, "Count it all joy" that you are tried, because you will thus receive a proof of your love, a proof of your faith, a proof of your being the true-born children of God. James says, "Count it." A man requires to be trained to be a good accountant; it is an art which needs to be learned. III. THE PRICELESS VIRTUE WHICH IS PRODUCED BY TRIAL, namely, patience; for the proof of your "faith worketh patience." The man who truly possesses patience is the man that has been tried. What kind of patience does he get by the grace of God? 1. First, he obtains a patience that accepts the trial as from God without a murmur. 2. The next kind of patience is when experience enables a man to bear ill-treatment, slander, and injury without resentment. He feels it keenly, but he bears it meekly. 3. The patience which God works in us by tribulation also takes another form, namely, that of acting without undue haste. In proportion as we grow like the Lord Jesus we shall cast aside disturbance of mind and fury of spirit. 4. That is a grand kind of patience, too, when we can wait without unbelief. Two little words are good for every Christian to learn and to practise—pray and stay. Waiting on the Lord implies both praying and staying. 5. This patience also takes the shape of believing without wavering, in the very teeth of strange providences and singular statements, and perhaps inward misgivings. If, in a word, we learn endurance we have taken a high degree. You look at the weather-beaten sailor, the man who is at home on the sea: he has a bronzed face and mahogany-coloured flesh, he looks as tough as heart of oak, and as hardy as if he were made of iron. How different from us poor landsmen. How did the man become so inured to hardships, so able to breast the storm, so that he does not care whether the wind blows south-west or north-west? He can go out to sea in any kind of weather; he has his sea legs on. How did he come to this strength? By doing business in great waters. He could not have become a hardy seaman by tarrying on shore. Now, trial works in the saints that spiritual hardihood which cannot be learned in ease. IV. THE SPIRITUAL COMPLETENESS

PROMOTED. "That ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." Afflictions by God's grace make us all-round men, developing every spiritual faculty, and therefore they are our friends, our helpers, and should be welcomed with "all joy." Afflictions find out our weak points, and this makes us attend to them. Being tried, we discover our failures, and then going to God about those failures we are helped to be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. Moreover, our trials, when blessed of God to make us patient, ripen us. A certain measure of sunlight is wanted to bring out the real flavour of fruits, and when a fruit has felt its measure of burning sun it developes a lusciousness which we all delight in. So it is in men and women: a certain amount of trouble appears to be needful to create a certain sugar of graciousness in them, so that they may contain the rich, ripe juice of a gracious character. Sanctified trials produce a chastened spirit. Some of us by nature are untender; but after awhile friends notice that the roughness is departing, and they are quite glad to be more gently handled. Ah, that sick chamber did the polishing; under God's grace, that depression of spirit, that loss, that cross, that bereavement—these softened the natural ruggedness, and made the man meek and lowly, like his Lord. Sanctified trouble has a great tendency to breed sympathy, and sympathy is to the Church as oil to machinery. A man that has never suffered feels very awkward when he tries to sympathise with a tried child of God. He kindly does his best, but he does not know how to go to work at it; but those repeated blows from the rod make us feel for others who are smarting, and by degrees we are recognised as being the Lord's anointed comforters, made meet by temptation to succour those who are tempted. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Trial a blessing*:—I. HOW THEY WERE TO REGARD THEIR TRIALS (ver. 2). "My brethren," he says—my brethren both by nature and grace, alike as Jews and Christians, as children of Abraham and children of a better father, the God of Abraham—"count it"—that is, reckon, think it—"all joy"—joy of the highest kind, and, indeed, of every kind—joy not in some small measure, but in the very largest, not in certain but the whole of its elements and aspects. "When ye fall into divers temptations." The language points to our being unexpectedly surrounded by temptations. It does not apply to the case of those who recklessly rush into them, who by their own presumption or folly bring them upon themselves. No happy effects can be looked for then, and the feelings suited to such circumstances are the reverse of joyful. He speaks not simply of temptations, but of "divers," that is, manifold, various temptations. He exhorts us to be affected in this way, not merely under one or two of them, but under any number, succession, combination of them—under them not only when they are of this or that kind, but whatever kind they happen to be of—under them not only when they come singly and go speedily, but even when they rush upon us from every side, and seem as if they would never take their departure. James here but reiterates the teaching of the Great Master (Matt. v. 12). Many in early times found it possible to obey the injunction (Acts v. 41; 2 Cor. vii. 4; Rom. v. 3; Heb. x. 34). Trials of any kind, such as earthly losses, bodily afflictions, domestic sorrows, spiritual assaults, are painful in their nature. Not only so, there is an element of danger in every one of them, there is the risk of failure, of dishonouring God in the fires, and losing the benefit of the visitation. But when we are providentially brought into such circumstances, then we should feel not only calmly submissive, but even gratefully glad. We are in a Father's hand, His purposes are all wise and gracious, and, in the very midst of our heaviness, we should greatly rejoice. II. WHY THEY WERE THUS TO REGARD THEIR TRIALS (ver. 3). If we remember how apt we are to deceive ourselves—how ready to rest in mere appearances, when all is prosperous and pleasant—how we need to be shaken and sifted to know what in reality and at bottom we are—we shall hail whatever searches us through and through, even though it may pierce like a sword, or scorch like a furnace. But how is the result brought about? "Knowing this," he says, knowing it as you do, both by the testimony of God's Word and the experience of God's people—knowing it as a thing often evidenced and indubitably certain—"that the trying of your faith worketh patience." Faith is the primary, radical grace of the Christian character. From it, as a root, all the others spring; on it, as a foundation, all the others are built. It is the grand principle of the new life, which grows as it grows, and declines as it declines. "It worketh patience"—endurance, perseverance, which is more than calm submission to the Divine will, even resolute, energetic constancy in the doing of that will, a standing out, a holding on, and pressing forward in spite of the sufferings undergone. Hence it is said elsewhere, "Knowing that tribulation"—which

corresponds to the trying or proving in the present case, for it is effected by means of tribulation—"worketh patience, and patience experience" (Rom. v. 3, 4). This is the result brought about, the effect produced. Such dealings not only evince the reality of faith, but promote its growth, for they stir it into more conscious and vigorous exercise. The most tried Christians are the strongest. The proving of faith issues in endurance, and at every step this endurance grows less difficult and less precarious. Past evidences of the Divine love, wisdom, and faithfulness in the time of need, stablish the heart and banish fears in prospect of impending and under the pressure of present trials. Thus there is a going from strength to strength in the path of suffering. But here the apostle pauses, as it were, and turns aside for a moment to exhort those whom he addresses regarding this patience (ver. 4). Let this endurance not stop short in its course; let it produce its full effect, work out its complete result. How needful the counsel! We grow weary, grasp at premature deliverances, have recourse to questionable expedients. We are not willing to wait God's time and way of extrication. In order to have its perfect work it must act, not partially, but fully; and, I add, it must act not temporarily, but permanently. The purpose of the whole, and the effect, when realised, is, "that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." Let it be perfect, and we are perfect; so wide is the influence, so precious are the fruits of the grace of patience. The language here may be expressive of Christian completeness or maturity—of the new life in its full development, its well-balanced, vigorous exercise. He who is not only sound but strong, no longer a babe but now a man, is so far perfect. "Entire"—that is, having every requisite element and feature, and each in its proper place, all that enters into stability and consistency of character, to the exclusion of whatever is of an opposite tendency, and might have the effect of marring or weakening. As if that were not enough, he adds, "wanting nothing"—nothing essential to spiritual manhood, to the thoroughness of our personal Christianity. In proportion as we have this endurance at work, we possess grace in all its varied forms and ripest fruits—grace adequate to every duty and emergency. 1. See here the mark to which we should ever be pressing forward. Christians, you are not to be satisfied with holiness that is partial either in its extent, its compass, or in its degree. You are to seek that it may fully pervade every power and relation of your being. 2. See the discipline by which alone this mark can be reached. There must be endurance to the end; and that comes only in the way, and as the fruit of trial. The gold cannot be tested and refined without the furnace. It is the lashing waves, the roaring breakers, which round and polish the smooth pebbles of the beach. It is only by being burned or bruised that certain spices reveal their fragrance. (*John Adam.*) *Benefit of temptations*:—Of what temptations, think you, was the apostle speaking? Did he mean, think you, that we were to "count it all joy," when we were tempted to the things which are pleasurable to our fleshly appetites, our senses, our pride, but which displease God? Even these temptations may be turned to good by the overpowering grace of God, because every trial in which, by His grace, we stand does bring us larger grace and greater favour of God. But out of such temptations it is a joy to have passed. But there is no joy to fall into them; because even apart from the issue, whether we conquer or are conquered, there is the separate peril whether, by a momentary consent, we displease God. What were, then, the temptations into which the early Christians were chiefly exposed to fall, into which the apostle bids them "count it all joy" to fall? St. Paul recounts them where he speaks of those things which, by the grace of Christ, shall not separate from the love of Christ (Rom. viii. 35–37, v. 3). But why, then, are we to count such temptations as these joy? Why is it to be a joy to have to forego what flesh and blood desire, to do what flesh and blood shrink from? 1. First (which contains all), it is a token of the love of God. It is a badge of our sonship, an earnest of our future inheritance. To be without trial would be to be neglected by God. To have trial is a proof that God is thinking of us, caring for us, giving us something which may approve us to Him. It is not the happy lot to have few troubles. The greatest friends of God had most and the heaviest. The happiest lot is to receive in peace, whether more or fewer, what God permits, and by His grace to endure, and to be more than conquerors through Christ that loved us; strengthened by our very conflicts, proofs against temptations through temptations; abounding in grace through the victories of grace, cleaving close to God by overcoming that which would separate us from Him. 2. Then, suffering likens us to Christ; it is a portion of the Cross of Christ. 3. Then, trouble bursts the bonds of this life and

shows us the nothingness of all created things. Trouble drives the soul into itself, teaches it to know itself and its own weakness, rouses it when torpid, humbles it when it lifts itself up, strengthens the inner man, softens the heart, cuts off offences, guards virtues. Yet not only are those severer troubles channels of God's grace to the soul, but even temptation itself, when the soul hates it, purifies it. Then only is temptation dangerous when it is pleasant. Then flee it, as worse than a serpent, for it threatens thy soul's life. The apostle speaks not of temptations which we run into, temptations which we seek out for ourselves or make for ourselves, temptations which we tamper with; but temptations into which, by God's providence, we fall. The least, if thou court it, may destroy thy life; out of the greatest, God, if thou seek Him, will make a way of escape; not a mere escape, but out of it, aloft from it, over it. For this the very faith and truth of God are pledged to us that, if we will, we shall prevail. In this way, too, David's words come true, "It is better to fall into the hands of the Lord than into the hands of man" (2 Sam. xxiv. 14). The trials which God sends, as sorrow, losses, bereavement, sickness, are always directly to our profit if we do not waste them. In strife with temptation only canst thou know thyself. "The unrest of temptation sifts whether a man, when in rest, truly loves God." Temptation shows us how weak we are to resist the very slightest assaults. We see in our weakness how any good in us (if there be good) is not of us but of God. And so temptation, if we are wise, makes us more watchful. Slighter temptation is either the way into or the way out of greater. Slighter temptations, if yielded to, prove a broad and high way which leads to greater, and, but for God's mercy, to destruction and death: slighter temptations, if resisted, open the eyes to the peril of greater. Or, again, a great sudden temptation has revealed to the soul the danger of tampering with less. And so temptation drives us to Him who hath said, "Call upon Me in the time of trouble, so will I deliver thee, and thou shalt praise Me." "I will be with him in trouble," saith God. "I will be unto him a wall of fire round about." "My strength is made perfect in weakness." The depth of trouble calls deeply. The deep earnest cry is answered. The longing of the soul is the presence of Christ. He who gives the grace to cry to Him wills to hear. And with the nearer presence of God to the soul come larger gifts of grace and more joyous hope of pleasing God. Experience has made it a Christian proverb, "God gives no grace to man except upon trouble." In victory over temptation God gives a holy fervour. He makes the soul to taste and see that it is far sweeter for His sake to forego what the soul desireth than against His will to have it. Then, after or in temptation, God will give thee consolation. As when on earth our Lord called His disciples to rest awhile, He will, after a while, if thou hold out, give thee rest, or else by the very trial He shields thee from some greater trial. And what will the end be? "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." Every temptation resisted by the grace of God is a jewel in the heavenly crown. (*E. B. Pusey, D.D.*)

The use of trial:—The use and ordination of persecution to the people of God is trial. God maketh use of the worst instruments, as fine gold is cast into the fire, the most devouring element. Innocency is best tried by iniquity. But why doth God try us? Not for His own sake, for He is omniscient; but either—1. For our sakes, that we may know ourselves. In trials we discern the sincerity of grace, and the weakness and liveliness of it; and so are less strangers to our own hearts. Sincerity is discovered. A gilded potsherd may shine till it cometh to scouring. In trying times God heateth the furnace so hot that dross is quite wasted; every interest is crossed, and then hirelings become changelings. Sometimes we discover our own weakness (Matt. xiii.); we find that faith weak in danger which we thought to be strong out of danger. In pinching weather weak persons feels the aches and bruises of their joints. Sometimes we discern the liveliness of grace. Stars shine in the night that lie hid in the day. Spices are most fragrant when burnt and bruised, so have saving graces their chiefest fragrancy in hard times. 2. Or for the world's sake. And so—(1) For the present to convince them by our constancy, that they may be confirmed in the faith if weak, or converted if altogether uncalled. It was a notable saying of Luther, The Church converted the whole world by blood and prayer. We are proved, and religion is proved, when we are called to sufferings. Paul's bonds made for the furtherance of the gospel (Phil. i. 12, 13). Justin Martyr was converted by the constancy of the Christians. When he saw the Christians so willingly choose death, he reasoned thus within himself: Surely these men must be honest, and there is somewhat eminent in their principles. So I remember the author of the Council of Trent said concerning Anno de Burg, a senator of

Paris, who was burnt for Protestantism, that the death and constancy of a man so conspicuous did make many curious to know what religion that was for which he had courageously endured punishment, and so the number was much increased. (2) We are tried with respect to the day of judgment (1 Pet. i. 7). Use: It teaches us to bear afflictions with constancy and patience. 1. God's aim in your affliction is not destruction, but trial (Dan. xi. 35). 2. The time of trial is appointed (Dan. xi. 35). 3. God sits by the furnace looking after His metal (Mal. iii. 3). 4. This trial is not only to approve, but to improve (1 Pet. i. 7; Job. xxiii. 10). (*T. Manton.*) *The benefit of trial:*—There are two general grounds on which believers may well do what is here required of them. 1. In spite of their trials they have precious privileges and exalted prospects—such privileges as peace with God and hearts renewed to righteousness, &c. (Psa. lxxiii. 24). 2. Their trials themselves are fraught with good. They are part of God's paternal discipline. They are fitted to give them many salutary lessons respecting the evil of sin and the value of salvation. 3. And, finally, the "trial of their faith," as the apostle goes on to say, "worketh patience." (*A. S. Patterson, D.D.*) *Trial and joy:*—The first thing he takes notice of is their sufferings—the troubles to which they are exposed on account of their faith in Christ. By and by he will have plenty to say of their sins, of conduct unbecoming Christian believers, conduct he will be sure to rebuke. If you see it to be your duty to point out a man's sins to him, do not do it till you are quite sure you have let him see that you feel for him with all your heart, and that you have no other wish than to do him good. 1. It verified the faith. Without the trial there might have been suspicion about the reality or the strength of it. The trial came and the faith endured. If you suffer because you are a Christian, this tries you whether you are a Christian. If you suffer in what we call the course of Providence, this tries you whether you have faith in Him who guides and governs all things. And so in every event of life that seems antagonistic to your welfare, it is a test of the reality of your faith, and, therefore, a ground of joy. 2. Trial not only verifies faith, it strengthens it as well, strengthens it so that it is stronger through the trial than it was before. The reason is plain. Whatever exercises faith strengthens faith; whatever compels it to come forth from disuse, whatever rouses it to assert its existence, increases its strength. "Our antagonist is our friend." Trials provoke faith, and the best thing that can happen to it is just to be provoked. You wrap up a child's limbs, you give them no free play, you compress the very channels in which the life-blood flows, and you wonder there is no increase of strength. (1) The purpose of all trial is the trying of faith. Life is the very sphere of trial, and everything that crosses us is a cross in the way we travel to a purer and a stronger faith. (2) Every kind of a trial which the Christian experiences has its special joy. There is a drop of pleasure in every bitter cup which is peculiar to that cup. (3) The beneficence of the trial-character of life; of the demand for verification of faith. Would you go to sea in a ship whose engines had not been tested? What about the journey to the eternal world? (4) How does a man come out from his trials? On a higher plane of spiritual life or on a lower one? He may see here the test. (5) There are trials before us that may be too strong for us. Let us see to it that our faith now be so confirmed that it will be more than conqueror over whatever the future may contain. (*Peter Rutherford.*) *Rules whereby to estimate trials:*—That your judgments may be rectified in point of afflictions, take these rules. 1. Do not judge by sense (Heb. xii. 11). 2. Judge by a supernatural light. Christ's eye-salve must clear your sight, or else you cannot make a right judgment: there is no fit apprehension of things till you get within the veil, and see by the light of a sanctuary lamp (1 Cor. ii. 11). So David, "In Thy light we shall see light" (Psa. xxxvi. 9); that is, by His Spirit we come to discern the brightness of glory or grace, and the nothingness of the world. 3. Judge by supernatural grounds. Many times common grounds may help us to discern the lightness of our grief, yea, carnal grounds; your counting must be an holy counting. God's corrections are sharp, but we have strong corruptions to be mortified; we are called to great trials, but we may reckon upon great hopes, &c. From that "all joy"; afflictions to God's people do not only minister occasion of patience, but great joy. The world hath no reason to think religion a black and gloomy way. A Christian is a bird that can sing in winter as well as in spring; he can live in the fire like Moses's bush; burn and not be consumed; nay, leap in the fire. But you will say, Doth not the Scripture allow us a sense of our condition? How can we rejoice in that which is evil? (1) Not barely in the evil of them; that is so far from being a fruit of grace that it is against nature; there is a natural

abhorrency of that which is painful, as we see in Christ Himself (John xii. 27). (2) Their joy is from the happy effects, or consequences, or comforts, occasioned by their sufferings. I will name some. (*a*) The honour done to us; that we are singled out to bear witness to the truths of Christ: "To you it is given to suffer" (Phil. i. 29). (*b*) The benefit the Church receiveth. Resolute defences gain upon the world. The Church is like an oak, which liveth by its own wounds, and the more limbs are cut off the more new sprouts. (*c*) Their own private and particular comforts. God hath consolations proper for martyrs and His children under trials. The sun shineth many times when it raineth; and they have sweet glimpses of God's favour when their outward condition is most gloomy and sad. There is a holy greatness of mind, and a joy that becometh the saddest providences. Faith should be above all that befalleth us; it is its proper work to make a believer triumph over every temporary accident. Again, another ground of joy in ordinary crosses is, because in them we may have much experience of grace, of the love of God, and our own sincerity and patience; and that is ground of rejoicing (Rom. v. 3). Lastly, all evils are alike to faith; and it would as much misbecome a Christian hope to be dejected with losses as with violence or persecution. You should walk so that the world may know you can live above every condition, and that all the evils are much beneath your hopes. 4. From that "when ye fall," observe that evils are the better borne when they are undeserved and involuntary; that is, when we fall into them rather than draw them upon ourselves. 5. From that "divers," God hath several ways wherewith to exercise His people. Crosses seldom come single. When God beginneth once to try He useth divers ways of trial; and, indeed, there is great reason. Divers diseases must have divers remedies. Pride, envy, covetousness, worldliness, wantonness, ambition, are not all cured by the same physic. And learn, too, from hence, that God hath several methods of trial—confiscation, banishment, poverty, infamy, reproach; some trials search us more than others. We must leave it to His wisdom to make choice. Will-suffering is as bad as will-worship. 6. From that word "temptations," observe, the afflictions of God's people are but trials. Well, then, behave thyself as one under trial. Let nothing be discovered in thee but what is good and gracious. Men will do their best at their trial; oh, watch over yourselves with the more care that no impatience, vanity, murmuring, or worldliness of spirit may appear in you. (*T. Manton.*)

Joy in temptation:—1. Of the nature of temptation. 2. Of the joyful result to the true Christian. 3. Of his duty under it. I. THE NATURE OF TEMPTATION. II. THE JOYFUL RESULT TO THE TRUE CHRISTIAN. 1. We must here remember, first, the account which St. Paul has given us of God's dealings: "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." So that, in the suffering of trial, the believer has one especial mark of God's favour. 2. But though all God's people are partakers of chastisement, yet, as mere suffering is not a sufficient test of grace, there is another particular to be noticed, namely, the awakening tendency of trials. I have alluded to the extreme danger of the state of quiet and prosperity when the world smiles upon men; when Satan seems to have departed from them; and when their natural propensities to ease are furthered by all surrounding circumstances (Jer. xlviii. 11). 3. This is another useful tendency of trial—it humbles men. Who is so likely to boast as he who has just put on his armour, and has never yet seen the battle? 4. I think we may now easily see that the results of trial to the believer are joyful. Every branch in the living vine that beareth fruit the heavenly Husbandman "purgeth, that it may bring forth more fruit." III. But it is time, in the third place, to speak more particularly of THE CHRISTIAN'S DUTY UNDER TEMPTATION. 1. And here, I would say, first, he must meet it in faith. And surely there are enough of precious promises whereon we may stay ourselves. 2. I would make another observation; and that is, you must under trial show submission to the Lord's hand. Persons are very often ready, like Cain, to cry out, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." 3. The next point that I would press on you is the exercise of patience. This is especially dwelt on by the apostle in my text, when he says, "Let patience have her perfect work; that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." Abraham, for instance, was long, very long, kept childless, till he was forced to hope even "against hope." It is by slow degrees that the proud heart is humbled, and the self-sufficient spirit moulded into childlike submission to the will of God. If the gold be taken from the furnace before it be thoroughly purified and refined, why surely it had better never have been cast into the fire. 4. I make but one more closing observation. How anxious

ought we to be to reap the benefit God intends from trial! When we contend with the enemies of our salvation, there can be no such thing as a drawn battle; if victory be not for us, we shall be worsted. And there is no state of more fearful augury than that of the man whom trial, chastisement, temptation, hardens. It is only sanctified trial that is profitable; and in order that trial may be so sanctified, we must earnestly implore the blessing of the Divine Spirit. (*J. Ayre, M.A.*) *Trials the law of life*:—Life is not always easy to any, of whatever condition or fortune. And men increase the painfulness of living by undertaking life on a wrong theory, viz., the conception of the possibility of making life free from trouble. They dream of this; they toil for this; they are all disappointed. It is impracticable. A man might just as well seek to live without eating or without breathing. All human beings are born to trouble as the birds fly upward. Why, then, should we increase the difficulties of human life by adding to its natural limitations the attempt to reach the unattainable? They live the less difficult lives who early adjust themselves to the natural fact that trouble is to be the normal condition of life. They prepare themselves for it. They fortify themselves by philosophy and religion to endure the inevitable. Then every hour free from trouble is so much clear gain. But to him who adopts the other theory—and who does not?—every trouble is so much clear loss. The man in trouble, the fish in water, the bird in air: that is the law; why not accept it? That fact need not discourage us. It does not take from our dignity, nor from our growth, nor from our final happiness. The painter cannot have his picture glowing on the canvas by merely designing it, nor the sculptor transmute his ideal into marble by a wish. The one must take all the trouble of drawing and colouring, and the other that of chiselling and polishing. It is no necessary discouragement to a boy that he must be under tutors, and must go through the trouble and discipline of school-day, even if he be a prince. It is the law. That answers all. It need scarcely be added, that for any success we must conform to the law. (*C. F. Deems, D.D.*) *The afflictions of the saints diverse*:—1. These afflictions are manifold in respect of the diversity of instruments which God useth in afflicting them upon the saints. For sometimes He useth the devil, sometimes men, sometimes His other creatures as instruments. 2. As in respect of the divers instruments thereunto by God used, the temptations of men are manifold; so if we look into the nature of temptations they are no less diverse. Some are afflicted by exile and banishment, some by captivity and imprisonment, some by famine and nakedness, some by peril and persecution, some by slander and reproachful contumely, some by rackings and tearings in pieces, some by fire and faggot, some by sores of body and sundry diseases, some suffer in themselves, some are afflicted in their friends, in their wives, in their children, some in their goods, some in their bodies, some in their credits, some by sea, some by land, some at home, some abroad, some by open enemies, some by counterfeit friends, some by cruel oppression, some by manifest injuries, some by force, some by fraud. 3. Finally, the ends wherefore they are afflicted are diverse; therefore in that respect also they may not amiss be counted diverse. Sometimes we are afflicted to the end we should be humbled, tried, sometimes that in the nature of God's blessings we may better be instructed; sometimes we are afflicted that God may be glorified, sometimes that our sins may be remitted, sometimes that the pride of our hearts may be repressed and sinful desires mortified; sometimes we are afflicted that God's love towards us may the more lively be expressed, sometimes that thereby the world may be hated of us, sometimes that we may be more zealous in prayer for deliverance, sometimes that we may be made conformable and like the image of the Son of God, together with Him may be partakers of His glory. Finally, to make us forsake all trust in other, and to bring us home to God. As Isaiah teacheth us, at that day shall the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, stay no more upon him that smote him, but shall stay upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. (*R. Turnbull.*) *A deep spring of joy*:—Their spring of joy did not flow from the mere surface of life. It bubbled up from the deep underlying strata, and still ran on whatever changes vexed the surface. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *Joy in tribulation*:—Mr. John Philpot was shut up with some Protestant companions in the Bishop of London's coal-cellar, but they were so merry that they were fetched out to be reprimanded for their unseasonable mirth. "The world wonders," wrote the good man to a friend, "we can be merry under such extreme miseries, but our God is omnipotent, who turns our misery into joy. I have so much joy that, though I be in a place of darkness and mourning, yet I cannot

lament, but both day and night am full of joy. I never was so merry before; the Lord's name be praised for ever. Oh, pray instantly that this joy may never be taken from us, for it passeth all the delights in this world." (*Sunday at Home.*) *Joy commendable in trouble:*—Every bird can sing in a clear heaven in a temperate spring; that one is most commended that sings many notes in the midst of a shower or in the dead of winter. (*Bp. Hall.*) *Temptations need not discourage:*—In all temptations be not discouraged. These surges may be, not to break thee, but to heave thee off thyself on the Rock Christ. (*T. Wilcocks.*) *Temptation a benefaction:*—Temptation is a necessity, and not only a necessity, but a benefaction. If you were to construct a man, you would have to put into him a certain percentage of temptation that he might become fully developed. (*Prof. Hy. Drummond.*) *The joyous end of trial:*—The quartz gold might bitterly complain when the hammer comes down on it—"Ah! I shall never be good for anything again. I am crushed to atoms." And when the rushing water came along it might cry out, "Here I am drowned. I am lost. I shall never come to the light any more." And when put into the furnace it might say, "Now I am for ever undone." But by and by, see that ring that clasps the brow of the king. It is that same gold that understood not, through much tribulation it must enter upon honour. It is even thus with us. We need not complain if the terrible temptation comes along. It will give us an opportunity of using the grace which God has bestowed; it will show what metal we are of; it will bring out our character if we have any; and we may thus "count it all joy." (*W. G. Pascoe.*) *Trial a boon:*—Every possible trial to the child of God is a masterpiece of strategy of the Captain of his salvation for his good. (*A. R. Fausset, M.A.*) *Advantage of adversity:*—Tough trees grow in exposed situations, where the mightiest winds of heaven sweep and whirl from year to year. An experienced shipbuilder would not think of using for the mainmast of a ship a tree that had grown in a hot-house, where the whirlwind had never come. (*R. V. Lawrence.*) *Shaped by sorrow:*—The best steel is subjected to the alternatives of extreme heat and extreme cold. Were you ever in a cutlery? If you were, you noticed that the knife-blades were heated, and beaten, and then heated again, and plunged into the coldest water, in order to give them the right shape and temper. And perhaps you also noticed that there was a large heap of rejected blades—rejected because they would not bear the tempering process. They cracked and warped; when put upon the grindstone, little flaws appeared in some that, up to that point, had seemed fair and perfect. Hence they were thrown aside as unfit for market. So souls, in order to ensure the right temper, are heated in the furnace of affliction, plunged into the cold waters of tribulation, and ground between the upper and nether stones of adversity and disaster. Some come out of the trial pure, elastic, and bright, ready for the highest service; others come out brittle, with ill-temper, full of flaws and spots of rust, and are thrown into the rubbish-room of the Church as unfit for any but the lowest uses. Now if you would be of any account among the forces that are working out the salvation of this world, be still in the hands of God until He tempers you. Listen to that knife-blade in the hands of the cutler. "Stop, now! I have been in the fire often enough. Would you burn the life out of me?" But in it goes again into the glowing furnace, and is heated to a white heat. "Stop hammering me! I have been pounded enough now." But down comes the sledge. "Keep me out of this cold water. One moment in the fiery furnace and the next in ice-cold water. It is enough to kill one!" But in it goes. "Keep me off the grindstone. You'll chafe the life out of me." But it is made to kiss the stone until the cutler is satisfied. But now see! When all the heating and cooling and pounding and grinding is done you may bend it double, and yet it springs back straight as an arrow; it is as bright as polished silver, hard as a diamond, and will cut like a Damascus blade. It has been shaped, tempered, and polished, and is worth something. (*Ibid.*) *Mercies travel along dark ways:*—Right back of Hackensack is a long railroad cut. In the dim twilight, when evening is far advanced, the cut is dark and gloomy. I was thinking of that one evening and I stopped to look into the entrance. I said to myself, "No one would ever imagine, just to glance in there without knowledge, that anything good could come by a way so forbidding." While I was still talking thus to myself, I felt the ground tremble, I saw the darkness light up with a sudden crimson ray, I heard a roar of ever-increasing loudness, and the black entrance of the cut was filled with a shower of sparks and a mixed plume of black and white; a ball of round fire blinded my eyes, a sound of thunder startled my ears, the earth shook up and down as though

set upon springs, and then it was gone—the train had rushed by—nothing to be seen in the gloom but the little red lamp on the rear of the cars that rapidly diminished its lustre, blinked once or twice, and went out. Long after it was out of sight I heard the sound of the distant gong; and I realised that this unsightly cut had let some human happiness safely through. Some of our choicest mercies come in by way of some frowning trouble. The station where we receive them is a little further on, to be sure; but it is well to remember that if the dark way had not been traversed nothing so rich and good would have arrived. (*J. W. Dally.*) *Manifold temptations needed:*—The more varied are the moral difficulties of life, the more complete is the discipline. The strain must come upon one muscle after another, if there is to be a perfect development of moral vigour—if, as James puts it, we are to be "lacking in nothing." The strength of every separate element of Christian righteousness must be tried, and tried by various tests. The courage which is unmoved by one form of danger may be daunted by another. The patience which submits without a murmur to familiar suffering may be changed by a new sorrow into angry resentment. The Christian charity which has kept its sweetness through many cruel persecutions may at last be suddenly embittered by some fresh outrage. (*R. W. Dale, LL.D.*) *Life a perpetual discipline:*—Life, from first to last, is a perpetual "trial," and the "trial" is perpetually varied. In the school of God there are no vacations. (*Ibid.*) *The record of a dark day:*—We go to rest sometimes with an impression of guilt on our minds, because all day long we have been under trial, so that we feel as if evil had been with us continually. At other times night finds us calm and serene. All has gone smoothly, and we are pleased with ourselves and our neighbours. And yet there may be a better record for the dark day than for the bright one, in God's book of remembrance. For temptation is not sin, nor its absence goodness. *Temptation may be a sign of grace:*—A brother in a religious meeting was suffering from severe temptation, and after a full account of his experience was advised to take courage, "For," said Father Taylor, "the devil was never known to chase a bag of chaff! You may be sure that there is the pure wheat in your heart, or he would not be after you so hard." *Joy amidst sorrow:*—Joy lives in the midst of the sorrow; the sorrow springs from the same root as the gladness. The two do not clash against each other, or reduce the emotion to a neutral indifference, but they blend into one another; just as, in the Arctic regions, deep down beneath the cold snow, with its white desolation and its barren death, you shall find the budding of the early spring flowers and the fresh green grass; just as some kinds of fire burn below the water; just as, in the midst of the barren and undrinkable sea, there may be welling up some little fountain of fresh water that comes from a deeper depth than the great ocean around it, and pours its sweet streams along the surface of the salt waste. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Joy in trial:*—When Richard Williams, of the Patagonian Mission, with his few companions, was stranded on the beach by a high tide, and at the beginning of the terrible privations which terminated his life, he wrote in his diary: "I bless and praise God that this day has been, I think, the happiest of my life. The fire of Divine love has been burning on the mean altar of my breast, and the torch light of faith has been in full trim, so that I have only had to wave it to the right hand or left, in order to discern spiritual things in heavenly places." Later, when severe illness was added to circumstantial distress, he could say, "Not a moment sits wearily upon me. Sweet is the presence of Jesus; and oh, I am happy in His love." Again, though held fast by fatal disease, he wrote: "Ah, I am happy day and night, hour by hour. Asleep or awake, I am happy beyond the poor compass of language to tell. My joys are with Him whose delights have always been with the sons of men; and my heart and spirit are in heaven with the blessed." **The trying of your faith worketh patience**—*Trial of faith works patience:*—1. The chief grace which is tried in persecution is faith. Partly because it is the radical grace in the life of a Christian (Heb. ii. 4); we work by love, but live by faith; partly because this is the grace most exercised, sometimes in keeping the soul from using ill means and unlawful courses (Isa. xxviii. 16); sometimes in bringing the soul to live under gospel-comforts in the absence or want of worldly, and to make a Christian fetch water out of the rock when there is none in the fountain. Use 1. You that have faith, or pretend to have it, must look for trials. Graces are not crowned till they are exercised; never any yet went to heaven without conflicts. Use 2. You that are under trials, look to your faith (Luke xxii. 32). (1) Hold fast your assurance in the midst of the saddest trials.

(2) Keep your hopes fresh and lively. 2. Many trials cause patience, that is, by the blessing of God upon them. Habits are strengthened by frequent acts; the more you act grace, the stronger; and often trial puts us upon frequent exercise (Heb. xii. 11). (1) It showeth how careful you should be to exercise yourselves under every cross; by that means you come to get habits of grace and patience: neglect causeth decay, and God withdraweth His hand from such as are idle: in spirituals, as well as temporals, "diligence maketh rich" (Prov. x. 4). (2) It showeth that if we murmur or miscarry in any providence, the fault is in our own hearts, not in our condition. 3. It is an excellent exchange to part with outward comforts for inward graces. Fiery trials are nothing, if you gain patience; sickness, with patience, is better than health; loss, with patience, is better than gain. 4. Patience is a grace of excellent use and value. We cannot be Christians without it; we cannot be men without it: not Christians, for it is not only the ornament, but the conservatory of other graces. How else should we persist in well-doing when we meet with grievous crosses? You see we cannot be Christians without it; so, also, not men. Christ saith, "In patience possess your souls" (Luke xxi. 19). A man is a man, and doth enjoy himself and his life by patience: otherwise we shall but create needless troubles and disquiets to ourselves, and so be, as it were, dispossessed of our own lives and souls—that is, lose the comfort and the quiet of them. (*T. Manton.*) *Incentives to patience:*—I. The sufferer should look at THE HAND which sends the affliction. Patience springs out of faith. II. The sufferer should look at THE PRESENT BENEFIT of affliction, which to a believer is unspeakably great. III. The sufferer should look to THE END of his afflictions. God may perhaps see good not to bless us in this life, as He did His servant Job; but, oh, what glory will it be to hear it said of us at the last day, "These are they which came out of great tribulation," &c.! (*W. Jowett, M.A.*) *The advantage of temptation:*—An iron railway-bridge is no stronger after its strength has been tried by running a dozen heavy trains over it than it was before. A gun-barrel is no stronger when it comes from the proof-house, and has had its strength tried by being fired with four or five times its proper charge, than it was before. But according to James, the "trials" which test our faith strengthen it; the "temptations" which assault our integrity confirm it. (*R. W. Dale, LL.D.*) *Patience and fortitude:*—People are always talking of perseverance and courage and fortitude, but patience is the finest and worthiest part of fortitude and the rarest too. (*John Ruskin.*) *Christian perfection:*—A perfect machine fulfils the object for which it is made, and a perfect Christian is one of such a character that he fulfils the object for which he has been made a Christian. "Entire, lacking in nothing," conveys the idea of being properly adjusted and arranged so that our avenues of temptation are properly guarded. A builder never thinks of putting a window in the floor or a door in the ceiling, and God would have our moral nature so adjusted that we may have everything in its place, and consequently "Entire, lacking in nothing." (*F. Montague Miller.*) *Patience Godlike:*—It would be far easier, I apprehend, for nine men out of ten to join a storming party than to lie on a rack or to hang on a cross without repining. Yes, patience is a strength; and patience is not merely a strength, it is wisdom in exercising it. We, the creatures of a day, make one of the nearest approaches that is possible for us to the life of God. Of God, St. Augustine has finely said, "*Patiens quia æternus*"—"Because He lives for ever, He can afford to wait." (*Canon Liddon.*) *Patience waiting upon providence:*—Let your hope be patient, without tediousness of spirit, or hastiness of prefixing time. Make no limits or prescriptions to God, but let your prayers and endeavours go on still with a constant attendance on the periods of God's providence. The men of Bethulia resolved to wait upon God but five days longer; but deliverance stayed seven days, and yet came at last. (*Jeremy Taylor, D.D.*) *The sphere of patience:*—It is said that the immortal astronomer, whose genius discovered the laws which govern the movement of the planets, saw his great labours despised by his contemporaries. Reduced to extreme misery, he was on his death-bed, when a friend asked him if he did not suffer intensely in dying thus without seeing his discoveries appreciated. "My friend," replied Kepler, "God waited five thousand years for one of His creatures to discover the admirable laws which He has given to the stars, and cannot I wait, also, until justice is done me?" Take heed to these words you who are doing God's work. Labour, if necessary, without result; speak, although not listened to; love, without being understood; cast your bread upon the waters; and to subdue the world to the truth, walk by faith and not by sight. (*E. Bersier, D.D.*) *Patience makes the burden lighter:*—

Two little German girls, Brigitte and Wallburg, were on their way to the town, and each carried a heavy basket of fruit on her head. Brigitte murmured and sighed constantly; Wallburg only laughed and joked. Brigitte said, "What makes you laugh so? Your basket is quite as heavy as mine, and you are no stronger than I am." Wallburg said, "I have a precious little herb on my load, which makes me hardly feel it at all. Put some of it on your load as well." "Oh," cried Brigitte, "it must indeed be a precious little herb! I should like to lighten my load with it; so tell me at once what it is called." Wallburg replied, "The precious little herb that makes all burdens light is called *patience*."

Ver. 4. **Let patience have her perfect work.**—*The perfect work of patience*:—We can all attain to a certain amount of proficiency at most things we attempt; but there are few who have patience to go on to perfection. Even in reference to things that we like, such as amusements, we are impatient. What is wanted to make even a good cricketer is, that patience should have its perfect work. "The gift of continuance"—that is what so many of us want. As a rule, the time required for the production of an effect measures the value of that effect. The things that can be developed quickly are of less value than those which require longer time. You can weed a garden or build a house in a much shorter time than you can educate a mind or build up a soul. The training of our reasoning faculties requires a longer time than the training of our hands. And moral qualities, being higher than intellectual, make an even greater demand upon the patience of their cultivator. Love, joy, peace, faith, gentleness, goodness, truthfulness—with what perseverance in the diligent use of God's grace are these acquired! And this patience which we ought to have with ourselves, ought surely to be extended towards others—"Be patient towards all men." It need not surprise us that we cannot make others what we would like them to be, since we cannot make ourselves as we wish to be. Parents are often unreasonably impatient about the intellectual and moral development of their children. Those who labour for the elevation of the masses must have that faith and patience which work where results cannot be seen. If we may say so without irreverence, we would say that we must let patience have its perfect work in our thoughts about the government of God. In our impatience we wonder why He should be so tolerant of the thorns upon which we have to tread, instead of taking them away and strewing our path with rose-leaves. God sees that these thorns are better for us than rose-leaves. The way most persons accept misfortune is the greatest misfortune of all; while nothing is a misfortune if patience be allowed to have its perfect work. In the top room of one of the houses of a miserable court, which I know well, there lives an old woman crippled and deformed in every joint by chronic rheumatism. Listen! She speaks of her gratitude. For what? Because with the assistance of a knitting-needle and her thumb, the only joint that will move, she can turn over the leaves of her Bible. (*E. J. Hardy, M.A.*) *Patience under afflictions*:—If we consider the condition of those Jews to whom the apostle directs this Epistle, we shall find that as they were a dispersed, so they were an afflicted and persecuted people. To these dispersed and distressed Christians, the apostle directs this his Epistle, and exhorts them, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations" (ver. 2)—that is, when ye fall into divers tribulations; for by temptations here he means not the inward assaults of the devil, but the outward assaults of his instruments. A strange command, one would think, to bid them rejoice at such a time and in such circumstances as these! Now, in this are included two things, which should mightily further their joy. 1. That all their sufferings are for the trial of their faith. God by these tries whether your faith be well-grounded and saving, or whether it be only temporary and flitting: He tries whether it be weak or strong; whether it be able to support itself upon a promise, or wants the crutches of sense and visible enjoyments to bear it up; whether it be a faith that is wrought in you only by conviction, or a faith that hath wrought in you a thorough conversion; whether it be a faith wrought in you only by evidence of the truth, or a faith that is accompanied with a sincere love of the truth. And, therefore, rejoice in your afflictions: for these will help you to determine this important question. Certainly that Christian hath great reason to suspect himself who cannot rejoice that he is going to heaven, though God sends a fiery chariot to fetch him. 2. This trial of their faith worketh patience. The more a Christian bears, the more he is enabled to bear; his nerves and his sinews knit and grow strong under his burdens. And therefore also "count it all joy when ye fall into

divers temptations." If thy sorrows add any degree of fortitude to thy patience, thou hast far more reason to rejoice than to repine; for nothing in this present life is to be accounted good or evil, but only as it respects the advantage or disadvantage which our graces receive by it. "Let patience have her perfect work," and then you shall have cause to rejoice. Let her go on to finish what is begun; and then shall ye "be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." It is not enough that ye can bear some afflictions, and that only for some time; but if you will be perfect, as you must do the whole will of God, and that with constancy unto the end, so you must suffer the whole will of God, and put no earlier period to your patience than to your obedience. Patience ought not to prescribe, either to the kind, measure, or degree of our sufferings. From the words we may observe these two propositions—1. That a Christian's patience ought to accomplish all the work that is proper for it while he lies under afflictions: "Let patience have her perfect work." 2. That the perfection of patience is the perfection of a Christian: "That ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." And herein I shall prosecute this method. I. WHAT IS THIS PATIENCE which a Christian ought to exercise and accomplish when he is under sufferings? It is a grace of God's Spirit wrought in the heart of a true Christian, whereby he is sweetly inclined quietly and willingly to submit to whatsoever the Lord shall think fit to lay upon him; calming all the passions which are apt to rise up in him against God's dispensations, with the acknowledgment of His infinite sovereignty, wisdom, justice, and mercy, in those afflictions which He is pleased to bring upon him. Negatively. 1. Patience is not a stoical apathy, or a senseless stupidity, under the hand of God. It is no narcotic virtue, to stupify us and take away the sense and feeling of afflictions. If it had any such opiate quality in it, it were not commendable; for that is no suffering which is not felt. And those who are stupified under the hand of God, and who take no notice of His judgments, are no more to be accounted patient than a block is when it is hewn and cut. Nay, patience is so far from taking away the sense of sufferings, that it rather quickens it. There is no man that more feels an affliction than a Christian doth; for he refers his chastisements to his deserts. 2. Patience doth not stifle all modest complaints and moderate sorrow. A patient Christian may well be allowed this vent for his grief to work out at. Grace never destroys, but only regulates and corrects nature. It will permit thee to shed tears, so long as they run clear, and the course of them doth not stir up the mud of thy sinful passions and violent affections. And, again, a patient Christian may make use of all the doleful signs of sorrow which God hath allowed and nature exacts, and yet his spirit not be moved beyond its due temper and consistency; like a tree whose boughs are agitated by every gust and storm of wind, when yet the root remains unmoved in the earth. 3. Patience doth not oblige us to continue under afflictions when we may lawfully and warrantably release ourselves from them. It doth not require us to solicit troubles. It is a sign of a vitiated palate if our physic taste not somewhat unpleasing to us; and of an obstinate mind if we be not careful to shun the discipline of the rod. If God bring sore, and perhaps mortal, diseases upon thee, it is not patience, but presumption, to refuse the means which are proper for thy recovery, under pretence that thou art willing to bear whatsoever it pleaseth God to lay upon thee. 4. Much less doth patience oblige us to invite sufferings. It is fortitude enough if we manfully stand their shock when they assault us; but it is temerity to provoke and challenge them. Neither is it patience to bear those invented severities which blind devotionalists inflict upon themselves: they may soon enough lash themselves into pain, but never into patience; this is a virtue which thongs and whipcord can never teach them. And thus I have showed you what patience is not. Positively. In patience there must be—1. A quiet, willing submission to the hand of God. 2. A quieting of our unruly passions. A calming of all those impetuous storms which are apt to arise in a man's heart when he is under any heavy sufferings. 3. All this must be done upon right grounds. Indeed, there is a natural patience—a patience that may be found in natural men devoid of true grace—which proceeds only upon natural and moral principles: as, that it is folly to strive against fate, and that it is equally folly to torment ourselves about what we can help. And thus we see what this grace of patience is. II. WHAT IS THE PROPER WORK OF PATIENCE. 1. The first work of patience is the quieting and composing the spirit of the afflicted. He is calm within, though his outward condition be full of storms (Acts xx. 24). 2. Another work of patience is to put a stop to all immoderate complaints. 3. Another work of patience under sufferings is self-resignation to the sovereign will and disposal of Almighty God. And there be

two notable ingredients which go to the composition of it—self-denial and submission. (1) Patience works the soul to a self-denying frame and temper. Fretfulness and impatience do always proceed from self-love. A cross lies very heavy upon a selfish man. And he that makes this world his all, must needs look upon himself as utterly ruined if God take from him that wherein he placeth his highest felicity; and therefore no wonder if he break out into passionate exclamations. But a truly patient soul puts a lower estimate upon these things; he values them, indeed, as comforts, but not as his chief good, otherwise he would have no patience in sustaining the loss of them. Yet still he looks not upon himself as undone; still he hath his God and his Christ, and his grace left. God doth but deny him that wherein he hath learned to deny himself. (2) As patience works the soul to a self-denying, so it does likewise to a submissive frame and temper. When it hath brought a man to renounce his own will, it then resolves him into the will of God. The will of His precept He hath made known unto us by His Word, and to that we ought to submit our wills by a cheerful performance of what He hath commanded. The will of His purpose He makes known unto us by His providence; and to that we ought to submit, by a quiet bearing of whatsoever He shall see good to inflict. Christ is willing not to have His own will, and so every patient Christian brings his will to this submission; that it is his will, that not his, but God's will should be fulfilled. 4. Another work of patience is a holy endearing of our afflictions to us; when it bring us to account them precious, as choice mercies bestowed upon us. Patience will make the soul thankful for corrections, esteeming it a token of God's special regard and condescension that He will vouchsafe to afflict us. We are all prone to think that God never minds us, but when He is continually heaping new mercies upon us; and if any calamity befall us, we presently fear that God hath forgotten us; but patience teacheth a Christian to believe that in every affliction God doth most particularly regard our concerns; that He is as mindful of us when He chastises as when He favours us. And therefore we should account afflictions as dear a pledge of God's love as prosperity. And as weeds grow fastest in a fat and rank soil, so our corruptions thrive and are ready to overrun our souls when our outward condition is most prosperous; and therefore God's love and care of us constrain Him sometimes to use severe discipline. 5. Another work of patience is the reconciling of a man to the instruments of his sufferings, to make him willing to forgive them himself, and to pray to God for their pardon, who is far more offended by them than we can be. 6. Another work of patience is to obstruct all dishonourable or unlawful ways of deliverance from those sufferings under which we lie. Patience will not suffer a man to accept of deliverance if he cannot free the honour of God and the purity of his own conscience from stain, as well as his outward man from trouble. III. WHEN IT IS THAT PATIENCE HATH ITS PERFECT WORK. 1. Patience hath, then, its perfect work when it is proportionable to the sufferings and afflictions under which we lie, and that both in duration and fortitude. And therefore—(1) If thy afflictions and sorrows be of long continuance, thy patience, that it may be perfect, must be prolonged. If thy patience wear off one day before thy trouble doth, it hath not its perfect work. Now, then, O Christian! look upon thyself as a traveller, and make account that whatsoever burden God is pleased to lay upon thee, He may perhaps not take it off till thou comest to thy inn, to take up thy lodging in the grave. (2) Sometimes our sorrows and sufferings are very deep, our burdens very heavy and pressing; and God may give thee a deep draft of the bitter cup, and squeeze into it the very quintessence of wormwood. Now, in this case, that thy patience may be perfect, it must be strong, as well as lasting; it must have sinews in it, to bear weighty burdens (Prov. xxiv. 10). 2. That our patience may be perfect, it must be proportionable also to the need of the sufferer. For then hath patience its perfect work, when a man bears whatsoever is necessary for him. Now, both the cure and thy patience are then perfect when, of a proud and high-minded person, He hath brought thee to an humble and meek spirit; when, of a worldly and self-seeking person, He hath made thee a public-spirited and self-denying Christian; when, of a drowsy and secure, He hath made thee a vigilant, zealous, and active Christian. 3. That thy patience may be perfect, it must be a joyful patience. IV. That which remains is to ENFORCE upon you this exhortation of the apostle. 1. For the motives to patience, they are many and powerful. And such, indeed, they had need be, to persuade our fretful natures to the exercise of so hard a grace. Yet grace can work those wonders which nature cannot. And there be several considerations that will tend mightily to hush all the disturbances of our spirits, under all our sorrows and sufferings. (1) That there

is nothing more necessary for a Christian, in the whole conduct of his life, than the work and exercise of patience (Heb. x. 36). And this especial necessity of patience will appear, if we consider that our whole life is but a scene of sorrows and troubles. Consider that patience is necessary to alleviate and lighten the afflictions we suffer. The same burden shall not, by this means, have the same weight in it. There is a certain skill in taking up our load upon us to make it sit easy; whereas others, that take it up untowardly, find it most cumbersome. Let the very same affliction befall two persons—the one a patient, meek, and self-resigning soul; the other a proud, fretful wretch, that repines every disappointment—and with how much more ease shall the one bear it than the other! The burden is the very same; but only the one is sound and whole, and it doth not wring nor pinch him; but the other's impatience hath galled him, and every burden is more intolerable to him, because it lies upon a raw and sore spirit. It is not so much the wearing as the striving with our yoke that galls us; and as it is with beasts caught in a snare, so is it with impatient men—the more they struggle, the faster they draw the knot, and make their sufferings more uneasy and their escape more impossible. (2) Another motive to patience may be to consider who is the Author and Inflicter of all the sufferings which thou undergoest. Consider that God is the absolute and uncontrollable Sovereign of all the world. Consider that God is not only our Sovereign, but He is our Proprietor. Consider the relation wherein God stands unto thee. Consider, again, that it is an infinitely wise God that afflicts thee; and, therefore, thou mayest well acquiesce in His providences. All thy sorrows are chosen out for thee by that God who doth inflict them. He knows the just proportion of what thou art to undergo. He is the Wise Physician, that knows what ingredients, and what quantities of each, are fittest for thee to take. He knows and considers the events and the consequences of things, which are hid in a profound obscurity from us short-sighted creatures. Possibly He intends the greatest mercy when He brings the sorest trials upon thee. Consider God is a faithful God. To this let me add one consideration more concerning God; and that is, that He is the God of Patience (Rom. xv. 5). And that, not only as He is the God that requires patience from us; not only as He is the God that gives patience to us; not only as He is the God that doth own and crown patience in us; but as He is the God that doth Himself exercise infinite patience towards us. He bears more from us than we can possibly bear from Him. (3) Consider what thou hast deserved. And this will be a most unanswerable argument for patience under what thou feelest. (4) A fourth motive to patience may be the consideration of the great benefits and advantages that accrue to us by afflictions (Heb. xii. 11). As the ploughing up of a field seems utterly to spoil the beauty of it, when its smoothness and verdure are turned into rough and unsightly furrows, and all its herbs and flowers buried under deformed clods of earth; but yet, afterwards, in the days of harvest, when the fields laugh and sing for joy, when the furrows stand thick with corn and look like a boundless sea and inundation of plenty, they yield an incomparable delight to the eyes of the beholders and welcome sheaves into the bosom of the reapers; so when God ploughs up any of His children, it may seem a strange method of His husbandry thus to deform the flourishing of their present condition; but yet, afterwards, when the seed which He casts into these furrows is sprung up, both the wisdom and goodness of Divine Providence will be made apparent in thus converting a barren prosperity into a more fruitful adversity. Improvements and advantages that we may make of our afflictions. As they are the exercises of our graces, so they keep them lively and active. Exercise, you know, though it weary the body for the present, yet conduceth to its health and soundness. Afflictions are the soul's exercise, by which God keeps our graces in breath, which else would languish and be choked up. Indeed, experience and custom facilitate all things, and make that very easy which before we accounted difficult. All birds when they are first put into their cage fly wildly up and down, and beat themselves against their little prison, but within two or three days sit quietly upon their perch and sing their usual notes. So it fares with us. When God first brings us into straits, we wildly flutter up and down, and beat and tire ourselves with striving to get free; but at length custom and experience will make our narrow confinement spacious enough for us; and though our feet should be in the stocks, yet shall we, with the apostles, be able even there to sing praises to our God. Another advantage of afflictions is this: that they are physic to the soul, to expel and purge out its corruptions. A patient bearing of afflictions is a clear evidence of our adoption. Indeed, our sufferings only prove us to be the sons of Adam, on whom the curse is

entailed through his primitive transgression; but our patience is a strong proof that we are the sons of God. All metals may be melted in the furnace; but it is the property of gold only to endure the fire, and lose nothing of its weight or worth. Consider that a patient suffering of afflictions will make rich additions to the weight and splendour of thy crown of glory. (5) Another motive may be this: that a patient bearing of affliction is a very great honour, both to ourselves and to God. To ourselves (consult 1 Pet. iv. 14, i. 7). It brings in a great revenue of glory unto God. (6) Consider that patience under afflictions is the best way to be freed from afflictions. (*a*) If they be immediately from men, patience is of such a sweet, winning nature, that, unless they have quite divested humanity, they cannot long persevere in a causeless wronging of those who quietly bear and pass by their former injuries. Patience withdraws fuel from wrath: it finds no new occasion to stir up strife by opposition. If our sufferings be immediately from God, a patient bearing of them will the sooner put a period to them; because usually one great end why God doth afflict us is to teach us patience. (7) Consider that all thy sufferings in this life are in themselves tolerable. They are but the infirmities of a man, which the spirit of a man may bear; for they are only partial. All thy afflictions and sufferings have a great mixture of mercy in them. (8) Consider how many thousands in the world are in a far worse condition than yourselves, and would account themselves happy were they in your circumstances. (9) As another motive to patience, consider of how short duration and continuance all the troubles and afflictions of this life are. Though your way be thorny and miry, yet it is but short. Let thy afflictions be as grievous as thy passion can describe them, yet doth God afford thee no lucid intervals? Hast thou no intermission from thy sorrows? This is mercy, and this time of thy refreshment ought not to be reckoned into the suffering, as commonly it is. Indeed, men have got an art of making their sorrows longer than they are. Ask one who labours under a chronic distemper how long he hath been troubled with it; straight he will tell you for so many months or for so many years, when yet, perhaps, the greater part of that time he enjoyed ease and freedom between the returning periods of his disease. If thou hast been long under afflictions, yet perhaps they have been varied. Even this is mercy, that He will not strike long upon one place, nor scourge thee where thou art sore already. (10) The tenth, and last, motive to patience, which ought to be very effectual with all true Christians, shall be taken from the example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Consider that His sufferings were infinitely greater than any that we can possibly undergo. Consider that all His unknown sufferings were not for His own, but for our offences. 2. The next thing in order is to show those distempers of spirit which are great hindrances of patience, and give a very great advantage to every cross to ruffle and discompose it. And they are such as these—(1) An effeminate softness and delicacy of spirit, when the mind is lax and fluid and hath not its due consistency. Consider the indecency and unbecomingness of impatience. It sits ill upon a man, and renders him contemptible and ridiculous. Consider the vanity and folly of impatience. To what purpose is it that thou torturest yourself? Couldst thou relieve thyself by it, this might be some reasonable pretence. Consider that impatience is not only unseemly and foolish, but it is unchristian too. There is nothing more directly contrary to the true spirit and genius of Christianity. (2) Another great hindrance of patience is a fond love and admiration of these creature enjoyments. (3) Another great hindrance to patience is pride and self-love. (4) Reflecting too much upon the instruments of our sufferings is oftentimes a mighty hindrance to the composure and patience of our spirits. And there are these considerations, that make us impatient under sufferings. The meanness and contemptible vileness of the instrument. It heightens impatience when we reflect upon the nearness of those who are the occasions and instruments of our sufferings. It many times heightens impatience to reflect upon the base ingratitude and foul disingenuity of those from whom we suffer. (5) Reflecting upon a former more prosperous condition is oftentimes a great provocation unto impatience under our present sufferings. (*Bp. E. Hopkins.*) *The fruits of patience:*—The word "temptations" here includes bodily temptations to evil, but not alone these; all forms of trial of every kind as well. Now, what is the attitude of men, even the best, when the clouds gather about them, when one desire after another is balked, and when one fear after another is fulfilled? Men settle down into gloom. They are very apt to fall into complaints and dolorous lamentations. But the Apostle James says to them, "Count it all joy" when adversity and various trials of the spirit come on you. Where we come into life with comparatively untrained forces, in ignorance

of the old-established laws, with social liabilities and desires that seek to be fulfilled, we require a long period of time in which to develop; and when men's desires are unfulfilled and are thwarted, that condition of things makes a man more manly. It drives him from his lower up into his higher nature. For see, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing this," &c. Is that, then, the result of patience? Is that homely quality so wonderful as to be praised in that way, that all your trials work faith, and faith works patience, and patience makes the perfect man? Is patience the sign of perfection in a man? It is that supreme quality by which a man reins in his forces, places himself willingly where God, by His providence, allots him, and is superior to his circumstances; where he has that consideration for himself, as a child of God and an heir of immortality, that no condition upon earth can daunt him. A king in disguise, wandering incognito through different lands, brought oftentimes to great straits, obliged to company with peasants, to gnaw their black bread, suffer hunger and thirst, oftentimes pushed hither and thither. But he lives within himself, and says, "How absurd for me, who am a king, who have revenues in abundance, to be put in these conditions. Here I am treated as any peasant; I am shoved here and there, and nobody takes any account of me. In a few weeks or days, at most, I shall recover myself, and sit again in high places." So a man in this life, knowing himself to be God's son, the heir of eternal glory, knocked about by various circumstances here and there and everywhere, has a legitimate pride in his birthright. It is just exactly under such circumstances that pride is legitimate. It lifts one up into a consciousness of his superiority to everything when he is pushed this way, that way, or the other by conflicting troubles and by trial. The conception of the apostle is that the difficulties and temptations of every kind in this mortal life really drive us up into the higher elements of our nature, practise us in them, make us more sanctified men, veterans, as distinguished from militia untried in the field, old men of wisdom and experience as compared with young men just coming into the trial of life. Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, because it is going to make men of you, going to make you hardy, going to thrust you up upon higher considerations, that are more becoming to you than the mere gain of ease and comfort and desires fulfilled. We see it to be, then, one of the most important qualities, as it works for manhood, to have this conception of ourselves as superior, by the grace of God, to all the accidents and conditions of this mortal life. Are griefs oppressive? By the grace of God I am able to bear grief, saith the Christian hero. Does one suffer lack? I am able to do without abundance. Am I despised and thrust aside? I am able to be despised and rejected. Now look at this matter more largely. Patience is the indispensable condition of mankind, unless they are at the seminal point. A savage and lazy Oriental, in a climate that takes away all courage and enterprise, does not have much patience. He does not want anything. He sits still, without desire, without enterprise, without out-reaching, without grasp, except in momentary fury. Just in proportion to the eminence of a man's sphere and the genius of a man's endowments, the quality of patience is necessary. Necessary, in the first place, because it is not possible for a man to have at once all he wants, or to regulate his wants and nature so that his supplies shall come in their order and in their gradation just as he needs them. Let us consider a few of the conditions in which men are placed where patience is necessary. 1. In the sphere of personal life, patience is a virtue. The ambitions of youth, the far-reaching before we are prepared for manhood, need it. 2. Now, in the household, and in early life generally, there are a thousand things that call for simple patience. The household is a little kingdom. It is a little sphere of light, held together by love, the best emblem and commentary upon Divine government there is. And yet how much there is in the household that frets! In the household there are the seeds of disturbance and confusion. But—patience, patience! You have need of patience in all the various experiences of the household, the collisions that come from differing natures seeking to fit themselves together; developments of all those practical qualities that enable men to live together, not only in patience, but in harmony, making the unity of the family produce every day, as it were, harmonious music. All these things require that men should have faith, and faith is the father of patience—that is to say, that prescience which enables a man to look forward to see that these things must be, and to wait for them, expecting them. 3. So in all the conflicts of business, the misunderstandings of men, the untrustworthiness of men, the rivalries of men, promises not fulfilled, disappointments of every kind. Ye have need of patience in all the conflicts of business. Do not give up. What if to-day is

yesterday turned bottom side up, to-morrow it will turn the right way again. What if the cloud does lower to-day? The sun will strike through by and by. What if the rain has come? It has come on you that are able to bear it. A man in all these contingencies of life, in the strife for position and influence, and for wealth, whether it be large or moderate, meeting various troubles and succumbing to them, is scarcely to be called a man. But if he rises in spite of his difficulties, that man is made stronger and larger by his troubles in civil, social, or business life. Ye have need of patience, saith the apostle, that after ye have fulfilled the will of God, ye wait to receive the reward. 4. Even in higher degree do men need patience when they are workers in the moral sphere. Human nature works upward very slowly and irregularly. New truths and new views require a long time. A farmer goes out and gets his phosphate, and puts it on the seed over-night, and says, "We will see in the morning what it has done." He goes out, and says, "Well, it ain't done a bit of good." No, not in a night. Ministers sow sermons on congregations, and think they will come up in a minute. But they will not come up in a good many minutes. By and by, little by little, by those and other influences, men will rise. There is nothing in this world that is so slow as the building of a man. In the process of building him an immense amount of time is consumed. A man gives out his plan of a house to an architect, and goes to Europe. In six months' time he comes back, and thinks he is going to move right in. When he arrives at the spot, there is nothing but brick and stone, and mortar and scaffolding, and all sorts of litter, dirt, and confusion. He is amazed at it. But in proportion to the elaborateness and largeness of the dwelling is the time that is required to construct it. So it is with moral ideas in the community, educating the whole people, enabling men to look without prejudice upon truth, and bringing them forward step by step. It is very slow work, and ministers, reformers, teachers of schools, parents, and all those whose desires are set for the furtherance of the welfare of men, have need of patience, great patience. Still one thing more. "Let patience have her perfect work." Raw patience does not amount to much. Ripe patience means a great deal; not that patience which is momentary and fugitive, but that which is settled down and become chronic. How beautiful it is to see a man or woman who has come to the state of ripe patience—the serene face of the matron, on whom all sweetness and goodness wait, who is living just at the golden sunset of her life, and who has been through trials unnamed—for the great sorrows of this life never come to the surface; broken-hearted almost, yet, by her faith in God, enduring till one and another thing is removed, and her life at last is completed, and she stands in the golden light, waiting. How beautiful is the serenity of victorious age that has not been overthrown, that has gone through the rugged way, and across Jordan into the promised land! How noble, too, is the heroic patience of men willing to give their lives for their kind, without selfish ends, with noble and heroic aspirations, waiting, waiting. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Patience and perfection:*—1. The perfection of our graces is not discovered till we are put upon great trials. As a pilot's skill is discerned in a storm, so is a Christian's grace in many troubles. 2. The exercise of grace must not be interrupted till it be full and perfect. Ordinary spirits may be a little raised for a time, but they fall again (Gal. v. 7). It is not enough to begin; our proceedings in religion must be answerable to our beginnings. While you are in the world, go on to a more perfect discovery of patience, and follow them that "through faith," and a continued "patience have inherited the promises" (Heb. vi. 12). 3. Christians must press on to perfection. "That ye may be perfect and entire, nothing wanting." (1) Christians will be aspiring to absolute perfection. They are led on to growth by this desire: they hate sin so perfectly that they cannot be quiet till it be utterly abolished. First, they go to God for justification, then for sanctification, then for glorification. And as they are bent against sin with a keen hatred, so they are carried on with an importunate desire of grace. They that have true grace will not be contented with a little grace; no measures will serve their turn. (2) Christians must be actually perfect in all points and parts of Christianity. As they will have faith, they will have patience; as patience, love, and zeal. (3) They aim at the perfection of duration, that, as they would be wanting in no part of duty, so in no part of their lives. Subsequent acts of apostasy made our former crown to wither (2 John 8). (*T. Manton.*) *On patience:*—I. THE NATURE OF PATIENCE. 1. It is a grace of the Holy Spirit, and is not to be confounded with that constitutional hardiness, or apathy of mind, which renders some men insensible to the most affecting events. 2. It is manifested in a cheerful submission to the trials of life.

The good man perceives the mercy there is in God's frowns, and the kindness there is in His strokes. 3. It is manifested in the steadfast pursuit of religion in spite of all its difficulties. 4. It is manifested in forbearance and kindness to our fellow-men. 5. It is shown in the steadfast expectation of the blessings of grace and glory. II. THE IMPORT OF THIS EXHORTATION. 1. This intimates that our patience should rise to the highest improvements of which it is susceptible. We must labour to attain such measures of this grace as to glorify providence in the whole of its dealings with us. 2. It intimates that we should endeavour to persevere in the exercise of this grace to the end, in spite of the increase of our troubles. III. THE MOTIVE TO THIS CONDUCT WHICH THE TEXT SUGGESTS. Attention to the state of the primitive Christians will lead us to the true import of the apostle's language. Their faith in the gospel and their attachment to its Author were strong, they had enabled them to overcome prejudices in favour of the Jewish religion which they had long fondly cherished. They had enabled them to relinquish the esteem of their bigoted countrymen, which had formerly been their solace amidst the indignities of the heathen, and to unite themselves with the followers of the Lord Jesus in spiritual worship and in pure benevolence. Now, as to these principles, they might be ready to imagine that they constituted the whole of the Christian character; but, though essential parts of it, more was still requisite. Patience was a grace which it was necessary they should cultivate most assiduously. It is a principal feature in the character of Christ. In this motive the apostle may be considered as intimating the influence of patience in securing and improving the other graces of religion. It keeps the shield of faith firm on the breast, and the fire of love flaming in the heart. It keeps the hands of prayer from falling down, and the song of praise from becoming cold or careless. Where patience hath its perfect work it hath as powerful an influence on happiness as on goodness. No anxiety can harass, and no despair cloud the heart where it rules. Conclusion: I shall give you a few counsels to aid you in the cultivation of this principle. 1. Be frequent in your prayers to the God of patience, that He may confirm you to the end. 2. Study with care the character of Jesus, and especially His patience. 3. Converse frequently with your companions in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. You should state your sorrows to each other, not to give vent to a querulous temper, but to solicit aid in presenting such considerations as may animate your resolution and confirm your fortitude. 4. Search the Scriptures daily. The Bible is the word of Christ's patience. There you will see a goodly company who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises, and there the most animating motives are presented to excite you to follow them. 5. Think on the lustre which this will shed on the religion you profess. This has been one of the boasts of philosophy, that it has made men superior to the evils of life; and nothing will degrade Christianity more, in the estimation of such men, than a querulous temper in its followers. 6. Think on the approbation which Christ will express of the perfect work of patience (Rev. ii. 19). (*H. Belfrage, D.D.*) *Patience*:—I never feel more strongly the divinity and perfectness of the Christian system, than in reading the works of those classic authors whose morality makes the nearest approach to the Christian standard. The chief fault that I find with Seneca is his omission of patience from his list of virtues; and from this omission, unessential as some might deem it, there flow the most fatal consequences. He gives many admirable precepts for contending with the evils of life, and destroying their power by exterminating them. But if they exceed mortal strength, and cannot be overcome, he represents it as beneath a wise or a brave man to bear them, when it is so easy to leap out of existence. The very field of discipline, which the heathen moralist thus precluded for his disciple, is that on which the precepts and example of Jesus are the most full and clear. Courage is an occasional act or effort of the soul; patience, a continuous habit. Courage is the mission of some; patience, the duty of all. Courage courts observation, and sustains itself by every possible outward stimulus; patience is lonely and quiet, its warfare is within. Courage may give its strength to evil, and may nerve the arm of the thief or the manslayer; patience dwells only in the bosom of piety, and always beholds the face of her Father in heaven. I now ask your attention to a few remarks designed to illustrate the necessity and the means of cultivating the virtue of patience, and the mode in which it so reacts upon the whole character as to make the patient disciple "perfect and entire, lacking nothing." The necessity of this virtue can hardly be overrated. Our Saviour said, with literal truth, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." Who escapes it? No one can feel more fully than I do that God has placed us in a good world, and has

put within the reach of us all a large preponderance of happiness over misery. And these visitations of Providence are not momentary, so that they can be met by a sudden and defiant effort; but they are prolonged, spreading out into the future, and the end is not yet, but is beyond our calculation. 1. Among the means of cherishing patience I would first name a deep and enduring sense of the love of God, and of the merciful purpose of all His dispensations. This we all confess in words; but we must feel it. This needed faith in a fatherly Providence parents should teach their children, when they are full of joy; and the young, prosperous, and always happy should grow into it more and more in daily adoration and thanksgiving. There has been, there is, enough in the life of each of us, if we would only ponder upon it, to draw forth the confession, with gratitude too full for utterance, "God has nourished me as a child—in ways and times without number He has revealed Himself as my Father and my Friend." This spirit will give us patience when the evil days come. We shall know that afflictions are but altered forms of mercy, ordained with kind purpose and for a blessed ministry, that outward trial is sent to heal inward disease. We shall lean in faith upon a Father, whose ways seem dark to us only because we are children and fall short of our Father's wisdom. Our trust will be confirmed by exercise and deepened by experience, so that every new period of trial will give to patience its more and more perfect work. 2. Again, patience derives nourishment from the hope of heaven, not from the mere belief in immortality, but from the personal appropriation and consciousness of it. We think little of a rough road or a bad inn, if the end of our journey is near and attractive. We cheerfully encounter temporary inconveniences if fully assured that they are to be followed by long and unbroken quietness and prosperity. Did we let our contemplations rest habitually on eternity, all our earthly trials would in like manner seem light and short, and not worthy to be compared with the joy set before us. 3. Patience receives also ample support from the life and example of Jesus. In Him the disciple learns that whom the Lord loves He chastens. Yet we behold Him calm, submissive, trustful. Not a murmur escapes Him, not an unconditional prayer for relief. His patience is tried at every point, both by the mysterious hand of an afflictive Providence, and by the malice and scorn of the wicked. But this life is a school for heaven, and we are accustomed to believe that we learn lessons here to practise there. Is not patience an exception? We can have no occasion for its exercise in heaven; why, then, assign it so prominent a place in the Christian character? This question will be best answered by considering the uses of patience. (1) Under this head I first remark that there is one work which we must all accomplish, would we enter heaven, namely, the formation of spiritual characters, the establishment of the supremacy of the inward over the outward, of the soul over sense, of things unseen and eternal over things seen and temporal. This, however performed, is an arduous process; but perhaps not more so for those whose discipline is that of protracted suffering, than for the prosperous and happy. But for those who are rich, and full, and strong, if they would reach favoured places in the heavenly kingdom, there must be a course of self-restraint, self-denial, and self-renunciation. And herein lies one essential office of patience, in the spiritualising of the character, and how beautifully and effectually it does this many of us can testify, from our having felt nearer heaven in the abode of penury, or by the bed of chronic illness, than in the gayest and brightest scenes that have fallen within our experience. (2) Then, again, in no form does a Christian example seem more attractive, and win more honour to the Christian name and character, than in patience under severe trial and suffering. Piety, indeed, is in the sight of God the same, under whatever form; but by man it cannot be equally appreciated in all conditions of life. In prosperity and joy, there will always be the sneering and sceptical, who will repeat Satan's question, "Doth Job serve God for naught?" But touch the disciple in his dearest earthly interests, and if he then holds fast his faith, and if he talks of the goodness of God, and manifestly dwells in inward peace, there is no room left for cavilling. God means that we should all be examples to one another; that, while we save our own souls, we should shine for the salvation of others; and that thus the world should from generation to generation become more and more filled with lights on the heavenward path. This office, as I have said, seems to be performed with superior felicity and power by those whose mission it is to suffer rather than to do. (3) I remark that patience is not a virtue to which even death sets limits. It belongs to heaven and to eternity. What! you ask, patience in heaven? Will there be suffering there? By no means. But what is patience? It is implicit trust, exercised in the darker scenes and vicissi-

tudes of life. These scenes will brighten into the perfect day, these vicissitudes will be merged in the great change, when the corruptible puts on incorruption; but the faith of which they were the theatre will live for ever, and be for ever needed. There will be mysteries in heaven as well as here: things to be taken on faith before they can be fully known, portions of the vast administration of God, in which, in our ignorance, we must cast ourselves in humble reliance on His wisdom and goodness. I have thus spoken of the necessity, the aids, and the uses of patience. It makes life beautiful. It sheds a calm and heavenly glory upon the bed of death. (*A. P. Peabody.*) *Patience needed by God's workers*:—In the New Testament "patience," in almost every case, has a reference to what has to be endured or suffered rather than to what has to be accomplished. Nor is this to be wondered at. The first age of Christianity was an age of labour, but it was more conspicuously an age of endurance. Since that age Christianity has become a conquering religion as well as a suffering religion. The spirit of patience takes a wider range now; and instead of meaning endurance under suffering, it takes in all the difficulties which come in the way of well-doing, and embraces all that might come under the word "perseverance." Let me notice some points in the nature of the Christian life which demand this spirit of patience or perseverance. I. THE KINGDOM OF GOD SHARES, WITH ALL THE WORKS OF GOD, THE CHARACTER OF GROWTH; and those who are fellow-workers with Him must accept the laws and conditions of His kingdom, and must, perhaps, wait long. I need hardly dwell on this fact of the growth of the kingdom of God. Take any single element of the character of a good man, or of a Church, or of a nation, and you see how impossible it is that it should all at once attain to perfection. Time, experience, are necessary. And perhaps the greater the virtue is, and the greater the work to be done, the slower will be the growth. It is so in the natural world, where the strongest tree, or the most sagacious and vigorous animal, comes to maturity after many years of slow growth. Civilisation is slow of growth; art, learning, high character in races and in individuals, all are of slow growth; but slower still is the development of religion, of high Christian virtue and character, whether in men or nations. What has strengthened the Christian graces of good men, their wisdom, their faith, their charity, their spirit of watchfulness, their faithfulness? Was it not the daily struggle against evil, the daily need of resorting to God for help, the falling back upon great eternal truths in the heart? If a man had all he wanted at the outset, he might, after a long life, be worse off than when he began. Certainly he would be deficient in many good qualities, and his inner character would be less complete. In countries where the inhabitants can live without labour, civilisation makes no advance; they have all they need, and in vain do you ask them to put forth efforts to rise higher in knowledge or in skill. But not less is the training of the soul in what is spiritual the fruit of opposition and hindrance. The hardest thing in the world is to do good, to chase away the prejudices and the errors and the bad habits which have taken root in the world. If a man could accomplish all this as by the magic wand, would he himself be as good a man as if he had been obliged to reach his end by the long laborious process of thinking and revising his thoughts, restraining his spirit, looking in upon himself, and upward to the Source of all purity and wisdom? Christ prepared His followers for all this. By His parables, by His life, by His death, He taught His disciples that opposition, defeat, and apparent destruction were, or might be, parts of the history of His Church, and that the harvest might only be reaped after long ages of waiting. This growth—so slow, so uncertain in outward appearance, so often advancing when it seems to have ceased, this growth of the kingdom of God in the individual—calls for a spirit of patience on the part of those who belong to the kingdom of God. II. PATIENCE IN THE WORK OF GOD IS NECESSARY BECAUSE IT IS NO PART OF THE CONDITION OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE TO SEE RESULTS. Results of some sort we ask to see, and results of some sort we do see; but the full sum of our labours it may require more than one generation to see. The man of clear judgment and pure feeling will doubtless, before his career is ended, enjoy the sight of many persons who have caught his spirit and character. But even that reward comes by patience. I do not speak of the individual only, I speak of the Church and of the world. III. THE SPIRIT OF PATIENCE IN CHRISTIAN WORK AND DUTY IS THE ONLY SPIRIT WHICH REALLY APPREHENDS THE RIGHT CHARACTER OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH. The spirit of patience is not measured by the reward or the result. The whole essence of Christianity is a contest with what is evil and wrong. It is presumptuous, and in the highest degree unbelieving, in us to say, "I shall not take part in this tremendous conflict

until I know what is to come out of it, and what good is to be done." The essential impulse of the Christian spirit is to set itself on the side of what is right and pure and true, irrespective of the issue. I know there are amongst us cases where, again and again, there has arisen, as if prompted by stern necessity, the suggestion that some work on behalf of an individual, or a class of individuals, may as well be thrown up. It comes to nothing. Is there any use doing more? What do you mean? The struggle is not a contest for one individual or for many; it represents the whole question of the supremacy of good or evil, the whole question of our faith in God, the whole question of our hope in the destiny of man. But the question may well arise in every heart, "What right have I to ask that all my plans and purposes shall succeed, or that any one of them shall?" Where do we see universal success free from mischance? In what region of nature do we find gain without loss, progress without decay? Everywhere we see a capacity for life and growth cut short and perish. We never see in other cases what we so rigorously demand in our own. And what are we, it may well be said, what are we that an exception should be made on our behalf, and that we should never encounter disappointment and failure? (*A. Watson, D.D.*) *Patience*:—Patience is not there to begin with. It is no inborn grace, like love. It comes to us by and by, and tries to find room in our nature, and to stay and bless us, and so make us altogether its own. The first thing we are aware of in any healthy and hearty child is the total absence and destitution of this spirit of patience. No trace of it is to be discovered in the eager, hungry outcries, and the aimless, but headstrong struggles against things as they are. But presently Patience comes, and rests on the mother's lifted finger as she shakes it at the tiny rebel, and puts a tone he had never heard before within the tender trills of her voice, and he looks up with a dim sort of wonder, as if he would say, What is that? Then, in a few years, she looks at him out of the face of the old kitchen clock. It seems impossible that this steady-going machine should be so impassive, and persist in that resistless march; should not be quick to strike the hour he would drag before its time out of the strong heavens, or should not delay a little as he sits in the circle when the day is done, and dreads the exodus, at the stroke of eight, to his chamber. Poor little man! he has got into the old sorrow. It is not the clock, but the sun and stars he would alter, and the eternal ways. Then, as the child passes into the boy, he has still to find this angel of patience. It is then very common for him to transfer his revolt from the sun to the seasons. If he is in the country, he rebels at the slow, steady growth of things; they never begin to come up to his demand. It is with all boys as it was with John Sterling. His father gave him a garden-bed, to till as he would; and he put in potatoes. They did not appear when he thought they should; so he dug them out, and put in something else; and so he kept on digging in and out, all one summer, because the things sprouted and bloomed at once in his hot little heart, like Jonah's gourd. It was an instance of the whole boy life. Nature can never come up to his notion of what she ought to do until Patience comes to help him. But your big, healthy boy fights it out, hard and long; nothing is just as he wants it. Christmas comes like a cripple, and school, when the holidays are over, like a deer. It is a shame cherries and apples will not ripen sooner, and figures find their places more tractably, and geographies run as straight as a line. It is easy to see, again, that these habits of the child and boy are only the germs of a larger impatience in the youth and the prime. We soon get our lesson from the angel about the kitchen clock and the courses of the sun, and the limits of our power to make this world turn the other way. We learn to come to time, and set ourselves to its steady dictation in all common things; and patience, so far, has her perfect work. I wonder to see the patience of some children, at last, about what they know they have got to do and be, in their tasks and strivings. But if the boy does learn all he ought to learn about times and seasons, and tasks and treats, and lines and limits, it is very seldom that the lesson holds good as he begins the march to his manhood, or when he gets there. Patience, then, has to teach him deeper things: time still says one thing and his desire another, and he hungers again for what God has forbidden in the very condition of his life. But now it is unspeakably more serious than it was ten years ago, as she comes to him and tries to teach him her great lesson. She has to remember what myriads of young men, strong, and eager, and headstrong as he is, have broken away from her after all. Fortune and position, weight for weight, with what faculty the Maker has given him, is just as sure to come to a man in this country as the crop to the farmer, and the web to the weaver, if he will only

let this angel have her perfect work. Travellers in India tell us they have seen a magician make an orange tree spring, and bloom, and bear fruit all in half an hour. That is the way many believe fortune ought to come. They cannot wait for its patient, steady, seasonable growth. Patience comes and whispers, "It will never do; the perfect work is only that done by my spirit; the magician can never bring his thirty-minute oranges to market, because they can never nourish anybody as those do that come in the old Divine fashion, by the patient sun and seasons." He gives no heed to the wise, sweet counsels; takes his own way; and then if he wins, finds that somehow he has lost in the winning; the possession is not half so good as the expectation: but the rule is, that the man who will not let Patience have her perfect work in building up his position and fortune, ends bare of both, and has nothing but a harvest of barren regrets. No man, again, comes to middle age without finding that this is the truth about all the noble sensations that give such a colour and grace to our life, and are such loyal ministrants to its blessing, if we can say "No" to the enemies of our good angel when they come and counsel us to disregard her ways, to let our passions take the bit in their teeth, and go tearing where they will. Twenty years ago last June, when I had been a few weeks in this country, I tasted, for the first time in my life, an exquisite summer luxury; and it seemed so good that I thought I could never get enough of it. I got some more, and then some more, and then I found, for the first time, I think, what it is to have too much of a good thing. The angel is there with his flaming sword, insisting that I shall only eat of it out of Eden. It has been to me ever since a parable of this deep old verity. I disregarded the angel whispering, "You had better take care; if you eat that for a steady diet, through a whole June day, you do it in spite of me; the hunger for some more, which has been growing all your life, is a pledge that the good of this will abide with you as long as you live if you will always let hunger wait on appetite." I had no idea of doing that. Impatience got the rein, and I gathered and ate the whole harvest of that good thing between dawn and dark. Every glass of wine, or dram of whiskey, drunk by a healthy and strong young man, is an insult and injury to this good angel, and makes it so far impossible for her to do her perfect work, because he is spending ahead of his income of life, and bringing a fine power of being to beggary, if not to worse than that. He can only get that glow and flame at a heavy discount, both of life itself and of all that makes life worth living. Patience would help him to infinitely finer pleasures from her simple and wholesome stores, and they would stay with him as long as he lived; but he will not listen to her counsels, and will have none of her reproofs; therefore will she weep at his calamities, and mock when his dole cometh. There is a whole world of evils of very much the same sort, some more fatal still than the one I have named. It is the same thing whichever way we turn. Nature says one thing, and desire another. Only the perfect work of Patience can make both one, and then the result of both is grace. This is true, first, of our relation to one another. The very last thing most of us can learn of our relations to each other is to let Patience have her perfect work. Very few fathers and mothers learn the secret this angel is waiting to tell them about their children until perhaps the last is born. It is probable that he will give more trouble than any one of the others. Then love and duty were the motive powers; now it is love and patience. Patience is the only angel that can work with love. To refuse her blessing is to refuse God's holiest gift, after what He has given us in the child's own being. I think the day is yet to dawn when fathers and mothers will feel that they would rather scourge themselves as the old anchorites did, than scourge their little ones; and will not doubt that they, and not the child, deserve it, when they feel like doing it. The fruit ripens at last all right, if we have the grace to let the sun shine on it, and to guard it from the destroyer. All the tendencies of our time to give children the right to have a great deal of their own way, are good tendencies, if we will understand that their own way is of course the right way, as certainly as a climbing vine follows the turn of the sun: all we have to do is carefully and patiently to open the right way for them wherever they turn. Patience, again, must have her perfect work in our whole relation to our fellow-men. It is very sad to read of the shameful things that have been done in the name of religion, for the sake of conformity: how the fagot has burned, and the rack has wrung. Want of patience, indeed, apart from the vilest reasons, must be the main cause for the dreadful rank growth of this evil weed of divorce in our social life. If they did love each other once, they will never find such blessing as could come to them, with patience as the aid to their affections. Human souls have an imperial quality in

them; a turn for insisting on being master; and when they come so close together as husband and wife, and love recovers his sight, as he will, Patience must take up her part and adjust the thing by a constitution of equal rights, and by an equal giving up of rights, or, in spite of love, there will come infinite trouble. We have very much the same thing to learn in our relation to each other in the whole length and breadth of our life. Ministers with their people, and people with their ministers; employers with their servants, and servants with their employers; men in their dealings with men, and women in their judgments of women. For, finally, there must be a Divine impatience, too. Jesus Christ felt it now and then; but you have to notice that it is never with weakness or incompleteness, or even folly or sin; for all these He had only forbearance and forgiveness, and pity and sympathy. What roused Him, and made His heart throb, and His face glow, and His voice quiver with a Divine indignation, was the hollow pretence and ugly hypocrisy He had to encounter, and the judgments one man made of another out of a sense of superior attainment. That is our right, as much as it was His right, as we grow towards His great estate. Last of all, for this angel of Patience we must cry to heaven. (*R. Collyer.*) *The lesson of patience:*—I. We ought to learn this lesson, in the first place, because of THE COMFORT IT GIVES. Patience means not getting put out when things do not turn out just as we wish. Look at Job. Look at Abraham. And then look at Jacob. An old proverb says, "Patience is the remedy for all troubles." The best remedy for hard times is patience. Patience stifles anger, and sweetens the temper, and subdues pride. Patience bridles the tongue, so that it shall not speak in anger, and holds back the hand from striking in wrath. Patience makes us humble in prosperity, and cheerful in adversity. Patience comforts the poor, and restrains the rich. II. In the second place, we ought to learn this lesson because of THE GOOD IT DOES. When a ship is going to sea, it is necessary for her to be properly ballasted. The ballast steadies the vessel, and enables her to meet the storms and billows in her way with safety. This shows us what good patience can do. III. But there is a third reason why we should try to learn this lesson, and that is because of THE HELP WE HAVE in doing so. We have great help given, in seeking to learn this lesson, from the examples of those who have learned and practised it before us. Suppose we are trying to climb up a steep mountain. We find it very hard work. If we see no footprints of others, we may say, "No one has ever been along this path before. Perhaps it is impossible to reach the top of the mountain. What is the use of trying?" We feel discouraged, and cease striving. But if the path is well worn, and there are footprints, we know that many people have gone up the mountain: then we may feel encouraged to keep on climbing to the very top. And so, when we have examples of those who have learned the lesson of patience, and in whom "patience has had its perfect work," then we may feel encouraged to try and learn this lesson for ourselves. How patient Jesus was all the days of His life on earth! "When He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not." But this lesson of patience can be learned only by the help of God's grace. (*R. Newton, D.D.*) *Patience:*—Patience is spoken of by the apostle in the text as having a work to do. Our work as men, as Christians, in this world is to strive to be more like God, more like Christ, in ourselves, in our home lives, our business lives, our duty, our pleasure; and this cannot be done without patience. Now patience has two main qualities which enable her to do her perfect work. Patience is willing to wait; secondly, patience is willing to endure. There is an old proverb, "All things come to him who can wait," a proverb which commends itself to those who observe how in this world's affairs hurry and worry hinder success, or spoil it, if gained. How often excitement or irritation mar the best laid plans, rendering a man useless or harmful at critical moments. Patience that is willing to wait is necessary even to energetic persons, eager to make money, and, as it is called, "to get on in the world." They learn by experience that energy out of season is wasted, if not harmful, and so they bide their time, and are patiently watchful for opportunity. Now, if this is true in worldly matters, we need not be surprised to find that it has its counterpart in spiritual matters. Patience is willing to wait, being well aware that the strong walls of prejudice which divide class and class are founded mostly upon ignorance, and with it break down. It takes time, and therefore demands patience. Impatience would attempt to cure what is amiss by remedies which in themselves and in their consequences are worse than the disease. Patience, on the other hand, cherishes hope, and has faith in the increasing purpose of God for good—God whose mercies fail not. Patience willing to wait is

characteristic of God's providence. It was also characteristic of the life of Christ on earth. He who was content to grow in wisdom and stature was content to spend the long years of His early manhood in subjection to His earthly parents till He reached the age of thirty and the appointed time was fulfilled. But if in Christ's life is seen patience thus willing to wait, in the record of His ministry and passion we see that very quality of patience which we speak of, namely, patience, willing to endure, working out for our sakes the perfection of human nature. And as a Teacher, what trials must His soul have felt—that soul full of knowledge and wisdom, yet only able to impart but little, and that little veiled in parable, to hearts not receptive and ears dull of hearing! How trying to the patience to find Himself misunderstood and the gospel lesson forgotten even by those nearest to Him and most ready to learn! And then again, all the feeling of indignation aroused by the wilful malignity of the "Scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites," insinuating, traducing, and finally conspiring to kill; and all this endured with patience. These are the facts which in the life and death of Christ tell us of His patience, willing to wait and willing to endure. (*E. Warre, D.D.*) *The perfect work of patience:* This endurance, which the writer seems to consider the finally desirable thing, may have two meanings: it may signify the being able to bear whatever is laid on us by our Lord, and which we call patience, or it may signify permanence of character. The latter seems the fixed meaning. Before the blast the dead leaves are driven, or the waves on the surface of the ocean are tossed, but the tree has endurance and remains; the ocean has endurance and remains. It is this permanence of character which is desirable above all things. The earlier trials are the first weight imposed upon character. They tend to give compactness. There is a line of density below which no substance can be pressed. Every additional pound of weight causes that which is pressed to approach that compactness which no additional burden can increase. This completed compactness the writer calls the "perfect work" of endurance. The sooner a man reaches this effect of trouble, the sooner is he at the point where no trouble can ever work him any harm. He is "perfect and entire." (*C. F. Deems, D.D.*) *The completion of the godly character:*—The three characteristics of the man of God form a climax: ye are to be spiritually perfect, having all your graces and virtues in their entirety, and in no one thing are ye to be deficient; the ideal statue is not to present to the view one grace in abundant development, and another of stinted proportions, symmetry not deformity is the model, each part is well balanced with the rest, and all in graceful harmony with the whole; the law of physical is also the law of moral beauty. As the temptations spoken of are various, of divers sorts and kinds, assaulting and testing the various constituents of the whole character, the effect of a successful endurance of them severally would be the perfection of each and all of the members of the inner man, the completion of the godly character, the production of a man after God's own heart. (*F. T. Bassett, M.A.*)

Ver. 5. **If any of you lack wisdom.**—*Wisdom to be obtained from God alone:*—I. THE CASE SUPPOSED. "If any of you lack wisdom." Although the case is stated hypothetically, it contains an exact description of the real situation of every human being. 1. There are those who are familiar with the history of nations, who can speak many languages, who can expatiate on the sublimest sciences, who can philosophise on the causes of natural appearances and on the principles of the human mind, who are versed in almost every department of human knowledge; and yet are strangers to those simple truths, an acquaintance with which is necessary to their final happiness. Hear how Augustine expresses himself when addressing God, in reference to his applauded acquisitions, but real blindness in early life. "I was fond of learning, not indeed the first rudiments, but such as classical masters teach." But "I attended to the wanderings of Æneas, while I forgot my own. Of what use was it to deplore the self-murdering Dido, while yet I could bear unmoved the death of my own soul, alienated from Thee during the course of these pursuits—from Thee, my God, my life? I loved Thee not, and (such the spirit of the world) I was applauded with, 'Well done,' on all sides. Alas! the torrent of human custom! who shall resist thee? How long will it be ere thou be dried up?" Let it not be supposed that this is to undervalue a learned education. Augustine had no such intention, as is clear from what he subjoins, "*That* literature which they wished me to acquire, with whatever intention, was yet capable of being applied to a good use. O my King, and my God, may whatever useful thing I acquired serve Thee. Still, O Lord, in my youth I have much to praise Thee for. Many, many were

Thy gifts; the sin was mine that I sought pleasure, truth and happiness, not in Thee, but in the creature." But let us not overlook the far greater number who can make no pretension to a learned education, and yet fancy they have no lack of wisdom. 2. There are your men of prudence, who escape the difficulties which perplex others, and whose well-laid schemes for worldly prosperity succeed to their most sanguine expectation. Every such person is commonly reckoned wise; but surely his wisdom, if thus limited, will not stand the test. 3. There are, again, in every class of society, men of ability, good sense and natural shrewdness, who are often in danger of forgetting the necessity of a higher species of wisdom. Nay, who at all acquainted with the scriptural view of human nature, does not perceive that fallen as we are, darkened as is our reason, and corrupted as are our affections, mere natural ability, if left to its own unrestrained influence, will certainly lead men astray from the path of truth? 4. Again, there are your minute reasoners, who either profess themselves to be already wise, or, if they allow their ignorance, expect light only from their own minds: these form another class who with many pass for wise men, but who are altogether destitute of the wisdom of salvation. Far be it from our intention to express any disrespect for the right use of reason; we speak of those who expect more from it than it can give. Pride is one very general cause of the rejection of salvation. This works in a variety of ways; but the two most striking are the pride of self-righteousness, and the pride of intellect. Alas! for those, who, thus walking in the light of their own fire, and compassing themselves about with sparks of their own kindling, carefully shut out the beams of the Sun of Righteousness! All these descriptions of persons, then, lack wisdom; but they are not all sensible of it. A great point is gained when men are brought to a knowledge of their own blindness, for those who know this are already in part taught of God. 5. But, are those who truly know, love, and serve the Lord, to be exempted from the list of those who lack wisdom? The more enlightened any man is, the more humble he invariably becomes. We are all included, then, in this description, either as being entirely destitute of any true wisdom, or as having still much to learn. II. THE DIRECTION GIVEN, "Let him ask of God." Man's natural ignorance of all true religion being ascertained, the inquiry suggests itself, To whom shall he apply for instruction? Have there been no uncommonly able and enlightened men whose discoveries suffice to lead to safety and true goodness? In vain has it ever been to apply to philosophers, or to the priests of heathen temples. They did not so much as know the true God; how then could they lead others to His knowledge? "The world by wisdom knew not God." As to any way of restoration to the Divine favour, they were totally in the dark. As to any change of heart, they knew not their need of it. And would there be more success in applying to sceptical writers of modern date? Not the least. Whom can the sick cure? whom can the blind direct? Hither, then, let all of us who regard wisdom betake ourselves. Shall we wait till Socrates know something, or Anaxagoras find out light in darkness, or Democritus draw up truth from the bottom of his well? Lo! a voice from heaven teaching the truth, and showing us a light brighter than the very sun. Why are we so unjust to ourselves as to hesitate to adopt this wisdom?—a wisdom which learned men have wasted their lives in seeking, but never could discover. If we lack wisdom, we must apply to God Himself; how then are we to know what His will is? He speaks to us in His Word. Yet this is not to be understood as if the mere perusal of Scripture would of itself bring to true practical wisdom, or even necessarily lead to the formation of correct theoretical opinions. Human teaching and the reading of the Scriptures in a spirit of self-dependence, may lead to orthodox notions; but they may lead far astray from them. Divine teaching is the only certain way of leading even to a correct line of thinking. This revelation is not a miraculous discovery of new truths, for in that sense they are all already revealed in Scripture; but it is the enabling of humbled persons to understand, to believe, to love, to obey, and to take a personal and lively interest in these truths. It is a work on the mind itself. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned." If, then, we allow the necessity of this teaching, we ought next to inquire how it is to be obtained. To this inquiry the answer is direct—"Ask of God." Prayer is the grand means of attaining this wisdom. 1. Comply with this direction in order to obtain just views of doctrine. 2. This suggests the use of this method to ascertain your religious state. You are enjoined to examine yourselves. But your hearts are deceitful. Ask, then, of God that He would be pleased to guide you to the right conclusion. 3. Ask wisdom of God to know and to avoid whatever is wrong. 4.

Attend to this direction, too, that you may be led to the practical knowledge of positive duties. 5. In a state of uncertainty, as to the steps you should take in the important pursuits and changes of life, implore providential direction. "I will instruct thee," saith the Lord, "and teach thee in the way that thou shouldest go; I will guide thee with Mine eye." 6. If blessed with prosperity and affluence, you have the utmost need to pray that you may not forget God, but may attain wisdom to render your salvation certain, which would otherwise be impossible. 7. If pressed with severe afflictions, it is only when they are accompanied with Divine teaching, that you can so bear and so improve them as to reap any benefit from them. Nay, the direction itself cannot be properly complied with, unless we obtain, in the very attempt, wisdom to comply with it; for we cannot pray aright of ourselves. Let us, therefore, say with the disciples, "Lord, teach us to pray." III. The encouraging PROMISE held forth to every one who will comply with the direction, God "giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." God is here represented as "the hearer of prayer"; yet with a particular reference to His answering of prayers for saving wisdom. In short, there is an express promise that whoever applies to God in cases of doctrine, or duty, shall be guided aright. But some will be disposed to say, "Is not this to set aside common sense and rational argument, and to open up the floodgates of fanaticism? or, if it must be so, how can these things be? Tell us precisely in what way this overruling influence is exerted." This promise disclaims all regard to extraordinary voices, visions, impressions, and, in short, everything apart from the written Word. It calls on men to be found in the use of the ordinary means, and, sensible of their own liability to error, to implore that God would guide them. Now, how God's directing the mind should be considered as impossible, or involving any absurdity, we are at a loss to conceive. We pretend not, indeed, to explain the precise manner of His operations; nay, we readily confess our inability to do so; but we ask whether this difficulty be not common to almost every inquiry of a similar nature. It meets, with equal force, all who allow a Providence, but who are obliged to confess that they cannot unravel its mysteries. What more irrational than to exclude the eternal Spirit Himself from all access to those spirits which owe their very being to His will? 1. That God has made this promise, should of itself convince us of its certainty; yet, perhaps, the best illustration of it which can be given is to show its fulfilment in fact. And here it may be remarked, that many of the most celebrated characters in Scripture have left evidence of its being fulfilled in their cases. "O God, Thou hast taught me from my youth." "I have not departed from Thy judgments, for Thou hast taught me" (Psa. lxxi. 17; cxix. 102). A most striking instance is furnished in the history of Solomon (1 Kings iii.). When the Apostle Peter uttered the believing declaration, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," our Lord answered and said unto him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father who is in heaven" (Matt. xvi. 17). "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things" (1 John ii. 20). Nor has this teaching, in so far as it relates to a personal apprehension of Divine truth, been confined to the ages of inspiration. 2. Another proof of the fulfilment of this promise is exhibited in the uniformity of sentiment, of practice, and of heart, among truly humble, praying persons of every name. It is evident that those scholars who follow any one master who understands the science he professes to teach, will resemble each other in their ideas of that science, But, let it be observed, that we do not say that this promise extends to those who continue merely nominal Christians; nor ought any one to expect that it will be fulfilled in those who neglect the distinctly marked and the absolutely necessary prerequisites. It requires humility, a disposition of implicit submission to the dictates of Scripture, and dependence on Divine instruction. I have said there is a remarkable harmony of views among truly humble, praying persons. Do not oppose to this the differences of various denominations. As in the scholars of the same master we expect only a general agreement, and not a complete identity of sentiment; as in the children of the same family we expect to see only a general likeness, and not an absolute sameness of features; so it is among the disciples of the Lord Jesus—among the children of God. But there are some peculiarities of expression in this promise well deserving of attention, as directly calculated to remove every sentiment which would discourage you from applying to God. One may be ready to say, "It is true that the Lord thus instructs those who serve and honour Him; but it would be vain presumption, in so unworthy and sinful a creature as I am, to make application." In reply to this, none are excluded but

those who think themselves too wise to need His aid; but you are sensible of your need, therefore you are by no means excluded, for God "giveth to all men"—or all who ask. A second may be ready to say, "Were there only a few things in which I needed guidance, I could expect to be heard; but I am so very ignorant, there are so many questions which I need to ask, that I fear God would be offended with my importunity." Hear, however, the encouraging declaration: God giveth "liberally." All His communications are on a scale of liberality worthy of Himself, David testified that the Lord had "dealt bountifully" with his soul. And, finally, there are some who, if they do not speak out their minds, yet feel in this way; conscious of their ignorance, they are kept back from availing themselves of instruction by a fear that, in the very application, their ignorance will be detected, and that they themselves will be exposed to ridicule and contempt. There may be reason to apprehend such treatment from some of their fellow-creatures; but there is no reason to fear such treatment from their heavenly Teacher, for God "upbraideth not." To sum up the whole in a few practical exhortations. 1. See that you all use the external means of acquiring saving wisdom. It is a general rule that blessings are promised only when you are in the way of corresponding exertions. Let, then, the Word of God be your daily study. Attend on the preaching of the Gospel, because it is enjoined, and because experience proves it to be one great means of enlightening the mind. 2. Let me expostulate with you who have not followed the direction in the text. It is to be feared there are some of you who have never been brought to humble dependence on Divine teaching, but are under the lamentable deception of trust in your own minds. 3. Improve whatever light you already possess. But, more particularly, this subject speaks in encouraging language to those pious persons who are not possessed of human learning. Look up, then, thou taught of God, to Him who guides thee; lift up thy voice aloud and sing. The range of thy idea is limited, extending, perhaps, but a short way beyond the spot which gave thee birth; but, in much human wisdom there is often much sorrow; while the light that shall bless thee in heavenly mansions, already irradiates thy humble dwelling. Nor would it be the part of gratitude, or of benevolence, to keep all this precious wisdom to yourselves. Endeavour to diffuse it in your more immediate circle, on every side. And, to say no more, sensible of your remaining ignorance, continue in the same humble supplication for farther teaching, and abide all your lifetime in the school of Christ; so shall you, undoubtedly, obtain a clearer light—a light which will cheer you in the darkest night of sorrow, and turn even the shadow of death into the morning. (*J. Foote, M.A.*) *Asking wisdom in trial*:—I. WHO IS TO ASK? "If any of you lack"—evidently the lacking man. A man who is full does not feel the need of asking: he has no necessity for seeking. Now, we know as a matter of fact and of experience, that as long as we are living an even, prosperous life, even though we may be Christians, there is great danger lest we should fancy that we lack not. There is great danger lest we should be satisfied with our faith, with our Christian standing, with our conduct in the world, and with our general deportment. "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." But presently trial comes, and we know that trial very soon searches us out, and makes us feel that there is that in our faith which is lacking, that in our love which is lacking, that in our obedience which is lacking, that in our separation from the world which is lacking, that in many parts and phases of our Christian character and conduct, which comes far short of that to which it ought to have attained. II. FOR WHAT? "If any of you lack"—now what are we to ask for? The case supposed is that of a Christian under trial. You will observe that the apostle does not direct us to pray for deliverance from the trial; he does not direct us to ask that the trial may be removed—this is a very common prayer; but it is rarely a wise or a safe prayer; and it is not often a successful prayer. St. Paul, when the thorn in the flesh was sent to him, sought the Lord thrice, that it might be taken from him; but it was not taken from him; his prayer was not answered as he had offered it. Neither, you will see, does the apostle direct us to pray for patience, for a stronger faith, for an entire submission; all that is most important. But what we want when the trial comes is, first and foremost, Divine wisdom, that we may be able first rightly to understand the true meaning of God in the discipline that we may be able to see what His purpose is in thus dealing with us. Then, having that wisdom, we shall receive the trial submissively and with resignation. I believe that one of the causes why men murmur so much against God's discipline is because they do not understand it. And thus we shall use it rightly; we shall make use of it for our sanctification, and the per-

fecting of the work of God in the soul. III. OF WHOM is this wisdom to be sought? Obviously of God; and very emphatically is the giving character of God brought out in this verse, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask"—literally it is, "of the giving God"; "of the giver God, who giveth to all men." Our Lord has taught us that it is "more blessed to give than to receive," and it is one of the attributes of the Divine character that He delights in giving—He is God, the Giver. But the Christian under trial, feeling the impenitence and the hardness of his own heart, feeling how he has rebelled against God, feeling how little he deserves any blessing from God, may ask, "Is this for me? Have I any right to look for it?" Observe how large are the terms of the promise—"that giveth to all men"—there is no exception there. God gives, and He gives "simply." There is no complexity in His giving. When man gives, he gives from a variety of motives, and he very often makes the person who receives feel that he is receiving a favour, and to receive that which is given to him with very unpleasant feelings; but there is nothing of this kind in God's gifts. When He gives, He gives simply; as the word is further explained in what follows, "And upbraideth not." There are things for which God does upbraid us. He rebukes us for our sins and our shortcomings, that we do not come and ask simply, as He is willing to give simply; but God never upbraids us for asking for wisdom; He never finds fault with us for seeking this great blessing and gift at His hands. IV. THE MANNER. How are we to ask? The apostle does not say, "Let him ask with humility"—that is implied, I think. Every man who really feels his need will come to God in a humble spirit. Neither does he say, "Let him ask with reverence"; that, I think, is implied. Every man who feels his need and lifts up his thoughts to the great God must come before Him with more or less of reverence and abasement of self. That which is placed before us as the essential qualification of the prayer which is to receive an answer, is simply this, "Let him ask in faith," with a full and certain persuasion that God can and that God will answer such petition. And it is this spirit of doubting which is condemned by the apostle, as that which absolutely disqualifies the person who prays for the reception of the promised grace. There are, I think, three reasons which are adduced in the verses which follow. 1. In the first place, the doubting man offers no firm heart, and no firm mind, for the reception of the Divine gift, and, therefore, God cannot deposit that gift, so to speak, upon that heart and mind. "He that wavereth, he that doubteth, is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed." 2. But secondly, the doubting man dishonours God. If God makes a distinct promise, God declares that if we come before Him and ask for the fulfilment of that promise, He will grant it, and we come before Him doubting whether He will fulfil the promise and carry out His Word or not, do we not dishonour Him? 3. But then there is another and a third reason given, namely, that the doubting man is unable to retain and to profit by the gift even if it were granted. "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." We know that double-mindedness is of the very essence of weakness. (*E. Bayley, B.D.*) *Religious wisdom:*—1. This wisdom may be said to consist in a knowledge of the truth of religion, at least of the principal and common proofs of it. 2. It consists in a knowledge of the things which a Christian ought to believe and to do. 3. And because to know our duty avails nothing, unless we practise it, religious wisdom consists in a lively sense of the possibility, reasonableness, obligation, and advantage of performing what God requires, which will excite us to persevere in the observation of it. I. TO WANT WISDOM, if we consider the words by themselves, MAY MEAN, EITHER TO HAVE NONE AT ALL, OR NOT TO HAVE A SUFFICIENT MEASURE OF IT. And here, if we consider the many frailties and defects which stick close to the best of men, and the violent assaults of some temptations, and the great faults into which the most religious have sometimes fallen, we may reasonably conclude that few, if any Christians, during this their state of probation, are so accomplished in this true wisdom as to need no further improvement. II. If any of you lack wisdom, LET HIM ASK OF GOD. This must have seemed strange advice to those who ascribed too much to their own reason and relied too much on their own understanding. Men are often slow to give, and glad of any plausible excuse for witholding their hand: they often accompany their acts of kindness, when they condescend to perform them, with reluctance, haughtiness, and insolence, and upbraid at the same time that they relieve; they set too high a value upon the good offices which they have done: they expect most unreasonable submissions and compliances; and upon any failure this way, they make loud complaints of the ingratitude of the obliged person: they often bestow their favours, not according to the wants or to

the deserts of those whom they assist, but either with a view to some return, or as mere unthinking capricious fancy directs. They will give to those who humour and flatter them, to the bold and importunate, against their inclination, purely to purchase repose, and with slights and forbidding coldness they will receive the person who hath everything that ought to recommend him to their esteem. A state of dependence upon God is liable to none of these inconveniences. If we lay open our wants to men, perhaps they will not believe us, or will charge them to our own fault; but the things of which we stand in need are known to God before we ask Him. Such encouragement we have to ask wisdom of God. One condition indeed there is, from which we cannot be excused, and that is a belief that we shall obtain our requests. Let him ask of God, and it shall be given him; but let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. It ought to be observed that, in the gospel, a firm persuasion of God's good will towards us is perpetually represented as absolutely necessary to make us capable of obtaining any favours from Him. In the case of miracles, faith, that is a belief that the miracle should be performed, was often required both of the person who wrought the miracle, and of the person on whom it was wrought. When any came to our Saviour to be cured by Him, and declared their belief of His power, He always healed them, and usually added these words, "As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee"; "Thy faith hath made thee whole"; "According to your faith be it unto you"; "Thy faith hath saved thee." In prayer, also, the same condition is required, and without it we must not expect to obtain our petitions. Upon which it is natural to make these two inquiries: Why doth God so strictly require this faith? and, Why is it so acceptable to Him, that He rewards it with conferring upon us all that we ask? 1. God requires of us a belief that we shall obtain our petitions, because He hath given us abundant reason to believe it. 2. Another reason why God demands such faith is, because upon a belief of His paternal care and kindness all religion is founded. The other question is, Why is this faith so acceptable to God that He rewards it with granting our petitions? If it be asked, Why so? the answer is, because it produceth many good moral effects; because it is the greatest honour which we can pay to God; and because it is one of the best proofs of a well-disposed mind. 1. A firm faith in God is the guardian of all other virtues, and suffers us not to be seduced by worldly hopes, or deterred by worldly fears from the performance of our duty; and as it is stronger or weaker, such will be its influence on our practice. 2. We cannot honour any man more than by placing an entire confidence in him. 3. A steady faith is also a victory over many doubts which the world and the flesh usually raise in vicious minds. (*J. Jortin, D.D.*) *Wisdom—how to be obtained*:—I. THE WANT SUPPOSED. Wisdom is far more than knowledge or understanding. We may have vast stores of information, we may even have high powers of mind, and after all be little if any better than the merest simpletons. It is a peculiar combination of the intellectual and the moral. It dictates the choice of worthy ends, and the employment of the most suitable means for the accomplishment of these ends. As a gracious thing, a spiritual gift, it is an enlarged acquaintance with the Divine revelations and dispensations, an insight into the meaning of the Word and the plan of Providence, especially as they bear on character and conduct, with a state of feeling and a course of action in harmony with their teaching. It consists in seeing what is the mind of God, what He would have us believe and do, and in yielding ourselves up to His will as thus ascertained, in the face of all opposition from without and from within, in defiance alike of frowns and flatteries fitted to turn us aside. He says here, "If any of you lack wisdom." The present exhortation is closely connected with what precedes, and is to be viewed accordingly. Believers are to count it all joy when they fall into divers temptations; but how is that possible? Under these trials they are to let patience have its perfect work; they are to endure without fretting or fainting, without grasping at questionable expedients or premature deliverances, seeking through all and above all the attainment of a spiritual maturity, a Christian completeness, in which nothing shall be wanting. We can well imagine them saying, "Who is sufficient for these things?" How are we to pierce the darkness of the Divine dispensations and get at the meaning of His dealings? How can we thread our way through the perplexities of these manifold temptations? Wisdom, what wisdom, is needed for every part of it—for the regulation alike of our views, feelings, words, and actions in seasons of trial! "Well," says the apostle, "if any of you realise this in your own cases, if you are sensible of your want of wisdom, if you feel unable to cope with these divers temptations, to solve such problems, escape from such snares, then here is the remedy—go and have your lack supplied,

go and be Divinely fitted for the fiery ordeal." II. THE REMEDY PRESCRIBED. 1. It is asking of God (ver. 5). It is not let him study, let him speculate, let him search human systems, let him ransack the recesses of his own being, let him cultivate and strain his intellectual powers to the utmost. It is thus men left to themselves have engaged in the pursuit of wisdom. Far simpler and more effective is the Scriptural method—"Let him ask"; that is all, only ask. But of whom? Is it of philosophers and sages so called, of the Aristotles and Platos of antiquity, or of their applauded successors in modern times, whether home or foreign? No; however wonderful the attainments of some of these have been—and we are far from depreciating them in their own place—they cannot bestow this gift, for they have not had it in any high and holy sense themselves. Is it of priests and prophets, of those holding sacred offices and possessing special spiritual speculations? No; they cannot effectually impart it, however much of it they may have received and manifested in their teaching. It is "of God"—the omniscient, all-wise, "only wise God." He has it as one of His infinite perfections; it is an essential attribute of His nature. He can communicate it to creatures truly, efficaciously, savingly, by His inspired Word and His Holy Spirit; and He is not less willing than able to do it, as His promises testify and His dealings demonstrate. "God that giveth." It is literally "the giving God"—that God of whom this is characteristic, to whom giving specially, distinctively belongs. He is infinitely full, all-sufficient of and for Himself. He neither needs nor can receive anything, properly speaking. With Him there is only imparting, constant, unwearied communicating; and where there is a rendering back to Him, it can only be of what He has previously bestowed, both as regards the disposition and the offering. He "giveth to all men." The term "men" is supplied by the translators. The statement, wide as it is in this form, admits of extension. His goodness reaches far beyond human beings (Psa. cxlv. 15, 16). But while we are not the only, we are the chief objects of His care and recipients of His bounty. How manifold the blessings which are showered down on men of every country, condition, and character—men without any distinction or exception whatever! But while thus true in the largest, most absolute sense of the expression, still we are most probably to regard the statement as limited to genuine suppliants, the giving in question being conditioned by the asking. His ear and hand are open to all who come in the manner here set forth. His grace is dispensed without partiality or distinction. He listens not merely to favoured classes or particular individuals, but to as many as call on His name in spirit and in truth. The one requisite is asking. Where there is that, the giving is never wanting. No real seeker is sent empty away. And now mark His mode or style of giving. He does it "liberally"; more literally and exactly, He does it "simply." God confers blessing really and purely, without stint and without condition. There is nothing partial or hesitating about it, as there often is when performed by men. Theirs is generally a mixed and modified giving, a giving and a withholding—the one with the hand, the other with the heart—a giving and a taking; that is, doing it from a regard to certain returns to be made, certain benefits to be received in consequence—a giving accompanied by terms that detract from the graciousness of the act and impose no light burden on those who accept the favour. God does it not thus; no, it is a free, single, simple thing in His case: it is giving, and that without mixture, that entire and alone—giving from the pure native love of giving. He says, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Nor does He confine Himself to what is asked. Often He far exceeds His people's requests (1 Kings iii. 11-13). "And upbraideth not." He indulges in no reproaches. He connects His bestowal of gifts with no recriminations. He might point to the past, and ask, "How much have I given you already, and what use have you made of these My former favours?" or, keeping to the present, He might say, "Think of your weakness and unworthiness—how unfit you are to appear before Me, how ill-prepared to receive any such blessing"; or, directing the view forward, He might chill our hearts and shut our mouths by declaring, "I know the miserable improvement you are sure to make of whatever I bestow—how you will break all these promises, falsify all these professions." He does indeed seem at times thus to chide suppliants, as witness our Lord's language to and His treatment of the Syro-Phœnician woman; but He does it only to stir up desire, try faith, and prepare the soul for appreciating more highly and receiving more gratefully what for the moment He appears to withhold. He does it to furnish new arguments, which the heaven-taught petitioner takes up and urges with irresistible effect. The apostle adds, "And it shall be given him." There is here no peradd-

venture, no mere chance or probability of success. There is absolute certainty. Many dig for treasure, and never find it; but in this field there is no possibility of failure. James may have had before his mind, when thus writing, that most precious passage (Matt. vii. 7–11). What encouragement is there here for those who lack wisdom, or indeed any blessing, to have recourse to this quarter for the needed supply! 2. It is asking in faith. Not only go to the right quarter, but also go in the right manner. Faith is absolutely essential in all our religious exercises (Heb. xi. 6). It is specially insisted on as requisite to the success of our approaches to the mercy-seat (Matt. xxi. 22; James v. 15). We must draw near, confiding in the ability and willingness of God to grant our requests, resting in the truth of His Word, the certainty of His promises, and pleading for all through the infinite merits of the adorable Redeemer, having respect to His finished work, and it alone, as the ground of our acceptance and our expectations. "Nothing wavering." We are to ask without doubting, fluctuating, vacillating—not carried hither and thither by conflicting influences. It refers first and chiefly to prayer. It is not to be irregular, inconstant, fitful—urgent to-day, formal, perhaps neglected altogether, to-morrow. It is not to be for this and the other thing by turns—now for one blessing, then for a different, as if we knew not what we lacked or desired, as if neither our wants nor wishes had any fixed, definite character, had any real and deep hold of our spirits. Above all, we are not to oscillate, like a pendulum, between faith and unbelief, distrust and confidence, at one time pleading with boldness, filling our mouths with arguments, bringing forth our strong reasons, and anon, it may be, saying or thinking there is no use of asking; we are too unworthy to be heard—we have been, and still will be sent empty away. "For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed." What more unstable, restless, changeable! Such a wave is now carried toward the shore, then hurled back from it; now it mounts to heaven, then it goes down into the depths. It is in ceaseless motion, and yet, with all its rising and falling, there is in reality no progress. So it is with many persons. Borne along by strong feelings at certain seasons, you would think them decidedly, even ardently, religious. But while their emotions have been deeply stirred, their principles have not been thoroughly changed. The world retains its old hold of their hearts, and soon you may find them as eagerly devoted to its interests and as entirely conformed to its ways as those who made little or no profession. Believers have their fluctuations also. They have many ups and downs in their condition and their experience. Often are they in the midst of tumult; and the confusion around may be little in comparison with the confusion within. But still faith is the ruling, predominant power in them; it guides them through these tempestuous tossings, and under its influence the storm is changed into a calm. Having told us what wavering is like, the apostle now explains and enforces the warning against it by declaring that it must be fatal to success in prayer—"For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord" (ver. 7). In point of fact he does receive from Him many a thing. He is constantly cared for and supported by that Lord whom he distrusts. He is fed, clothed, protected, blessed with countless temporal and not less with high spiritual privileges. But he need expect nothing in answer to prayer, as the fruit of his asking. He has no good reason to look for the least portion or any kind of favour by coming to the footstool of mercy. Why? His wavering hinders God from giving. Such a suppliant dishonours, insults God to His face, by doubting the truth of His Word, by treating Him as unworthy of confidence, by not drawing near in the way He has prescribed as that in which alone access can be had and benefits obtained. It unfits us for receiving, as well as hinders the Lord from giving. What use could we make of the blessing sought if it were granted? The unsteady hand cannot hold the full cup, but spills its contents. Those who have no stability, no fixed principles and plans, are little the better for anything they obtain. We often see this in temporal matters. Some persons are so changeable, irresolute, unreliable, that any help you give them is of little service. It is practically very much the same whether they have or want, for whatever they may get soon disappears. This feature of the case is brought out strongly in what is added—"A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways" (ver. 8); or, continuing the account of the waverer who is to receive nothing, James says of him, "He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways." Double-minded—that is, he has a divided spirit; he is drawn in two opposite directions—now heavenward, then earthward; now he goes forward, then backward; now to the one side, then to the other. It is not only in prayer that his divided mind

appears; that is but a manifestation of what comes out in every department of his conduct. It is only an index of his character generally. He is unsteady, uncertain, not to be depended on in his whole course of action. He wants the resolute will, the fixed purpose; he wants strength of mind and deep religious principle. 1. Let us realise our need of wisdom. Without it we will not discern the hand or the purpose of God in our divers temptations. Without it we will not see either the source of support under them or the door of deliverance from them. Without it we will flee to false refuges, and perhaps adopt means of cure worse a great deal than the disease itself. And we need it not only for the bearing and improvement of trial, but for the whole of our Christian work and warfare. We require the wisdom of the serpent amidst the snares and perils by which at every step we are surrounded. Not restrained and regulated by it, zeal often defeats its own ends, and injures the cause which it seeks to advance. 2. Let us see how this and every want is to be supplied. We must go out of ourselves, and rise far above all creatures. We must repair to the only good, the only wise God. Ask of Him—ask largely. We please not Him by coming with narrow and poor requests. Ask boldly. Not in a presumptuous or self-sufficient, but in a hopeful, confiding, filial manner. Be humble, but not timid; be lowly, but not fearful, desponding in spirit. Lay hold of the exceeding great and precious promises which are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus. (*John Adam.*) *Loving advice for anxious seekers*:—This verse has a special reference to persons in trouble. Much tempted and severely tried saints are frequently at their wits' end, and though they may be persuaded that in the end good will come out of their afflictions, yet for the present they may be so distracted as not to know what to do. How seasonable is this word! However, the promise is not to be limited to any one particular application, for the word, "If *any* of you," is so wide that whatever may be our necessity, whatever the dilemma, this text consoles us. This text might be peculiarly comforting to some of you who are working for God. You cannot work long for your heavenly Lord without perceiving that you need a greater wisdom than your own. To every honest Christian worker this text speaks with all the soft melody of an angel's whisper. Thy lips shall overflow with knowledge, and thy tongue shall drop with words of wisdom, if thou wilt but wait on God and hear Him before thou speakest to thy fellow-men. Thou shalt be made wise to win souls if thou wilt learn to sit at the Master's feet, that He may teach thee the art which He followed when on earth and follows still. But the class of persons who just now win my heart's warmest sympathies are those who are seeking the Saviour; and, as the text says, "If *any* of you," I thought I should be quite right in giving seekers a share of it. I. THE GREAT LACK OF MANY SEEKERS, NAMELY, WISDOM. This lack occurs from divers reasons. 1. Sometimes it is their pride which makes them fools. Like Naaman, they would do some great thing if the prophet had bidden them, but they will not wash and be clean. If this be thy difficulty—and I believe in nine cases out of ten a proud heart is at the root of all difficulty about the sinner's coming to Christ—then go to God about it, and seek wisdom from Him. He will show you the folly of this pride of yours, and teach you that simply to trust in Jesus is at once the safest and most suitable way of salvation. 2. Many persons also are made foolish, so that they lack wisdom through their despair. Probably nothing makes a man seem so much like a maniac as the loss of hope. When the mariner feels that the vessel is sinking, that the proud waves must soon overwhelm her, then he reels to and fro, and staggers like a drunken man, because he is at his wits' end. Ah! poor heart, when thou seest the blackness of sin, I do not wonder that thou art driven to despair! You lack wisdom because you are in such a worry and turmoil. As John Bunyan used to say, you are much troubled up and down in your thoughts. I pray you, then, ask wisdom of God, and even out of the depths, if you cry unto Him, He will be pleased to instruct you and bring you out into a safe way. 3. No doubt many other persons lack wisdom because they are not instructed in gospel doctrine. The window of the understanding is blocked up with ignorance; if we could but clean away the cobwebs and filth, then might the light of the knowledge of Christ come streaming in, and they might rejoice in His salvation. Well, if you are be-mired and be-puzzled with difficult doctrine, the text comes to you and says, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God." 4. Ignorance also of Christian experience is another cause for the lack of wisdom. The way of life is a new road to you, poor seeking soul, and therefore you lack wisdom in it and make many mistakes about it. The text lovingly advises, "Ask of God"; "Ask of God." 5. Very likely, in addition to all this, which may well enough make you lack wisdom, there are certain singularities in the action of Providence towards you

which fill you with dismay. It is not at all an uncommon thing for the Lord to add to the inward scourgings of conscience the outward lashings of affliction. These double scourgings are meant for proud, stubborn hearts, that they may be humbly brought to Jesus's feet. Then it is that eternal mercy will take advantage of your dire extremity, and your deep distress shall bring you to Christ, who never would have been brought by any other means. 6. Many lack wisdom because, in addition to all their fears and their ignorance, they are fiercely attacked by Satan. He it is who digs that Slough of Despond right in front of the wicket-gate and keeps the big dog to howl before the door so that poor trembling Mercy may go into a fainting fit and find herself too weak to knock at the door. Now, in such a plight as that, with your foolish heart, and the wicked world, and the evil one, and your sins in dreadful alliance to destroy you, what could such a poor timid one as you do if it were not for this precious word? "If any of *you*"—that must mean you—"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." II. THE PROPER PLACE OF A SEEKER'S RESORT—"Let him ask of God." Now you perceive that the man is directed at once to God without any intermediate object or ceremony or person. Above all, do not let the seeker ask of himself and follow his own imaginings and feelings. All human guides are bad, but you yourself will be your own worst guide. "Let him ask of God." When a man can honestly say, "I have bowed the knee unto the Lord God of Israel, and asked Him, for Jesus's sake, to guide me by His Spirit, and then I turned to the Book of God, asking God to be my guide into the book," I cannot believe but what such a man will soon obtain saving wisdom. III. THE RIGHT MODE IN WHICH TO GO TO GOD. 1. The text says, "Let him ask," which is a method implying that ignorance is confessed. No man will ask wisdom till he knows that he is ignorant. Make a full confession, and this shall be a good beginning for prayer. 2. Asking has also in it the fact that God is believed in. We cannot ask of a person of whose existence we have any doubt, and we will not ask of a person of whose hearing us we have serious suspicions. 3. There is in this method of approaching God by asking also a clear sight that salvation is by grace. It does not say, "Let him buy of God, let him demand of God, let him earn from God." Oh, no!—"let him ask of God." It is the beggar's word. 4. Observe here what an acknowledgment of dependence there is. The man sees that he cannot find wisdom anywhere else, but that it must come from God. He turns his eye to the only fountain, and leaves the broken cisterns. IV. The text has in it ABUNDANT ENCOURAGEMENT for such a seeker. There are four encouragements here. 1. "Let him ask of God, who giveth to all men." What a wide statement—who "giveth to all men"! I will take it in its broadest extent. In natural things God does give to all men life, health, food, raiment. Now, if God hath gifts for all men, how much more will He have gifts for that man who earnestly turns his tearful eye to heaven and cries, "My Father, give me wisdom, that I may be reconciled to Thee through the death of Thy Son"! Why, the grass, as Herbert says, never asked for the dew, and yet every blade has its own drop; and shall you daily cry for the dew of grace and there be no drop of Heaven's grace for you? Impossible. Fancy your own child saying, "My father, my father, I want to be obedient, I want to be holy"; and suppose that you have power to make your child so, could you find it in your heart to refuse? No; it would be a greater joy to you to give than it could be to the child to accept. But it has been said the text ought not to be understood in that broad sense. I conceive that there is implied the limitation that God giveth to all who seek. There are some men who live and die without the liberal favours of grace, because they wickedly refuse them; but He gives to all true seekers liberally. 2. The next comfort is, He gives to all men liberally. God does not give as we do, a mere trifle to the beggar, but He bestows His wealth by handfuls. 3. It is added as a third comfort, "and upbraideth not." That is a sweet word. 4. Then comes the last encouragement: "It shall be given him." Looking through my text, I asked the question, "Is that last sentence wanted?" "Let him ask of God, which giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." Now, if the Lord gives to all men, He will certainly give to the seeker. Is that last promise wanted? And I came to this conclusion, that it would not have been there if it was not required. There are some sinners who cannot be contented to draw obvious inferences; they must have it in black and white. Such is the fearfulness of their nature, they must have the promise in so many express words. Here they have it—"it shall be given him." But to whom shall it be given? "If any of you lack wisdom." "Well," says one, "I am quite out of all catalogues; I am one by myself." Well, but you are surely

contained in this "any of you." "Ah!" says one, "but I have a private fault, a sin, an offence which I would not dare to mention, which I believe has damned me for ever." Yet the text says, "If any of you." "Let him ask of God, and it shall be given him." "But," says one, "suppose my sins should prove to be too great!" I cannot, will not, suppose anything which can come in conflict with the positive Word of God. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Wisdom to be sought from God*:—1. What this wisdom is. It is the doctrine of the Cross here specified, namely, to endure patiently whatsoever God layeth upon us, and to know that God in singular love correcteth all those with the rod of affliction whom He purposeth to make heirs of His eternal glory. This to know is wisdom far greater than the wisdom of men. This wisdom standeth in two things—(1) In knowledge, that we wisely understand the causes for which we are thus afflicted of God as that partly for the punishment of our sins, partly for the more manifestation and plain trial of our faith, partly for the advancement of God's greater glory, that thereby in the deliverance of men from their calamities He might be more glorified; finally, that hereby we being touched might repent, lest we perish with the world. Hereof to have true understanding is a great point of wisdom. (2) As the wisdom how to bear the cross consisteth in knowledge of the ends wherefore it is inflicted, so also it consisteth in an inward feeling and judgment when in our hearts and consciences we have sense of the comfort of the Spirit which in afflictions of this life supporteth us and with assured hope of safe deliverance in due season under-proppeth us. 2. This wisdom is not a quality in nature, but a grace and an excellent gift of God; therefore of Him only is this wisdom to be sought, which the apostle to intimate willeth that if any man lack this wisdom he should ask it of God. To bear the cross patiently, to know the use of afflictions truly, to feel the comfort of the Spirit inwardly—this is wisdom not of man, but of God, not of ourselves, but from His heavenly goodness, from whom all wisdom floweth as from a fountain. 3. Patiently to bear the cross, wisely and well to behave ourselves in our afflictions, being a gift from God, what hope have we to obtain it by asking of Him? Three ways are we here to conceive hope of obtaining this wisdom from God. (1) From the promise we have from God that He will hear when we call, open when we knock, give when we ask it of Him. Almighty God assureth us of this hope by His prophet, by whom He willeth us in the days of tribulation to call upon Him, with promise that He will hear us. In fine, He protesteth that He is more ready to hear us than we to call upon Him, and more willing to supply our need than we desirous to ask it at His hands. (2) As from the promise that is made us that we shall obtain, so from the liberality of God we must conceive hope of obtaining the thing we pray for. God giveth to every man liberally. Shall He not give us wisdom who is liberal to all men? Shall we distrust His goodness who is rich to all that call upon Him? Shall we suspect His bountifulness which poureth out plentifully His blessings upon all flesh? (3) We have hope to obtain this wisdom at the hands of God from the goodness of His nature. He giveth His gifts liberally to all men, and He upbraideth none, neither casteth any man in the teeth either with His benefits so plentifully poured upon us or with our beggarliness and miserable want whereunto we are subject; therefore is there great hope of obtaining the wisdom we pray for. 4. But how shall we ask this wisdom? How shall we pray for the gift of patience that we may obtain it? Ask it in faith, and waver not! Faith in all the prayers of God's saints is necessary, neither is there anything which more hindereth the grants of God towards man than when they doubt or waver in their prayers, distrusting either the power of God, as not able, or His goodness, as not willing to hear us in the days of our necessities, which distrustfulness is no small evil in the sight of God; neither is it a light matter to doubt of obtaining that thou desirest, whereby thy double heart and wavering mind is descried. Who in asking pretendest hope, in wavering distrustest either the power or promptness or readiness of God to give thee the desire of thy heart and to doubt either of His power or promptness and readiness of mind is great impiety, disloyalty, and ungodliness. (*R. Turnbull.*) *The discipline of need*:—1. All men are concluded under an estate of lacking. Dependence begetteth observance. If we were not forced to hang upon Heaven, and live upon the continued supplies of God, we would not care for Him. 2. Want and indigence put us upon prayer, and our addresses to Heaven begin at the sense of our own needs. 3. There is need of great wisdom for the right managing of afflictions. (1) To discern of God's end in it, to pick out the language and meaning of the dispensation (Micah vi. 9). Our spirits are most satisfied when we discern God's aim in everything. (2) To know the nature of the affliction, whether it be to fan or to

destroy: how it is intended for our good; and what uses and benefits we may make of it (Psa. xciv. 12). The rod is a blessing when instruction goeth along with it. (3) To find out your own duty; to know the things of obedience in the day of them (Luke xix. 41). There are seasonable duties which become every providence; it is wisdom to find them out—to know what to do in every circumstance. (4) To moderate the violences of our own passions. He that liveth by sense, will, and passion is not wise. Skill is required of us to apply apt counsels and comforts, that our hearts may be above the misery that our flesh is under. The Lord "giveth counsel in the reins," and that calmeth the heart. Well, then—(*a*) Get wisdom if you would get patience. Men of understanding have the greatest command of their affections. (*b*) To confute the world's censure; they count patience simplicity and meekness under injuries to be but blockishness and folly. No; it is a calmness of mind upon holy and wise grounds; but it is no new thing with the world to call good evil and to baptize graces with a name of their own fancying. As the astronomers call the glorious stars bulls, snakes, dragons, &c., so they miscall the most shining and glorious graces. Zeal is fury; strictness, nicety; and patience, folly! And yet James saith, "If any lack wisdom"—meaning patience. (*c*) Would ye be accounted wise? Show it by the patience and calmness of your spirits. We naturally desire to be thought sinful rather than weak. "Are we blind also?" (John ix. 40). 4. In all our wants we must immediately repair to God. 5. More particularly observe, wisdom must be sought of God. He is wise, the fountain of wisdom, an unexhausted fountain. His stock is not spent by misgiving (Job xxxii. 8). Men have the faculty, but God gives the light, as the dial is capable of showing the time of day when the sun shines on it. 6. God will have everything fetched out by prayer (Ezek. xxxvi. 37). Prayer coming between our desires and the bounty of God is a means to beget a due respect between Him and us; every audience increaseth love, thanks, and trust (Psa. cxvi. 1, 2). We usually wear with thanks what we win by prayer; and those comforts are best improved which we receive upon our knees. 7. Asking yieldeth a remedy for the greatest wants. Men sit down groaning under their discouragements because they do not look further than themselves. Oh! you do not know how you may speed in asking. God humbleth us with much weakness that He may put us upon prayer. That is easy to the Spirit which is hard to nature. 8. God's dispensations to the creatures are carried in the way of a gift. Usually God bestoweth most upon those who, in the eye of the world, are of least desert and least able to requite Him. Doth not He invite the worst freely? (Isa. lv. 1). 9. "To all men." The proposals of God's grace are very general and universal. It is a great encouragement that in the offer none are excluded. Why should we, then, exclude ourselves? (Matt. xi. 28). 10. God's gifts are free and liberal. Many times He giveth more than we ask, and our prayers come far short of what grace doth for us. (1) Do not straiten God in your thoughts (Psa. lxxxi. 10). When God's bounty is not only ever-flowing, but overflowing, we should make our thoughts and hopes as large and comprehensive as possibly they can be. (2) Let us imitate our heavenly Father, and give liberally—with a free and a native bounty; give simply, not with a double mind. 11. Men are apt to upbraid, but not God. (1) God gives quite in another manner than man doth. It is our fault to measure infiniteness by our last, and to muse of God according as we use ourselves. Let us learn not to do so. Whatever God doth He will do as a God, above the measure of the creatures, something befitting the infiniteness and eternity of His own essence. (2) God does not reproach His people with the frequency of their addresses to Him for mercy, and is never weary doing them good. 13. One asking will prevail with God. (*T. Manton.*)

Needed wisdom:—I. FOR WHAT THE WISDOM IS NEEDED. To achieve Christian perfection. Materials for building a house are nothing without the requisite constructive ability. Recollect what abundant material the willing-hearted people brought for the making of the tabernacle; they had even to be stayed at last; but all the willing-heartedness would have done nothing without Bezaleel and Aholiab to make use of the materials. II. THE WISDOM TO BE SOUGHT OF GOD. Thus there is relief from all need to attempt definitions of wisdom. The Father of Jesus knows what is needed toward perfection. III. We are helped in asking by recollecting THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN GOD AND MEN IN RESPECT OF GIVING. 1. God is the giving God. That can be set forth as an element in His character. He is not part of the energy of life, which has to receive before it can give. 2. He is the God giving liberally. His giving is pure giving, giving for the need, giving uncomplicated by considerations of whether it will pay to give. 3. The God giving without reproach.

God's giving is ever gladsome giving. The more we ask for, of the right sort, the more He has to give and the better He is pleased. (*D. Young, B.A.*) *Wisdom to be asked of God*:—In one of Cicero's moral books, in speaking of the things which we could properly ask of the gods, he enumerates such things as wealth, honour, and health of body, but he adds, it would be absurd to ask wisdom of any god, for it would be totally out of his power to give such a thing to his worshippers; whereas we Christians, and even the sincere and faithful Jews in the old times, believed that it was the first thing we have to ask of the true God. Of course we may not ask it under the name of wisdom, but it is the same practically if we ask for repentance, or for faith, or for obedience; for all these are a part of true wisdom, which may be described as the godly, the spiritual, the Christian mind. (*M. F. Sadler, M.A.*) *Religion the highest wisdom*:—It is evident that if the chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever, then wisdom in the highest sense is simply another name for religion; and indeed that, looking at the matter from the point of view which an immortal creature ought to take, there is no real wisdom at all where religion is wanting. Suppose the owner of a factory for the making of some delicate and expensive fabric were to bestow great attention on certain departments of the manufacture, and exhibit much ingenuity in devising improvements on the machinery and processes connected with these departments, but neglected other branches, and, above all, gave little heed to the grand purpose of the whole, so that he produced unsatisfactory and unsaleable material, none of us would say that this was a *wise* man of business. An actual case of the kind is not very common, for the interests of this world keep men from such outrageous folly; but, alas! it is by no means rare to see a man of much worldly sagacity, heedless of the great ends of his being—diligent in the twisting of a certain thread, or the preparation of a certain dye, for the web of life, whilst yet the web itself, looked at in the light of the Lord, is worthless. True wisdom lies in the subjection of all our capacities and energies and affections to the control of high moral principles, and the consequent faithful application of them all to noble moral uses; and the fear of God is the beginning—the foundation—of this wisdom. (*R. Johnstone, LL.B.*) *Right judgment*:—This heaven-sent wisdom, discretion, right judgment, is that of which the Psalmist speaks (Psa. xxxii. 9; xlviii. 13). This is a part of the endowment of Pentecost. This is that gift of right estimate and practical wisdom which we need so much, and seek so little; and for the want of which all our lives through we make most lamentable and hurtful mistakes. Surely it was not Joshua only who erred when he made peace with the Gibeonites without seeking counsel from God. It was not David only who erred, when following his own opinion against the remonstrances of such a man as Joab, he numbered the people; but Christians who have received the Spirit, and who may always have larger and larger gifts of wisdom only for the asking; and amongst those foolish Christians, ourselves also, are continually falling into grievous errors for want of a right judgment. How happy would that country be, how peaceful and prosperous, if the citizens used a right judgment in all things. Far more would this possession be to them than rich mines, or fertile fields—a much greater endowment. Would parents indulge their children, to those children's future misery, if they exercised a sound judgment? Now, they spoil their children, and too late use that most sad lament, "The more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved." Would parents place their children in places of temptation, in which, whilst their bodies perhaps grow, their souls shrink up and die, if by an exercise of right judgment they perceived that this world is not their children's best prospect, nay, that it is their worst, if by misuse it mars the everlasting future? How about the parents' own souls? Would it be possible for Christians with any real judgment, any show of wisdom and understanding, to value things temporal more than the unseen and the eternal? Knowing what they do of the value of education, of practising the powers of the mind and the body, could they dream that their present scanty devotions, stinted worship in the sanctuary, communions, if any, rare and ill-prepared for; few and hurried readings of Scripture, could they dream, I say, that their souls can thus be prepared for the presence of God? There is such a thing as a natural judgment, part of that endowment of reason which remains to us after the Fall, although often clouded and overpowered by passions. And even this we are often not at the trouble to use. We speak upon impulse, and act upon impulse; speak unadvisedly with our lips, and act hastily and unwisely. How few go to God, and ask for His guidance in their difficulties, and in every perplexing turn of their lives! How few pray earnestly for "a right judgment in all things." Few, few indeed. Oh

what a privilege it is, what a happiness, to be able to commit our way to the Lord! What a comfort to be able to repair to Him and lay our burden down at His feet! When we cannot decide for ourselves, and when we cannot trust any man to decide for us, we can resort to the Ear which is ever open to our cry, the Eye ever watchful to guide us. And observe that the answer to our prayers is not simply good advice, or good influence. It is nothing less than the gift of the Holy Spirit Himself, which God bestows upon those that ask Him; nothing less than God the Holy Ghost, the Third Person in the ever-blessed Trinity, living wisdom, light, truth, holiness; disposing as well as directing, enabling as well as suggesting. (*W. E. Heygate, M.A.*) *What is wisdom?*—The wisdom we are to seek may be that wisdom which will enable us to turn every trouble to a good account. He is a great merchant who can make a great commercial disaster the foundation of a fortune. He is a great general who can wrench victory from defeat. He is a wise man who grows stronger in the midst of troubles which break weaker men. Or it may be that exalted nobility of spirit which James describes (chap. iii. 17) as produced by the wisdom which cometh down from above. Or it may be that same religiousness which is named in Scripture as "the fear of the Lord," which fear the Psalmist (Psa. cxi. 10) calls "the beginning of wisdom," and (Psa. cxii. 1) describes as great delight in the commandments of the Lord (see also Job xviii. 28). (*C. F. Deems, D.D.*) *God will give wisdom:*—If you honestly crave wisdom to make His will your will, to aim at that maturity and perfection of character which He knows to be your supreme good, He will as surely give you that wisdom as the sweet, pure, sun-warmed air will flow into your room when you throw open your window to the day. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *Prayer for wisdom:*—Before he went into the school-life each day, Dr. Arnold prayed for himself this prayer, "O Lord, I have a busy world around me. Eye, and ear, and thought will be needed for the work to-day done amidst that busy world. Now I enter upon it, I would commit eye, ear, thought, and wish to Thee. Do Thou bless them, and keep their work Thine, that, as through Thy natural law my heart beats, and my blood flows, without any thought of mine for them, so my spiritual life may hold on its course at those times when my mind cannot consciously turn from my absorbing work to Thee. I commit each particular thought to Thy service. Hear my prayer, for my dear Redeemer's sake." *Asking wisdom from God:*—On assuming the governorship of the Soudan, a province half as large again as France, desolated by the slave-traders, whom it was to be his work to put down, Gordon wrote, "No man ever had a harder task than I, unaided, have before me, but it sits as a feather on me. As Solomon asked, I ask wisdom to govern this great people; and not only will He give it, but all else besides." (*J. F. B. Tinling, B.A.*) *In search of the highest wisdom:*—Justin Martyr wanders in search of the highest wisdom, the knowledge of God. He tries a Stoic, who tells him his search is in vain. He turns to a second philosopher, whose mercenary tone quenches any hope of assistance from him. He appeals to a third, who requires the preliminary knowledge of music, astronomy, and geometry. Just think of a soul thirsting after God and pardon and peace being told, You cannot enter the palace and have access to the fountain until you have mastered music, astronomy, and geometry. What a weary climb for most! what a sheer inaccessible precipice for many of us! In his helplessness he applies to a follower of Plato, under whose guidance he does begin to cherish some hope that the road leading to the desired summit may some day be struck. But in a memorable hour, when earnestly groping after the path, he is met by a nameless old man, who discourses to him about Jesus the Christ. Without any more ado, he is at the end of his quest. "Straightway," says Justin, "a flame was kindled in my soul," and if not in the actual words, yet in spirit he sang—

> "Thou, O Christ, art all I want,
> More than all in Thee I find."

Wisdom and prayer:—Bengel having observed, respecting the ways of Providence, how much often depends upon a single minute circumstance; "look, for instance," he said, "how frequently all the events relating to a young clergyman's marriage and future condition in life, and perhaps the destinies of many hundreds of souls, may be traced up to the apparent accident of a vacancy in some pastoral charge." Here a friend replied, "This is what renders it so serious a matter to decide for one's self; that one is perplexed to know whether one ought to proceed according to one's best judgment immediately, or take more time to wait." "This," said Bengel,

"is the very thing which makes it so desirable to pray without ceasing." (*Bengel's Life.*) *The characteristic of real wisdom*:—It belongs to true wisdom to meditate, hit upon, and mind whatever is to the purpose at the right time. (*Ibid.*) *Humility of wisdom*:—I have heard of a young man who went to college; and, when he had been there one year, his parent said to him, "What do you know? Do you know more than when you went?" "Oh, yes!" said he; "I do." Then he went the second year, and was asked the same question. "Do you know more than when you went?" "Oh, no!" said he; "I know a great deal less." "Well," said the father, "you are getting on." Then he went the third year, and was asked the same question, "What do you know now?" "Oh!" said he, "I don't think I know anything." "That is right," said the father; "you have now learned to profit, since you say you know nothing." He who is convinced that he knows nothing of himself, as he ought to know, gives up steering his ship, and lets God put His hand on the rudder. He lays aside his own wisdom, and cries, "O God! my little wisdom is cast at Thy feet: my little judgment is given to Thee." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **Giveth to all men liberally.**—*The amazing kindness of God*:—I. IN HIS BESTOWMENT OF THE HIGHEST SPIRITUAL GIFT. "Wisdom" consists in choosing those ends which are worthy of our nature, which are the highest within the reach of our faculties, and in the employment of the best means in the best way for the attainment of those ends. It stands, in one word, for moral excellence or religion —the chief good. II. In His bestowment of the highest spiritual gift ON THE SIMPLEST CONDITION. "Let him ask." This means soul-asking, an earnest, importunate, persistent yearning. 1. The man who does not intensely desire this "wisdom," or religion, will never have it. 2. The man who does intensely desire it is sure to have it. III. In His bestowment of the highest spiritual gift, on the simplest condition, IN A SPIRIT OF SUBLIME GENEROSITY. He gives in a spirit of— 1. Impartiality; 2. Genuine liberality; 3. Unreproaching affection. (*Homilist.*) *The giving God*:—The writer seems to hear some of his readers say, "But it requires much wisdom to live thus in the midst of trials." Very true! But the supply is at hand, "Ask of God." "If any of you come short of wisdom, let him ask of the giving God." What an encouraging epithet, "the giving God"—the God who is accustomed to give, who is known amongst men and ages as "The Giver"! And that there may be the utmost encouragement, James gives three characteristics of His giving: It is universal, abundant, unselfish. One may say, "I am so insignificant"; another, "I am so sinful"; another, "I have so little faith"; another, "I am so hard." But you are a human being, and He gives to *all*. "But I am so fearfully lacking, my need of wisdom is so great. If I had any sense whatever, I might apply to Him." But He "giveth liberally." He longs to have great things asked of Him. Go to little men for little things. It is as easy for a great man to do a great thing, as for a small man to do a small thing. God, the Father, King of the world, may be asked for the largest gifts, since no giving can possibly render Him poorer. A humane monarch once said, "The greatest advantage of being a king is, that the king has the power to make so many happy." The advantage which God has over all His children—even earthly monarchs—is that He has more power to make more people happy. The unselfishness of the Divine Giver is seen in that He never "upbraids." Human givers are so interested in their part of any giving transaction that a much-solicited person is apt to do or say something which shall remind the receiver of his obligation, and to make former gifts a reason for withholding that which is now sought; and, more especially, if good use has not been made of former benefactions, to upbraid the ungrateful or thriftless receivers. Even human parents sometimes do this. It requires the greatest nobility to rise above such inclinations. Our Father never upbraids. He never points to the misuse we have made of any former gifts. He never tires of giving. He is so delighted to have us ask, that He would have us more ashamed of not coming to Him for needed wisdom than for any other fault or sin. (*C. F. Deems, D.D.*) *God's manner of giving*:—To all sincere petitioners He "giveth liberally"—with unstinted hand, with glorious munificence. Jacob asked for "bread to eat and raiment to put on," and God makes him "two bands." Solomon prayed for an "understanding heart," and God said (1 Kings iii. 11–14). The prodigal thinks of the position of "an hired servant," and his father says (Luke xv. 22–24). Sweet and beautiful, however, as this word "liberally" is, the apostle's own word is something even more comprehensive and encouraging. It is the adverbial form of the term employed in Rom. xii. 8, and Eph. vi. 5. The exact meaning here is,

that God gives "with simplicity," "with singleness of spirit": He does not as men often do, give and yet in effect not give; He does not give, and yet by an unkind manner, or by subsequent ungenerous exactions, neutralise the benefit of His giving; His kindness in giving does not, as so often with men, fold in upon another motive of a selfish nature; His giving is without any duplicity, with singleness of aim to bless the recipient, to reveal the love of His own nature for the happiness of His creatures. "And upbraideth not" is pretty nearly an expansion, in a negative form, for the sake of clearness and emphasis, of the thought already given in "liberally," "with simplicity." We may easily weary human benefactors. Those who have often shown no kindness are apt to feel continuing it a burden; and even if they do continue it, there is much chance of our hearing painful references to the frequency and largeness of our applications. Under these circumstances a suppliant may well enter the house even of one whom he has good cause to acknowledge as a friend with hesitation and fear. But God, in His giving, "upbraideth not." He makes no mention of our past folly and abuse of His kindness. He always employs His past kindness as an argument to induce us, through trust in His love, to ask for more and greater blessings (Psa. lxxxi. 10). (*R. Johnstone, LL.B.*) *Every true prayer answered*:—How positive is the assurance of an answer to this prayer for wisdom! You may pray for a change of circumstances, for more land or money, or for success in some undertaking, or for deliverance from some trouble; and the Father may see that it is better to leave you just as you are, and answer your prayer in some other way. In some way for good every true prayer is answered. There could not possibly be an unanswered prayer without something greater than a miracle —without a revolution of the whole system of the universe. Until attraction repels, and heat makes cool, and effects produce their own causes, there cannot be an unanswered prayer, because God has ordained the connection between the real prayer, intellectually meant and heartily felt prayer, with the production of some spiritual good. The law of gravity is not more sure in its existence, or more unerring in its action, than the law of spiritual prayer. But, as in physical, so in spiritual operations, the result does not always come in the anticipated mode; but it comes somehow. The law of equivalents is unfailing. But there is one prayer which we *know* the Father will answer. There is no "perchance" here. There are no conditions in asking God for wisdom. He that seeks it *shall* find. The petitioner may present his prayer as a claim, and demand the answer of this special prayer as the fulfilment of God's special promise. All the more may he do so, because this wisdom is something no man can have by inheritance, and no man can acquire by any study under the best teachers and amidst the best circumstances, and no man can impart to his fellowman. For this wisdom we must "ask of God." (*C. F. Deems, D.D.*) *The liberality of God*:—What abundant testimony we have to the liberality of God! The very winds proclaim it, as they sweep with tumultuous haste from shore to shore all round the world. The sunshine utters it, as in silent majesty it ascends the heavens, and fills immensity with its glorious presence. The dew whispers it, as it steals softly down, until not a blade, or leaf, or flower but glitters with its vivifying beauty. The stars announce it, as they, the unnumbered host of God, come forth to shine in the inmeasurable depths of heaven. This is the testimony that He "giveth to all men liberally." And yet there is testimony yet more conclusive still, although it would be strange to meet such signs of liberality even to lavishness here, and to meet with parsimony in a realm which encircles a life more precious and more permanent. The winds may cease, the sun may be obscured, the stars may fall, and the earth with all its works may be burnt up, but His Word shall not fail, and this His assurance and appeal—"He that spared not," &c. (*T. Stephenson.*) *Divine liberality*:—Alexander the Great said to one overwhelmed with his generosity, "I give as a king." Jehovah gives as the Infinite God. *Liberal gifts*:—A pasha once made one of his councillors open his mouth, and he filled it with diamonds and jewels. We may be sure he opened his mouth as wide as he could. So let us "open our mouths wide that they may be filled." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *God's giving*:—His giving is not the cover of any unavowed purposes; it conceals no secret policy; it is frank, open, genuine. He gives for the sake of giving, and because He delights in it. (*R. W. Dale, LL.D.*) *Liberal answers to prayer*:—When poor men make requests to us, we usually answer them as the echo does the voice: the answer cuts off half the petition. We shall seldom find among men Jael's courtesy, giving milk to those that ask water, except it be as this was, an entangling benefit, the better to introduce a mischief. There are not many Naamans among us, that, when you beg of them one talent, will force you to take two; but God's answer to our prayers is

like a multiplying glass, which renders the request much greater in the answer than it was in the prayer. (*Bp. Reynolds.*) *God gives without upbraiding:*—This is a very interesting feature in the character of the Divine Being as a Giver. Not a little of the value of a gift—I mean, of course, not the intrinsic value, but the pleasure imparted by the reception of it—arises from the manner of its bestowal. We feel this, in receiving from a fellow creature. Even a poor man, of any sensibility, would many a time rather be without the alms he seeks, than have it with the ill-natured or the contemptuous scowl with which it is given—thrown to him, it may be, to send him about his business and get rid of his troublesome importunity. How wide the difference of his emotions, when the same or even a less alms is bestowed with open-handed cheerfulness, or the tear of tender pity! Even in higher cases than that of the mere beggar, a gift is often bestowed with what we call a bad grace; with a manifest grudge; with some reflection against the petitioner for his folly, or for the trouble he causes. This is not God's way. He "upbraideth not." In the first place, He upbraids not the petitioner who comes to Him for wisdom, with his want of it—with his stupidity and folly. On the contrary, He is pleased with that sense of deficiency—that humble consciousness of proneness to err which brings the suppliant to His footstool. In the second place, He does not "upbraid" the petitioner for his importunity; for it is by making importunity necessary that He tries faith—tests its reality and its strength. He is never wearied with the frequency, or displeased with the pressing earnestness of the petitions presented. He receives all graciously. He rejects none. When they embrace His very feet in the earnestness of desire, He spurns them not from Him. Nor does He "send them away empty." (*R. Wardlaw, D.D.*)

Ver. 6. **But let him ask in faith.**—*Faith in prayer:*—What is it to ask in faith? To this some things are requisite as necessary conditions, though more remotely; some things as essential ingredients. I. THE NECESSARY CONDITIONS RESPECTING THE PETITIONER, ASKER, THE THING ASKED, THE MANNER OF ASKING. 1. The asker must be in the faith, or rather faith in him; the petitioner must be a believer. How can he ask in faith who has no faith? (John xvi. 23.) How can he ask in Christ's name who believes not in it? There is no answer for him that is not a believer, "God heareth not sinners" (John ix. 31). A fervent prayer for a thing unlawful is a crying sin. 2. The thing asked for must be an object of faith; such things as you may upon good grounds believe that God will grant (1 John v. 14). 3. The manner of asking must be faithful. (1) With fervency. He does not ask in faith that asks not fervently (chap. v. 16). If we pray as if we prayed not, God will hear as though He heard not, take little notice except to correct. Strong cries only pierce heaven; such were Christ's. (2) With submission. (3) With right intentions. We must pray to glorify God, make us serviceable to Him, capable of communion with Him. II. THE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS OF THIS DUTY ARE THE ACTINGS OF FAITH IN PRAYER, which are one or other of these four. He whose faith puts forth any one of these acts prays in faith. 1. Particular application. Believing the promises whereby God has engaged Himself to give what he asks; so to ask in faith is to pray with confidence the Lord will grant the petition, because He has promised. 2. Fiducial recumbence. Faith can read an answer of prayer in the name of God, and stay itself there, when a promise appears not, or, through faith's weakness, cannot support it (Isa. l. 10, 11). 3. A general persuasion that the prayer shall be heard. The prayer may be heard, though the thing desired be not presently bestowed, or not bestowed at all. And so a man may pray in faith, though he be not confident that what he prays for shall be given him, much more that it shall not be presently given. 4. A special confidence that the very same thing which is asked shall be given. Use: Take notice of the misery of unbelievers. They that cannot pray in faith must not expect to have their prayers heard. Of all duties and privileges, none more advantageous and comfortable than prayer; but it is faithful prayer: for without faith there is neither advantage by it, nor comfort in it. To pray, and not in faith, is to profane the ordinance. Pray as much, as often as you will, if not in faith, you lose your labour. The apostle is peremptory, "Let not that man think he shall receive anything of the Lord" (ver. 7). Now to prevent this wavering, this doubting, so dishonourable and offensive to God; so prejudicial, dangerous, uncomfortable to you: let me prescribe some directions, the observance of which will establish the heart, and encourage faith, in your approaches to God. 1. Get assurance of your interest in the covenant; that Christ has loved you, and washed you from your sins in His blood; that He has given

you His Spirit; that you are reconciled and in favour. If you be sure you are His favourites, you may be sure to have His ear. 2. Consider, the Lord is engaged to hear prayer. Faith may conclude He will hear, for He will not, He cannot, be false to His engagement; but He is engaged strongly, by His titles, attributes, &c. When you pray consider He is able to hear and give what you ask. It is gross atheism to doubt of this, to question omnipotency. Consider He can do abundantly (Eph. iii. 20). He can do more than we ask. Easily. He can do the greatest thing you ask more easily than you can do the least thing you think. Safely. Without any loss or damage to Himself, without any diminution of that infinite store that is in Himself. He is willing. Faith seldom questions God's power; that which hinders its actings is doubts whether He is willing. But there is more reason to question this, for He is as willing as He is able. 3. Consider the nature and dignity of prayer, which affords divers arguments to confirm faith. (1) It is God's ordinance, instituted and enjoined for this end. (2) He in Scripture adorns it with, and ascribes to it, many transcendent privileges, such as, considered, may fortify the most languishing faith. There is a strength in prayer which has power with God (Hos. xii. 3, 4). (3) Prayer is the Lord's delight, the most pleasing service we can ordinarily tender; therefore He does not only most frequently command it, but importunately sue for it. Let me hear thy voice, says Christ to His spouse (Cant. ii. 14), for thy voice is sweet. It is sweet as incense (Psa. cxli. 2; Prov. xv. 8). 4. Consider the promises. The Lord has promised He will hear. If ye doubt He will hear, ye doubt He is faithful. Consider how many, how universal, how engaging. 5. Consider your relation to God. He is your Father; Christ teaches us to begin with this. 6. He gets glory by hearing prayer. 7. Consider the success of others, how effectual the prayers of God's ancient people have been; this affords great encouragement. 8. Consider your own experiences, how many times God has answered your prayers formerly; that will be a great encouragement to trust Him for time to come. Those that have tried God are inexcusable if they will not trust Him. 9. Labour to remove those discouragements which hinder the exercise of faith in prayer, or weaken it in its actings. Try whether we pray in faith. (1) Backwardness to pray is a sign that you pray not in faith. (2) Carelessness in praying. (3) Perplexity and solicitousness after prayer. This was a sign Hannah prayed in faith (1 Sam. i.). (*a*) How can they believe their prayers will be accepted who see no ground to believe that their persons are accepted? There is a confidence to be found in unregenerate men in their addresses to God. The confidence of faith in prayer differs from this presumptuous confidence. (1) In its rise. The carnal man arrives at this confidence he knows not how. He attained it with ease, it cost him nothing; it sprang up in him as a mushroom, on a sudden, without his care or industry. Whereas the confidence of faith is not in an ordinary way so soon, nor so easily, nor so insensibly attained. (2) In the grounds. Presumption has either no ground at all, or else it is raised upon nothing but the sand; in some it springs from their natural temper. But now the confidence of faith is to be found in those who are most modest as to their natural constitutions, when once they are renewed and fortified by the power of grace. Christ and the promise is the ground of this confidence. (3) In the attendants. Confidence of faith is accompanied with—(*a*) Reverence; a filial and a holy fear of God. (*b*) Resignation of his will and wisdom to the will and wisdom of God. (4) In the effects. (*D. Clarkson, B.D.*) *Wavering prayer*:—1. The apostle condemneth it, first, from a comparison or similitude, wherein the doubtful person in prayer is compared to a wave of the sea. For as a wave or surge of the sea swelleth by the rising of the wind, and by the strength thereof is carried hither and thither, and never remaineth steady, but always is troubled, so is a wavering minded man; for his manifold imaginations, his sundry cogitations, his divers thoughts of heart, so toss him and carry him up and down, that his mind can never rest, but is always vexed and never surely fixed upon any one thing; for now he thinketh God will hear him, and by and by he misdoubteth; now he persuadeth himself God can give him his heart's desire, and forthwith he mistrusteth; now he conceiveth hope, and immediately he fainteth; now he saith with himself, I will make sure to God; but straightway he feareth. Thus is he tossed and troubled by his own cogitations, and carried away with the wind of his own vanity, and never resteth: wherefore he is well compared to a wave, of the wind and moved air tossed and tumbled. 2. As by this plain similitude this doubtfulness and inconstancy is condemned, so in like manner, and secondly, by a reason from discommodity and disadvantage, which followeth

this wavering, the reason is this: that which bringeth no good unto men, but procureth hurt rather, ought not to be used among the saints of God. If a man should come to his neighbour and say, "Sir, I have a suit unto you, but I doubt I shall not obtain it, for I fear either you cannot, or at least you will not, perform my desire," doth he not stay the hand of the giver—doth he not make himself unworthy to receive anything that is so doubtful? Shall it not be replied, "Shall I do for him that hath me in suspicion that I will not help him, and doubteth of my good nature and frank heart towards him?" 3. The third and last way whereby he condemneth this is from a sentence generally received of all men, which he protested, as it were, proverbially. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways, therefore wavering in prayer is condemned. Unstable, which is derived from the commonwealth, which, having laws and orders whereby it may be governed, and they carefully observed. The commonwealth thereby hath her quietness and stability, whatsoever hindereth the prosperous quietness of the commonwealth, whatsoever is against good laws and orders, as sedition, tumults, uproars, tyrannical empire and bearing rule, and the like is called unstable, so in like manner in the mind of man, whilst reason ruleth and executeth her office, the affections of man continue in their place, and man's mind resteth in her quiet constitution; but if the affections break the bonds which reason prefixeth, there ariseth disorderedness and instability. He therefore which, doubting and wavering, prayeth, hath a disturbed and disordered mind, and hath in himself an uproar and tumult of affections which follow another thing than faith prescribeth, therefore is said to be unstable in all his ways. The double and wavering minded man is like an old and tottering wall, which daily shaketh and is always in danger of falling; yea, like the foolish man's building in the gospel, whose foundation being but on the sand, at the rain falling, at the floods rising, at the wind blowing, and the tempest raging, is in daily danger of ruin. The inconstant and wavering minded man, like the weathercock, is always turning, never long staying. Sometimes the wind of vainglorious ambition carrieth him with mainsail to pride; sometimes the blast of filthy pleasure thrusteth him headlong to unclean conversation; sometimes the swelling waves and mighty surges of prosperous condition enforceth him to vain confidence; sometimes the woful state of adversity casteth him violently into utter desperation; sometimes by desire of gain he is carried into covetousness; sometimes as careless of his estate he lavisheth out at large, and spendeth his goods by prodigality; sometimes he is allured with fleshly pleasures, sometimes he is cast down with fear, sometimes he is carried away with contempt and arrogancy of his spirit; now his mind is set upon this thing, now upon another, that he may rightly say with St. James, that he is unstable in all his ways. The wavering minded man, subject to all affections that are evil, and to all dangerous alterations, may therefore be compared to the unstable reed, which boweth and turneth at every wind; his unstayedness and instability carrieth the wavering minded man now into this danger, now into that, and so is always near unto perdition. (*R. Turnbull.*) *How must we pray in faith*:—I. WHAT IS MEANT HERE BY "ASKING IN FAITH." 1. To "ask in faith" may be here spoken in reference to the person that prays; namely, he that prays must be in the faith, a faithful or righteous person (Psa. lxvi. 18). "The prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (chap. v. 16). 2. To "ask in faith" is to believe that all we say in prayer is true. When we confess ourselves to be grievous sinners, we are to think ourselves to be as great sinners as we say we are; when we call God Almighty "our Father," we are to believe Him to be so. 3. We are to believe that whatsoever we ask of God in prayer is according to His will. II. As concerning the matter of our prayers we are to believe as hath been said, SO AS TO GOD WE ARE TO BELIEVE SEVERAL THINGS. Indeed, scarce any of His attributes but some way or other we are to act our faith upon in prayer; but I shall choose some few on which the eye of faith is especially fixed in prayer. 1. The first is God's omniscience; for else we shall be at a great loss. If we believe not this, how can we be assured that God hears our prayers? 2. We are to believe God's providence, that He rules and orders all things. Whoso thinks that all things are ruled by second causes, by the power and policy of men, or by the stars, or chance, they will not pray at all, or go to God merely as a refuge: we shall pray to God, but trust to ourselves; or to medicines when we are sick, and to our food when we are well. 3. God's omnipotence is to be believed. Else we will stagger through unbelief. 4. We must act our faith upon His goodness and bounty. If we do not believe that the goodness of God is as much above the love of our dearest friend, as we account His wisdom and power above our friend's,

we have unworthy thoughts of that attribute which God hath most abundantly manifested, and would have most glorified; and the love our friend bears us is but a drop from and of that ocean that is in God. III. The third object of faith are THE PROMISES; and there are three kinds, some to prayer, some to the person praying. We are to act our faith upon all. IV. The fourth and main object of faith which our faith must eye in our prayers, is CHRIST, in whom "all the promises are Yea and Amen"; who hath reconciled the person and attributes of God: and concerning Christ we are to believe—1. The great love God bears to Christ. Which is doubtless greater than to the whole creation. 2. We are to believe the fulness of Christ's satisfaction, and the greatness of the value and efficacy of the death of Christ. For if justice be not satisfied, we have no throne of grace, but a bar of justice, to come before. The blood of Christ hath a pacifying, purifying, purchasing, perfuming, reconciling, satisfying, justifying, virtue. 3. We are to believe the efficacy and infallible success of Christ's intercession. Christ doth four things as to our prayers. (1) He indites them by His Spirit; (2) He perfumes them by His merit; then—(3) He presents our prayers and persons; for we have access through Him (Eph. iii. 12); and then—(4) Superadds His own intercession, His blood crying louder than our sins, and better things than our prayers. 4. We are to believe and improve this truth; namely, that the Father exceedingly delights to honour Christ. And hereby God wonderfully honours Christ, by pardoning and receiving into favour such rebellious sinners as we are, for His sake, by forgiving anything for His sake. 5. We are to believe, improve, and obey Christ's commands (John xiv. 13, 14; xvi. 23). (1) We are to believe these things of God and Christ with an historical faith. (2) With a faith of recumbency. We are to rely upon the power, wisdom, and goodness of God, and upon Christ's interest in God, &c. (3) Saints are, by way of duty, but not by way of a necessary condition of obtaining whatsoever they ask, to believe with the faith of assurance of obtaining whatsoever we pray for. (*Thos. White, LL.B.*) *Man given to doubting*:—1. The trial of a true prayer is the faith of it. (1) An actual reliance upon the grace and merits of Jesus Christ. We cannot lift up a thought of hope and trust but by Him. We must come humbly; we are sinners: but we must come in faith also; Christ is a Saviour: it is our folly, under colour of humbling ourselves, to have low thoughts of God. If we had skill, we should see that all graces, like the stones in the building, have a marvellous symmetry and compliance one with another; and we may come humbly, yet boldly, in Christ. (2) We must put up no prayer but what we can put up in faith: prayer must be regulated by faith, and faith must not wander out of the limits of the word. If you have a promise, you may be confident that your requests will be heard, though in God's season: you cannot put up a carnal desire in faith (1 John v. 14). All things are to be asked in faith; some things absolutely, as spiritual blessings—I mean, as considered in their essence, not degree. Degrees are arbitrary. Other things conditionally, as outward blessings. Let the prayer be according to the word, and the success will be according to the prayer. (3) The soul must actually magnify God's attributes in every prayer, and distinctly urge them against the present doubt and fear. 2. Man's nature is much given to disputes against the grace and promises of God. Carnal reason is faith's worst enemy. Then is our reason well employed, when it serves to urge conclusions of faith. 3. The less we doubt, the more we come up to the nature of true faith. Do not debate whether it be better to cast yourselves upon God's promise and disposal, or to leave yourselves to your own carnal care; that is no faith when the heart wavers between hopes and fears, help and God (Luke xii. 29). Get a clear interest in Christ, and a more distinct apprehension of God's attributes. Ignorance perplexeth us, and filleth the soul with dark reasonings; but faith settleth the soul, and giveth it a greater constancy. 4. Doubts are perplexing, and torment the mind. An unbeliever is like the waves of the sea, always rolling; but a believer is like a tree, much shaken, but firm at root. (*T. Manton.*) *Faith necessary to successful prayer*:—"While the prayer of faith," said an eloquent Welsh preacher, "is sure to succeed, our prayers, alas! too often resemble the mischievous tricks of children in a town, who knock at their neighbours' houses, and then run away. We often knock at mercy's door, and then run away, instead of waiting for an entrance and an answer. Thus we act as if we were afraid of having our prayers answered." (*New Cyclopædia of Illustrations.*) **He that wavereth.**—*Unstable men*:—Paul describes them as being "driven about by every wind." You never know where to find them; they are scarcely ever two days alike. The chameleon is said to take its

colour from its surroundings, and so would it seem do these religious changeabilities. But, after all, these are not so dangerous to other people as are those who for the most part are consistent, but who at rare intervals seem to fall into sin. A clock that ever varies is never trusted even when it is right, and therefore does but little mischief; but let the trusted time-keeper go wrong, and the whole town may be thrown into confusion. And this applies the more forcibly as our position may be more public and conspicuous. Your own watch in your pocket may be altogether wrong, and nobody may know it but yourself, but if the clock in the steeple be in error, the fact will be on every lip. What the good beacon is to the sailor, such should every Christian be amongst men. The pilot making his way towards the Thames is shaping his course by the lightship; but, alas! the lightship has broken from her moorings, and soon both the "guide" and the voyager are stranded on the Goodwins. I was sitting one day looking out on the beautiful Mediterranean as it was lashed by the gale, and I was struck by what appeared to be the hesitancy of a vessel to enter the harbour. She backed and filled and stood off and on, when, as I supposed, she might have entered forthwith. The secret, however, soon explained itself. Amongst the breakers dashing along the shore, there was being tossed "to and fro" one of the large black buoys which had previously marked the channel entrance. During the gale it had been driven from its moorings, and from being a useful guide it had become a helpless log. Alas that any who have been guides to others should ever be found amongst the miserable breakers of sin, driven away from the moorings of Christian believing and of Christian living. (*W. H. Burton.*) *Doubts neutralise*:—Of course no blessing comes if the man doubts. God could not give in such a case, because the man could not receive. When the Father has promised His wisdom, a special spiritual gift, how can it rule me if I close all the avenues of my spirit by my unbelief? The object of the gift is to improve the relations between the Father and the child, but manifestly that cannot begin to be done if the child believes that the Father is a liar, or even if he fail to have the most perfect faith in the honour and good intentions of the Father. He must not doubt. If he is not willing to give God trust, how can he expect God to give him wisdom? (*C. F. Deems, D.D.*) *Wavering prayers*:—Place yourselves on the seashore in a storm; you see the billows rise up in varied form and size, but not one assumes its form or height independently of the rest. As the wind blows more or less violently, as it comes from this or that quarter, as the following wave presses on with greater or less force, will be the size and duration of each one that approaches you. And thus it is with the inclinations and wishes of men; they receive their direction from without, from this or that impulse, and fluctuate hither and thither as outward obstacles vary. Their wishes and resolves are never clear and determinate; their heart is always divided; they are fickle, wavering, inconstant, in all their ways. Is this the right condition of mind for prayer? For what are we especially to pray? To-day about one thing, to-morrow about another? At the present hour are we to pray ardently for a gift, about which at the next we shall be utterly careless? or shall we be earnestly interceding for an individual, to whose welfare in a few hours we are quite indifferent? Can this be what is meant by praying in faith? No; for in such a state of perpetual variation there is no faith, no certain assurance of the object of hope, no undoubting belief of that which we do not see. (*B. Jacobi.*) *A royal waverer*:—James the First of England, and the Sixth of Scotland, was a waverer. He was aware of this defect, and heard of a preacher who was singularly happy in his choice of texts. James appointed him to preach before him, that he might put his abilities to the test. The preacher, with the utmost gravity, gave out his text in the following words: "James the First and Sixth [Jas. i. 6], in the latter part of the verse, 'For he that wavereth,'" &c. "He is at me already!" said the king. *Want of application*:—An eminent Frenchman hit off in a single phrase the characteristic quality of the inhabitants of a particular district, in which a friend of his proposed to settle and buy land. "Beware," said he, "of making a purchase there; I know the men of that department; the pupils who come to it from our veterinary school at Paris do not strike hard on the anvil; they want energy, and you will not get a satisfactory return on any capital you may invest there." (*S. Smiles.*)

Ver. 7. **Let not that man think that he shall receive.**—*Unbelieving prayer useless*:—1. Unbelievers, though they may receive something, yet they can expect nothing from God. They are under a double misery. (1) They can lift up no thoughts of hope and comfort, for they are not under the assurance of a promise.

(2) If they receive anything, they cannot look upon it as coming by promise, or as a return of prayers. 2. Men usually deceive themselves with vain hopes and thoughts; they are out in their thinking (Matt. iii. 9). 3. The cause why we receive not upon asking is not from God, but ourselves; He "giveth liberally," but we pray doubtingly. He would give, but we cannot receive. We see men are discouraged when they are distrusted, and suspicion is the ready way to make them unfaithful; and, certainly, when we distrust God, it is not reasonable we should expect aught from Him. 4. From that "anything"—neither wisdom nor anything else—that God thinketh the least mercy too good for unbelievers: He thinketh nothing too good for faith, and anything too good for unbelief. 5. From that "from the Lord," that the fruit of our prayers is received from the hands of Christ; He is the middle person by whom God conveyeth blessings to us, and we return duty to Him. (*T. Manton.*)

Ver. 8. **A double-minded man is unstable.**—*The instability of a double-minded man:*—I. THE CHARACTER OF ONE WHO IS IRRESOLUTE AND UNFIXED IN HIS LEADING VIEWS AND DESIRES. 1. His understanding is various. 2. He acts as if he had two wills. 3. His affections are spiritual or carnal, serious or sensual, heavenly or worldly, just as the two contrary principles of flesh and spirit prevail in him, which alternately sway the mind, and of which alternate sway this variableness of temper is the certain effect. II. THE EFFECT OF THIS UNHAPPY TEMPER. 1. The double-minded man is inconstant in his purposes and pursuits. 2. Another effect of such a divided heart is that it can seldom in good earnest fall in with the dictates of conscience in the plainest instances of duty. 3. The double-minded man is easily overcome in an hour of temptation. Lessons: 1. There is no man but what hath, and must have, some leading views in life, some grand point at which he aims, and to which he makes almost all his other views subservient. 2. Common understanding and reason will lead a man to examine what this great end is that he drives at. 3. Every man, as a reasonable creature, endowed by his Maker with reflection and understanding, should take special care that his governing aims be right. 4. Before we can know what ought to be our great and governing views, we must know what we are and what we are designed for. 5. That to serve and please and fear that great God that gave us being is our great concern, and ought at all times to be our governing view, as reasonable creatures born for immortality. (*John Mason, M.A.*) *The double-minded man:*—If reason be compared to the helm of a ship, the passions are the sails. It was necessary that we should be impelled to act, as well as that our actions should be duly regulated: and that is the most perfect state of human nature in which the guidance of the enlightened judgment is seconded by a steady and generous ardour. The "double-minded man" may be considered as divided in his judgment, and divided in his inclination. Divided in judgment, having thought, but thought superficially, upon the concurrent evidences of religious truth, "he is carried about with every wind of doctrine." Hence the light which guides him is not a single and steady, but a wandering and bewildering, light. Divided in inclination, not averse to receive good impressions, yet unapt to retain them. In consequence of these internal changes, the double-minded man is equally changeable in his outward conduct, "unstable in all his ways"; and as the good or evil principle prevails, he is either intent on repairing his faults and advancing towards perfection, or he becomes the slave of his sins, injurious to his fellow creatures and a rebel to his God. Such is the character of "the double-minded man" in the general view. 1. Let us examine it as it appears to others. To the eminently good he is an object of humiliating compassion; to the bad, of derision. Moreover, every change of conduct adds his own testimony to the suffrage of the world, either that his understanding is so weak as to be always wavering between truth and error; or that his resolution is so frail as to fluctuate incessantly between good and evil, clearly discerned and acknowledged by himself to be so. Like a child, playing on the brink of a precipice (overhung with fruits and flowers), now struck with the danger, now tempted by the beauty and the fragrance; trembling, yet lingering, whether he recede from or advance to his destruction; presenting an image of most pitiable imbecility. His mind is torn by struggling passions; his life, a scene of conflict, that one may compare to civil war, in which rival parties, alternately defeated and victorious, inflict and suffer reciprocal calamities; and whichsoever prevails, nothing is to be seen but the burning of towns, the laying waste of provinces, confusion and desolation on every side. Alas, when a man is conscious of breaking through the secret resolutions of

his own mind, of violating injunctions to which he has been professing perpetual obedience, renewing transgressions which he has been lamenting in anguish, which will shortly make him abhor himself, which will possibly fill up the measure of his guilt and seal his doom—what a scene of internal misery to be conscious, while knowing his duty, of wanting spirit and resolution to perform it; to possess an understanding, yet violate its best dictates; to have a heart, yet transgress its purest sentiments; to hear the voice of conscience and of God recalling him from ruin, yet finding himself hurried on by the headstrong fury of his passions—what must be the feelings of this man, who has endured so lately the pangs of guilt, who has been in the very crisis of a blessed change, who had begun to taste the sweets of liberty, yet is ensnared again—what must his feelings be while renewing and perpetuating his ignominious bondage! 2. Thus unhappy is the double-minded man in his own eyes: we are now to consider him with respect to his moral worth —his character in the sight of God. It is not a wavering, divided temper and conduct which comes within the line of salvation marked out by the gospel: "If ye continue in My Word" (says Jesus Christ Himself), "then are ye My disciples indeed"; and again, "No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." As guilt is the poison of the soul, so repentance is its cure: the double-minded man betakes himself alternately to the poison and to the remedy. If such treatment would be fatal to the bodily constitution, how much more to the constitution of the mind, which, if it do not fix in virtue, must sink into the reverse, while the passions and appetites are rather inflamed than moderated by temporary and ineffectual restraints, and all those finer principles which should hold them in subjection are gradually impaired and become callous by frequent injuries—every virtuous effort grows weaker and weaker, till it yields mechanically to every impulse of desire, and the whole mind becomes at length blind to danger, deaf to counsel, and dead to the sense of goodness. In this melancholy state, what hope of moral recovery can remain? Those who have lost sight of reason in the career of passion, or who have even long slumbered in a course of stupid unthinking wickedness, may still be awakened; and strong motives, with the aid of strenuous exertion, may still open some glimmering prospect of recovery. But when reason, conscience, religion, have tried their utmost, but in vain, what more remains to be done? (*P. Houghton.*) *A double-minded man*:—The word signifies one that has two souls; and so it may imply—1. A hypocrite (chap. iv. 8). As Theophrastus saith of the partridges of Paphlagonia, that they had two hearts, so every hypocrite hath two souls. As I remember, I have read of a profane wretch that bragged he had two souls in one body, one for God and the other for anything. 2. It implieth one that is distracted and divided in his thoughts, floating between two different ways and opinions, as if he had two minds or two souls. 3. And, more expressly to the context, it may note those whose minds were tossed to and fro with various and uncertain motions; now lifted up with a billow of presumption, then cast down in a gulf of despair, being divided between hopes and fears concerning their acceptance with God. 1. That unbelieving hypocrites are men of a double mind; they want the conduct of the Spirit, and are led by their own affections, and therefore cannot be settled: fear, the love of the world, carnal hopes and interests, draw them hither and thither, for they have no certain guide and rule. This double mind in carnal men bewrayeth itself two ways—in their hopes and their opinions. (1) In their hopes they are distracted between expectation and jealousy, doubts and fears; now full of confidence in their prayers, and anon breathing forth nothing but sorrow and despair; and possibly that may be one reason why the Psalmist compareth the wicked to chaff (Psa. i. 4), because they have no firm stay and subsistence, but are driven to and fro by various and uncertain motions, leading their lives by guess, rather than any sure aim. (2) In their opinions hypocrites usually waver and hang in suspense, being distracted between conscience and carnal affections; their affections carry them to Baal, their consciences to God. 2. That doubtfulness of mind is the cause of uncertainty in our lives and conversations. Their minds are double, and therefore their ways are unstable. For our actions do oft bear the resemblance of our thoughts, and the heart not being fixed, the life is very uncertain. The note holdeth good in two cases. (1) In fixing the heart in the hopes of the gospel. (2) In fixing the heart in the doctrine of the gospel; as faith sometimes implieth the doctrine which is believed, sometimes the grace by which we do believe. A certain expectation of the hopes of the gospel produceth obedience, and a certain belief of the doctrine of the gospel produceth constancy. 1. None walk so evenly with God as they that

are assured of the love of God. Faith is the mother of obedience, and sureness of trust maketh way for strictness of life. 2. None are so constant in the profession of any truth as they that are convinced and assured of the grounds of it. (*T. Manton.*)

Double-mindedness:—I. WE HAVE TO OBSERVE ON THE MISERABLE DISADVANTAGE, INEFFICIENCY, AND, WE MAY SAY, WORTHLESSNESS, OF SUCH A STATE OF MIND FOR ANYTHING GREAT AND GOOD. "Double-minded," "unstable in all" things. Now, connect this with the consideration of the feebleness of the human powers at the best. Let those powers be in their best order, and exerted in the most steady, constant, and consistent manner possible, and even then, how slow and toilsome is the progress to any good! The most vigorous have mourned and been mortified, to see how little they had done: the most determined servants of God have confessed that they were "unprofitable servants." Again, connect the idea of this character with that of the shortness of life; short, in the most protracted instances, shorter still, in the far greater number. And how much of this inevitably consumed in little cares and occupations, and, in many instances, in grievances, pains, and languor! A man deliberating and perplexing and confounding his designs, and life still hastening on; prosecuting a purpose a little while, and then, hesitating, stopping, life still going on! abandoning his design—life all the while passing away. Think, again, what dishonour and ignominy it is, for a man to be thus, as it were, his own opponent and frustrator. There is enough to obstruct him, from without, were he ever so vigorously prepared for the great operations of duty. But he has within him the causes of defeat. He cannot put in order the active principles and powers within the citadel of his soul, to sally out in force against the external difficulties and opposition. He has there opinion dissenting from opinion, motive disagreeing with motive, passion conflicting with passion, purpose thwarting purpose. But to carry the view outward; this double-minded man, who has no simplicity and unity of purpose, think how unfortunate is his case, on account of the multiplicity of things there will be to distract his purposes, and frustrate his exertions. In this "double" condition of mind he is liable to be arrested by a great number of things on either side. II. But we may previously observe that there are very many men exempt from this miserable weakness, BY BEING THE SUBJECTS OF SOMETHING STILL WORSE. There is many a sinner that betrays no double-mindedness. He is actuated wholly, steadily, constantly, by some one predominant evil. The man of all-grasping ambition, the complete sensualist, the insane lover of money. And these, in their way, are most worthy to be held up as examples to those who profess to be, or to wish to be, devoted to better things. "Look at them," we would say to the unstable, double-minded man—"look at them and be ashamed!" In representing the character of our text, in some of its most usual forms, we may note that there is perhaps some difference between a double-mindedness of variableness, fluctuation, fickleness, and that of inconsistency or self-contradiction. But we would rather direct the attention to that double-mindedness which endeavours, in the habitual course of life, to combine irreconcilable things. And how many exemplify this in the manner in which their minds are affected between the present and the future! A predominance of regard to the great and endless future is indispensable to the happy order of the human soul. But in some minds this concern rather harasses than predominates—it cannot govern, but will not depart. And as it will not, it is attempted to be brought into some kind of compromise with the prevailing interest about the present objects. There is the warning thought, "These present objects will soon be no longer mine—I must leave them! and what will be the state of my soul elsewhere?" And there is terrible authority in this thought. It forces its demand on the conscience of such a man. There are, therefore, some serious thoughts; some employments of a religious kind; some abstinences and self-denials; some prayers, however constrained. And this miserably embitters the interest of the present and temporal objects. Still the heart cannot, cannot let these objects sink down to the subordinate rank, and admit the predominance of the grand future ones. This miserable double-mindedness distracts the tenor of a man's life. He goes on hesitating, embarrassed, impeded, and only succeeds in going wrong! It is much the same thing, we have said already, when we exemplify the character, denominated in the text, in the case of a man who approves some great, general, good object, but is influenced by a selfish interest against it. This private interest rises up against all his convictions and better wishes and sympathies, and determines him to oppose the thing he pronounces so good. But yet, not without a painful consciousness of inconsistency, which his utmost efforts cannot reconcile, and which gives a wavering "unstable" character to his course of

proceeding. See, again, the character in the text exemplified in the case of a man harassed between the dictates of his own judgment and conscience, on the one side, and the consideration of how he will be accounted of in the world, on the other side. The attempted combination of things which cannot truly agree is exemplified in some who wish to carry an appearance and a profession of belonging to the Christians, the people of God, and at the same time are very desirous of being on the most favourable terms with worldly and irreligious society. We will only add to the description one more particular, and that of a doctrinal reference. There seems to be in some persons a "double-minded" apprehension of the meritorious cause of human salvation—a notion of some kind of distributive partition of the merit, between the sinful being himself and Jesus Christ. Now this must produce a painful perp'exity and instability in a man's experience, and in his religious exercises and efforts. For it can never be adjusted, on each side, how much. If the Redeemer will not, of mere free favour, furnish all for justification, where will He stop? If I am to contribute essentially, meritoriously, myself, what will suffice? by what rule is it to be estimated? Unstable, therefore, is such a man in his feelings, in his efforts, in his prayers. III. WHAT IS THE REMEDY FOR ALL THIS? The great thing to quell all this mischief and conflict and wretchedness is to have one grand predominant sovereign purpose of life. And what can that be but to live for God and eternity? How gloriously this would crush the hateful strife! and bring us out free, in singleness of spirit, for the enterprise of immortality! The means conducive, under the Divine influence, to the establishment of this great predominant principle and power are most plain and obvious. Let the man who feels the plague of this internal dissension, let him look most deliberately, most resolutely, and, as in the sight of God, at the motives, the objects, the interests, which divide and baffle his spirit; and solemnly decide what it is that deserves to have the ascendency. And what he is losing all the while! losing the labour of his vital powers—spending his strength for nought; losing his time, the inestimable advantages for the attainment of the final good, the present happiness he might be enjoying, the benefits of the Redeemer's work, the day of grace and salvation. By continuance, too, these worse contesting principles have habit on their side, the most infernal ally of evil principles, an angelic one of the good. And, lastly, as God is, if we may speak so, the supreme unity, simplicity, consistency, stability, in the universe, the soul must have a firm connection with Him, so as to be in a humble sense (what we should not venture to express, if His own Word had not) a "partaker of the Divine nature," by His Spirit imparted, through the medium of the Redeemer. And then these opposing evil principles and powers in the soul will shrink in the strife, will no longer prevail, though they linger to struggle, will have received the touch of death, and will perish wholly and for ever when the spirit is at last set free from mortality and this infected world. (*J. Foster.*) *The double-minded man:*—He is one who is inconstant; he is changeable; he hath a mind to serve God and be saved, but he hath at the same time a mind also to satisfy his lusts; he would be eternally happy in the next world, but he would not quit the sensual pleasures of this; he is godly by fits and by intervals, but he is not so uniformly, and uninterruptedly; his religion hath its flows and its ebbs, its rises and its falls; now it grows, and presently again it decays. To give us a more lively image of this instability, which is the distinguishing mark of a double-minded man, our apostle paints him out to us by a familiar but elegant comparison, "He that wavereth is like to a wave of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed." The ground of this instability is the diversity of those principles upon which he acts; his heart is not pure and free from mixture, and therefore his actions are thus repugnant. He hath a double mind, and therefore nothing that he doth can be simple and uniform. To remove this inconsistency and incongruity, which there is betwixt what he at several times doth, his heart must be purified from all secular and low aims, and entirely be fixed on the choice of one single end, and steadily apply itself to the use of such means, as all jointly conspire to the attainment of that end. When we make the glory of God and the salvation of our souls our last and chief end; when we form no other designs that come in competition with this; when all our actions are so ordered as to have a proper tendency to this end, and do all agree with each other by agreeing together in this tendency, then have we that purity of heart which our apostle here enjoins. (*Bp. Smalridge.*) *The folly of double-mindedness:*—Should we observe a person at the same time taking aim at two different marks placed at a considerable distance, and much more, if they were placed diametrically opposite to one another, we must be more than ordinarily serious if

such a sight did not move our spleen and provoke our laughter. And yet every whit as ridiculous is that person who proposes to himself such designs as do plainly interfere with each other. For is it not the height of folly to aim at any end which we are sure never to accomplish? And must not he that pursues opposite ends necessarily fall short of one of them? For will not all those means that contribute to the gaining one, hinder the attainment of the other? If the pleasures of this world are more suited to our natures; if they are more agreeable to our rational faculties; if they are more durable; if they are more perfect whilst they last; let us pursue these steadily, without troubling ourselves for anything beyond them. Let us not rob ourselves of any of the present satisfactions of this life, in expectation of lesser joys at a greater distance. Or if the pleasures of this world, though they do not exceed, yet are truly equal to the pleasures of the next; if, having weighed them together in an even balance, we find that neither of them turns the scale; then let us live at all adventures: where there is no room for preference, let us take either side, as it happens. Let us "set our affections on things above, or on things below"; be godly or profane; sober or intemperate; righteous or unjust; merciful or uncharitable, according as we are in humour. Let us practise some duties to comply with the motions of the Spirit, and commit some sins to gratify the lusts of the flesh; and having no certain haven where we would be, let us suffer our inclinations to run afloat, and to be tossed about to any point of the compass by every blast of wind. But if neither of these be the true state of our case, as, if the Christian religion be true, we are sure neither is; if the advantages and pleasures of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed; nay, farther, if the seeking of the things of this world, either more than the glories of the next, or equally with them, will shut us out of the kingdom of God; and if on the other side, to those who "first seek the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, these things shall be added" over and above; where there is such a vast disparity in the objects, where the dispute lies between the creature and the Creator, between finite and infinite, between momentary and eternal, there to be equally poised between such unequal objects; and, in short, for the want of a uniform pursuit of the better part, to lose both parts, is such a degree of folly as in speculation we could never have believed possible, had not the practice of men showed it to be very common. (*Ibid.*) *The uneasiness of double-mindedness*:—When a mariner hath determined within himself what port to make to, and is secure that he is in the direct way which will bring him to that port, whatever ill accidents he meet with in his passage are in some measure made tolerable by the prospect he hath of arriving at the desired haven at last; but when he is tossed by contrary winds from one point to the other; when, in the words of the Psalmist, "he reels to and fro, and staggers like a drunken man, and is at his wits' end," because he knows not which way to steer his course, then must his soul needs be melted within him because of trouble. Now this is the unpleasant condition of a double-minded person: he is tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind. Sometimes the pleasures of this world appear amiable in his eyes, and he pursues them with great eagerness of soul; but these have nothing in them which will satisfy his desires; these either flying from him whilst he follows them, or vanishing away in the fruition; he hopes to find more solid contentment of mind in the practise of virtue and the duties of religion; but having not a true relish for these more refined pleasures, finding some hardships in his first entrance upon a holy life, and wanting resolution of mind to overcome them by patience, he quickly relapses into his former wicked courses, and tries again the more beaten paths of vice; but still he is as far removed as ever he was from the attainment of true happiness, because he does not move towards it in a direct line, but, by going sometimes forwards and sometimes backwards, is at an equal distance from his journey's end, after all his wearisome travel and pains, as he was when he at first set out. The heavenly-minded person who pursues the paths of virtue with an even course finds in himself a fund of joy which is never to be exhausted, a spring of comfort and delight which never fails him (Psa. xvi. 5). On the other side, the carnal-minded person who is uniform and consistent with himself in a constant course of sin; who hath got the conquest over his conscience, and is deaf to its loudest cries; who, finding the fetters of religion too burdensome, hath taken care to break these bonds asunder, and to cast away these cords from him, hath his share of pleasures, which he freely enjoys, without abatement or control. The double-minded person who pretends to be sometimes spiritual, and who at other times is carnal; who shares his affections betwixt the Creator and the creature; who sometimes obeys the laws of God to

comply with the dictates of his conscience, and at other times disobeys God's laws to gratify his sensual appetite, may perhaps propose to himself a double share of pleasure; and all that happiness which the spiritual and carnal person do separately divide between them, he may fondly hope to join together in one, and to enjoy at once. But whilst he aims at too much, he is in danger to lose all; whilst he claims more happiness than comes to his share, he forfeits what otherwise he might have fairly enjoyed; and, instead of uniting in one the different pleasures of a sensual and spiritual life, he will find by experience that he truly tastes neither. For the pleasures of sin are embittered by the remorses of conscience, whose checks he is not able wholly to silence; and, on the other side, that satisfaction of mind which he should reap from the consciousness of having done some things well is impaired by the sense of guilt which arises from his having done other things which he knows to be evil. There are several forbidden pleasures which a profligate, dissolute thorough-paced sinner, who hath no sense of shame, no fear of God, no strugglings of conscience to restrain him, doth without control freely indulge himself in; and these make up a great part of that happiness which he pitches upon as his portion. But the double-minded person who proposes to himself different ends, and pursues different courses, though he sometimes transgresses the lines of duty, dares not go great lengths in vice; he hath not so far got the mastery over his conscience but that there are several kinds and instances of sin at which he presently starts back and recoils; he is for keeping up an interest with two opposite parties, God and the world; and therefore is careful not to serve either, so far as to make the breach with the other utterly irreconcilable; and thus, for want of a perfect and uniform obedience, he loses those pleasures which the saints of God find in a religious life; and at the same time, for want of being thoroughly wicked, he debars himself from several sorts and degrees of pleasure which profligate sinners take very frequent and very large draughts of. And as through the restraint of conscience he dares not allow himself in several pleasures which notorious sinners liberally taste of, so in those which, through the prevalence of his lusts, he gives way to, he finds not all that relish which they do. For though he is so far wicked as not to resist a temptation when it is offered; yet he doth not so much as the other entertain himself with the prospect of criminal pleasure before he enjoys it; his soul is not so wholly swallowed up with it whilst he enjoys it; and he doth not with so much contentment call it back and dwell upon it in his memory, and act it over again in his imagination after he has enjoyed it. (*Ibid.*) *The sinfulness of double-mindedness:*—I. IT IS CONTRARY TO THAT LOVE OF GOD WHICH THE GOSPEL EXPRESSLY REQUIRES (Matt. xxii. 35). Now, if the steadiness of our obedience depends upon the sincerity of our love of God; if nothing can seduce them from their duty, whose hearts are truly possessed with an ardent love of God; then will it follow, on the other side, that those whose obedience is partial and interrupted, who advance some steps in the paths of virtue, and after that depart back into sinful courses, are destitute of that superlative love of God which is the very basis of all religion, and the first and chief condition of our eternal salvation. II. IT IS INCONSISTENT WITH THAT PERFECTION WHICH IS ANOTHER CONDITION OF THE GOSPEL COVENANT. Absolute perfection is not to be attained, and therefore repentance comes in to supply the want of it; but a sincere endeavour after perfection is possible; and he who sins with a resolution to repent is not sure that God will give him grace to repent in time of need. Now, if an endeavour after perfection, if doing the utmost we can do in "all things to keep a conscience void of offence," is confessed on all hands to be the least that can be meant by that perfection which is the condition of our salvation, then must double-minded persons be in a very dangerous state who cannot pretend that they perform this condition. For can that person be said to use his utmost endeavours to be perfect who, though he resists some temptations, yet not only yields to but even invites others? Doth he do all he can do to approve himself to God who doth as many actions, which he knows to be displeasing to God, as he doth actions acceptable? Can he be thought in earnest to press forwards towards the mark whose retreats are equal to his advances? who is always in motion, but rids no ground; and who, after some years spent in a course of religion, is got no farther than when he at first set out? As well may he be thought a perfect scholar who, in that part of learning he professes, is ignorant of as many things as he knows; or that be deemed a perfect animal which, of those limbs it should have, wants as many as it hath, or which is destitute of as many organs of sense as it enjoys. III. IT IS INCONSISTENT WITH THAT SINCERE FAITH UPON THE OBSERVANCE OF WHICH ON OUR PART WE EXPECT SALVATION. If we examine the faith of

a double-minded person, if we try it by its works, we shall not find it thus general and impartial. He finds gracious promises in the gospel annexed to the performance of some duties, and these he pretends to discharge on purpose that he may inherit those precious promises; but he finds also severe threats denounced against some sins: and, notwithstanding these threats, he goes on in a constant habitual commission of them. Now, how is his performance of these duties a better proof that he heartily believes those promises than his voluntary transgressions are, that in his heart he disbelieves those threats? (*Ibid.*) *Instability of the double-souled*:—A two-souled man is unsettled; "unstable in all ways." His opinions are fluctuating; and so are his sentiments. Sometimes he is repenting of his sins, and sometimes he is repenting of his repentance. Sometimes the importance of the future overwhelms him, and sometimes he feels that nothing is worth thinking of but the present. Such instability of sentiment must unsettle the believer. The man is sometimes as serene as a May morning, and sometimes as sweeping as a cyclone. You can never know how he will receive you, or how he will behave under certain circumstances. His instability imparts its changefulness to his countenance; while he is looking one way, his soul has gone another. His speech is ambiguous, his tone of voice wavering, his utterance now very rapid and now very slow. Sometimes he answers offhand and without reflection, and then he requires so much time to consider that the opportunity for speech has passed. He is untrustworthy in every department of life. That man *cannot* receive anything of the Lord. He cannot hold his hand long enough to have anything placed therein. (*C. F. Deems, D.D.*)

Vers. 9–11. **Let the brother of low degree rejoice.**—*Humiliation and exaltation*:—I. "LET THE BROTHER OF LOW DEGREE REJOICE IN THAT HE IS EXALTED." When called to rejoice we expect a reason. Good cause may exist for joy; but unless we know it we cannot be affected by it. But in the injunction before us there is no want of true sympathy. A reason is assigned, "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted." The first thing here to be noticed is, that the humiliation and the exaltation cannot be of the same description. The one is temporal, the other spiritual—temporal depression, spiritual elevation. Their abasement as the children of earth and mortality is set in contrast with their exaltation as the children of God, and heaven, and eternity. 1. The poor of Christ's people are "exalted" as to birth. The poorest believer is a child of God, by the redeeming purchase of Christ's blood, and the regenerating power of His Spirit. 2. He is exalted as to character. This is inseparably associated with the former dignity. That birth itself is a change of character. It is a birth into a new life: a life of new principles, affections, desires, and a new course of conduct; and it is true "exaltation"—from the debasement of sin to the beauty of holiness—from the image of Satan to the image of God. 3. "The brother of low degree is exalted" in regard to his society. The poor Christian frequents no palaces; graces no parties of aristocratic fashion. But he has society which "the world knoweth not of"; society far higher than the highest to which this world, in its best estate, could introduce him. It is a society, indeed, which the world does not acknowledge, but it is honoured of God. They are "the excellent of the earth, in whom is all His delight"; and of whom He hath said, "I will dwell among them, and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." 4. "The brother of low degree is exalted" in power; in dominion; in honour. It is a spiritual power; not a power of spiritual oppression, but of self-subjugation and self-control; and the power that proves victorious over the mightiest of the enemies of mankind—"the world, the flesh, and the devil." 5. "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted" in riches. The poorest believer is rich—rich in the present possession of "all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus"; rich in the future hope of the "inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away"; and, in one all-comprehensive word, rich in having "God Himself as the portion of his inheritance and cup." 6. "The brother of low degree may rejoice in being exalted," when he surveys his prospects. These are transcendently glorious. They surpass all our feeble conceptions. II. Pass we now to the CONTRAST. It is contrast only as to this world and to time; for the spiritual blessings and hopes of poor and rich in the Church of God are the same: "But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away" (ver. 10). Now, according to the testimony of the Bible—confirmed by a sad amount of experience—riches, operating upon the corruption of

the human heart, are ever apt to produce in their possessor the spirit of pride and vanity; of self-confidence and self-elation. Even when the tendency does not, in any remarkable degree, manifest itself in the behaviour and bearing of the rich toward their fellow-men, it appears in a spirit of independence—of "trust in their wealth, and boasting themselves of the multitude of their riches," and of a forgetfulness of God. Instead of being led by the gifts to the Giver, they forget the Giver in the gifts; and, in the use of them, place self before God. If such be the strength of this tendency, has not the Christian whom God, in His providence, has blessed with a large amount of this world's good cause to be thankful when in spite of it he has, by the influence of the Divine Spirit, been "made low"? when, by that Divine influence, he has been made an exception to the atheistical tendencies of his riches, and kept in the spirit of humility and in the spiritual-mindedness of devotion to God?. The "lowliness" here made the ground of grateful joy consists essentially in two things, which ever accompany each other, and in their elementary nature may be regarded as one—namely, a sense of entire dependence on the God of providence for every temporal good, and a sense of equal dependence on the God of grace for all spiritual and eternal blessings. III. Notice now the GROUNDS on which "the rich" brother is called to rejoice in his being "made low." They are such as these—1. The transitory nature of all the riches and honours of this world. Had the rich man not been "made low," he might have drawn upon himself the temporary admiration of his fellow-men; and that would have been all: he should have "passed away, and been no more seen"; all his honours dying with him. He would thus, like other rich men, have "had his portion in this life"—a pitiful portion for an immortal creature!—and then have gone destitute into another world. Well for him, then, that he has been "made low," for—2. By this he has been brought into possession even here of better blessings than the world can furnish. His very humility is, as a creature and a sinner, his true honour; as it is the honour of the first archangel before the throne. In that humility, too, Jehovah has complacency. He obtains the smile and the blessing of Jehovah, and all the present joy, and all the soul-satisfying hope which that smile and that blessing impart. Which leads me to notice—3. That the rich man who is thus "made low," besides true honour and blessing from God in this world, becomes an heir of a richer heritage than any which he could ever attain to here, where all is corruptible and fading. It is by his having been "made low" that he has been "made meet to be a partaker of that inheritance." But for this he might have continued to enjoy his earthly riches and honours—"clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day"—but he must have forfeited the inheritance above—"the better country, even the heavenly." (*R. Wardlaw, D.D.*) *Poor and rich believers*:—I. THE TWO CLASSES OF PERSONS ADDRESSED. 1. Poor Christians. He calls the party addressed a "brother," that is obviously a brother in the faith of the gospel, a member of the same spiritual family. It was thus Christians then spoke of, and to each other. They realised the endearing relationship which subsisted between them—a bond not of a merely figurative or formal nature, but most intimate. He is not simply a brother, but one "of low degree"—that is, in humble circumstances. James had called on them generally, irrespective of any distinctions among them, to count it joy when they fell into divers temptations, and now he specially presses this on the class here addressed. The brother of low degree, without wealth, without rank, without influence, without any of the coveted possessions or advantages of earth, is exhorted to exult. 2. Rich believers. Here he says simply, "the rich," and as the other party was the man poor temporally, so this doubtless, and still more evidently, is the man rich temporally. And the person thus singled out represents not this class of people generally, but those of them who belong to the household of faith. It is still a "brother" whom he addresses. Both had reason to rejoice, notwithstanding the wide separation between them in all outward respects. The lowest and the highest alike had matter of exultation. The gospel placed them on the same platform of spiritual privilege. In Jesus all classes meet and have a common heritage of blessing. II. THE TWO GROUNDS OF BOASTING RECOMMENDED. 1. In the case of the poor brother, it is his exaltation. He is to rise above his outward poverty and the depression connected with it, and to glory in the elevation to which he has been raised, the treasures of which he has become possessed, as one of God's people. Taken from the dunghill, he sits among the princes; and, high as he is already, he is advancing towards a height of glory, transcending not only his attainments, but even his conceptions. He is the heir of a portion,

in comparison with which all the estates and dignities of earth are not worthy to be named. Well may the poor man lose sight of his low degree, rise far above all its privations, and exult in his being thus spiritually exalted. So far we have viewed the exhortation generally; but doubtless it carries a special reference to the temptations treated of both in the preceding and succeeding verses. The exaltation was closely connected with them; it resulted in no small degree from the suffering they involved. Such dispensations seem fitted only to reduce to a low degree. But they do the very reverse. They cast down, but they also raise up; they empty, but only in order to fill us with something far better. If they abase with one hand, they elevate with the other. For consider how they link us with, and assimilate us to the Lord Jesus. These trials purify and ennoble the character. Even Jesus was thus perfected. 2. In the case of the rich brother, it is his humiliation. "But the rich, in that he is made low." The Christian is not to glory in his worldly elevation. That had been forbidden long before (Jer. ix. 23). It is not his being lifted high, but his being brought down, which is to constitute his ground of boasting. As the poor believer was to rejoice in his exaltation, the wealthy one is to rejoice in his humiliation. As the former of these terms must be understood spiritually, so must the latter; for it is only thus there can be a proper contrast, as is evidently intended. The natural tendency of wealth is to fill men with pride, self-confidence, vainglory. There is no more formidable barrier in the way of that poverty of spirit which is a fundamental characteristic of all Christ's disciples. When, then, the affluent are delivered from this snare; when they are enabled to see the emptiness of all their treasures, and the danger which the possession of them involves; when they are made willing to take their places in the dust as sinners—to abase themselves before God, and walk without high looks and haughty bearing among men—they have good reason to rejoice, exult, glory. In this humiliation lies their defence against evils of terrible power and endless duration. This being made low is, not less than the other, the fruit of temptations and trials. These are often the means of bringing down those whose looks are high, and laying them in the dust of self-abasement. It is thus that many enter the kingdom. God employs painful dispensations of providence to awaken them out of their security, and to prepare them for submission to the doctrines of the gospel. James enforces the exhortation by the consideration that earthly riches are perishable, transitory in their nature, and that all who trust in them, identify themselves with them, are doomed to speedy destruction. (*John Adam.*) *Christian brotherhood*:—I. THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES ARE DIFFERENT. 1. Circumstances are no test of character. 2. Christians should be contented with their lot. 3. There are opportunities for the exercise of brotherly benevolence. II. THEIR CAUSE FOR JOY IS THE SAME. 1. Not in external circumstances. 2. In spiritual triumph over circumstances. (*U. R. Thomas.*) *Discipline of change*:—I. CHANGE IS NEEDFUL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NOBLER FACULTIES OF MAN'S NATURE. It keeps alive those faculties of mind and heart that are already active; rouses into activity those that are lying dormant; and hinders us from falling into mere routine and mental and moral barrenness. II. CHANGE IS NEEDFUL TO KEEP US FROM FORGETTING GOD AND RELAPSING INTO CALLOUS SELF-CONFIDENCE. There is a painful truth in what David says—in our prosperity we think we shall never be moved. And we become self-indulgent, self-sufficient, and forgetful of God, and are only reminded of our duty to Him, and our dependence upon Him, when He hides His face, and breaks in upon our prosperity; when storm waves threaten to engulf us, we cry, "Lord, save, or I perish." III. CHANGES ARE NEEDFUL FOR THE FOSTERING OF SPIRITUAL LIFE AND GROWTH. If there are no changes in our religious life, or in the discharge of our religious duties, religion not infrequently relapses into mere formalism, machine work. To prevent this, and to rouse the soul to greater activity, God sends us changes. He stops the orderly machine—throws it out of gear, compels us to pause awhile and examine the various parts, and adjust them and start afresh. IV. CHANGES ARE NEEDFUL TO SLACKEN OUR HOLD ON EARTH, AND STRENGTHEN OUR HOLD ON HEAVEN. By a thousand alternating lights and shades the mind has forced upon it the fact of the instability of terrestrial things, and the folly of setting our affections too firmly upon them; while at the same time, it is made to feel the need of some centre of stability where change is not, some rock of strength on which it may build without fear of coming storms. (*W. Fox.*) *Grave reverses a decisive test of character*:—Read fairly the words of St. James cannot fail to carry this plain sense to our minds: that the Christian brother who

is poor in this world's goods is to be glad when he gets rich in this world's goods; and that the Christian brother who is rich in these goods is to be glad when God takes them away from him, since God will only take them away when it is for his good. And if we sincerely believe, as we profess to believe, spiritual good to be better than temporal good, and spiritual wealth to be far more precious than temporal wealth, I am persuaded that we should never think of taking these words in any other sense. For St. James is the most prosaic, the least mystical, of the New Testament writers. It is almost impossible to misunderstand him except by thrusting meanings into his words which never entered into his mind. But the verses do not stand alone. They are intimately connected both with the verses which go before and the verses which follow them. Directly he has uttered his opening salutation, the apostle strikes his key-note. In the salutation he had wished the Christians of the Hebrew dispersion joy—"Joy to you." But what a wish was that for men whom their heathen neighbours hated because they were Jews, and their Jewish neighbour hated because they were Christians! How could men so miserable hope for joy? St. James teaches them: "Count it all joy," &c. But what was this strange art of extracting joy from sorrow, honour from shame, gain from loss? St. James teaches them this also. Trials beget that patient and constant temper which makes a man mature, complete in character, so that he lacks nothing. If, then, they made perfection of Christian character their first aim, preferring it before all happy outward conditions, they would rejoice in any change of condition which put their character to the test and helped to make it perfect. So that these verses, taken quite literally, fall in with the whole scope of the apostle's argument. With that argument in view it becomes impossible to take them in any other than this plain sense. The poor man is to be glad when he is tried by riches, remembering, however, that for him they are a trial; and the rich man is to be glad when he is tried by poverty, and to take comfort in the conviction that it is a trial by which God is seeking to make a man of him, rounded and complete in character, lacking nothing that he ought to have. The ruling thought of these verses is, then, that great reverses of fortune are a test of Christian character, and a means of Christian perfection; and that we ought not simply to bear them patiently, but to rejoice in them because they so test our character as to mature and perfect it. Yet no one will deny that the reverses by which such a character is formed are very searching trials, very hard to meet in a manly, still harder to meet in a Christian, spirit. When you see a poor good man suddenly made rich, are you not a little afraid for him, though, perhaps, in the same circumstances, you would have no fear for yourself? Do you not fear that he may lose in humility, in sobriety, in spirituality; that he will pamper his senses with unaccustomed luxuries; that his devotion to Christ and the Church may grow weaker? On the other hand, when you see a "rich brother," who has been successful in business, and for many years has lived in luxury and ease, suddenly reduced to comparative penury: if he has to "begin life again" when the strength and sanguine hopefulness of youth are past, do you not fear for him? Do you not fear that his piety may prove to have been a mere adjunct of his prosperity; that his patience may fail him; that he may grow sour, irritable, suspicious; that he may fail to get any good from the evil which has befallen him; that he may confound misfortune with disgrace, lose his self-respect, and conclude that he has forfeited the respect of men because it has pleased God to bring him low? The shoe does not always pinch where our neighbours think it does. The most searching test in these great reverses is often, not in their direct, but in their indirect, consequences. A man, without being a hero, may have so much of goodness and of good sense as that a sudden access of fortune would make little difference to him, none *in* him, if he stood alone in the world: and yet it may pierce him and try him to the heart because others share it with him. He may have a vulgar wife, fond of show, or children who will give themselves airs, or friends who flatter him, or servants whose solemn, formal deference gives him a sense of importance; and by all these indirect influences his own standard of thought and duty may be insensibly changed and lowered. And the other man, the rich man who has been smitten with poverty, may be affected in a similar manner. To a sensible good man outward changes are of little moment save as they affect character and usefulness. How many a good fellow have we all known to whom the hard work and comparative penury of a reduced income has been a positive relief, and who would have snapped his fingers at "Fortune and her wheel" had he had no one to care for but himself, or had those for whom he was bound to care been likeminded with himself! But if

he has a wife who frets or storms, or children who sulk or wrangle; if those immediately dependent upon him are too "stuck up" to work for their bread, and yet cannot eat their bread without a good deal of the best butter—then his trial may become very penetrating and severe. Are we to rejoice in such trials as these? Yes, even in these; for these, too, test our character and may help to make us perfect. St. James, indeed, speaks only of poverty and riches; but of course he includes under these terms whatever other changes or reverses they involve. And if a man finds his kind, pleasant wife changed into a "fine lady" by prosperity, or into a shrew by adversity; if a woman finds her once kind and manly husband turned into a fretful poltroon by misfortune, or into a lazy sensualist by wealth, these sorrowful changes are part of the reverses which have come upon them; they are among the consequences of having been "lifted up" or "brought low"; and in these also the apostle bids us rejoice. Before we can honestly give, or take, the apostle's comfort, we must occupy his position, we must hold his convictions, we must rise to the full stature of men in Christ Jesus. St. James held that this world would soon pass away, and that we should still sooner pass out of it; but that there is another world in which we shall live for ever, and in which our conditions will be shaped by our character. In his view, therefore, the chief aim of every man was, or should be, to form in himself a character which would best fit him both for the life that now is, and for that which is to come. It mattered very little whether he was rich or poor in things which he must soon leave behind him: what did matter was that by the enjoyment or by the loss of these things he should be qualifying himself for, should be laying hold of, the life which is eternal. Whatever changes, whatever reverses, contributed to elevate, purify, complete the power and quality of his life, and stamp on it the characters of immortality, should therefore be welcome to him. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *Human exaltation and humiliation:*—I. CHRISTIANITY TEACHES THAT MAN, HOWEVER LOW IN DEGREE, IS MAN STILL. The millions are not aware of the greatness of their nature. Spite of the fall, man still possesses intelligence, conscience, moral sensibility, and power to will. Redemption comes to him as an angel of light, and proposes to take the wanderer by the hand, and conduct him to the great Father—to glory and perfection. II. CHRISTIANITY TEACHES THAT MAN, HOWEVER EXALTED IN POSITION, IS BUT MAN. It is as great an error in the rich to think too highly of themselves as it is for the poor to think too meanly of themselves. The spirit of many is, that pence make shillings, shillings make pounds, and pounds make men. How common, but how erroneous this! Christianity gives us the true idea of humanity. Only let its light enter the mind—then the poor, the degraded, the rude barbarian, the privileged Jew, the philosophic Greek, and the cultivated European, will feel that they are men, and but men. The one is exalted, the other is made low. III. CHRISTIANITY TEACHES THAT ALL MEN, INDEPENDENT OF CIRCUMSTANCES, ARE EQUAL. The brother of low degree and the rich are one in everything which constitutes man. 1. Physically (Gen. iii. 20, x. 32; Acts xvii. 26). 2. Morally. Our common depravity proves the oneness of the race. IV. CHRISTIANITY TEACHES THAT MAN IS THE SUBJECT OF GREAT VICISSITUDES. 1. Riches are not of human, but of Divine disposal. 2. Riches and poverty are no proof of Divine pleasure and displeasure. 3. The only test of Divine approval or disapproval is moral character. V. CHRISTIANITY TEACHES THAT THE EXALTATION OF THE POOR AND THE HUMILIATION OF THE RICH ARE SOURCES OF REJOICING. They now see their nature in the light of Christianity. Their errors are corrected; they now think of themselves as they ought to think; they now behold their equality with each other. Between them there is no feeling of superiority and inferiority. They rejoice in their common brotherhood and oneness. (*J. Briggs.*) *The true Christian temper:*—1. The people of God are brethren. They are begotten by the same Spirit, by the same immortal seed of the Word. They have many engagements upon them to all social and brotherly affection. Ah! then live and love as brethren. Averseness of heart and carriage will not stand with this sweet relation. 2. He saith "of low degree," and yet "brother." Meanness doth not take away Church relations. Christian respects are not to be measured by these outward things; a man is not to be measured by them, therefore certainly not a Christian. We choose a horse by his strength and swiftness, not the gaudiness of his trappings; that which Christians should look at is not these outward additaments, but the eminency of grace (chap. ii. 1). 3. Not a "man" of low degree, but a "brother." It is not poverty, but poor Christianity that occasioneth joy and comfort. 4. From the word τάπεινος—it signifieth both humble, and of low degree—observe, that the meanest have the greatest reason to be humble; their condition always

maketh the grace in season—poverty and pride are most unsuitable. It was one of Solomon's odd sights, to see "servants on horseback, and princes going on foot" (Eccles. x. 7). A poor proud man is a prodigy of pride; he hath less temptation to be proud, he hath more reason to be humble. 5. God may set His people in the lowest rank of men. A brother may be *ταπεινος*, base and abject, in regard of his outward condition. "The Captain of salvation," the Son of God Himself, was "despised and rejected of men" (Isa. liii. 3); in the original, "the leaving-off of men"; implying that He appeared in such a form and rank that He could scarce be said to be man, but as if He were to be reckoned among some baser kind of creatures; as Psa. xxii. 6. 6. From that "let the brother of low degree glory." That the most abject condition will not excuse us from murmuring: "though you be *ταπεινος*, base, yet you may rejoice and glory in the Lord. A man cannot sink so low as to be past the help of spiritual comforts. Though the worst thing were happened to you, poverty, loss of goods, exile, yet in all this there is no ground of impatience: the brother of low degree may pitch upon something in which he may glory. Well, then, do not excuse passion by misery, and blame your condition when you should blame yourselves: it is not your misery, but your passions, that occasion sin; wormwood is not poison. 7. From that rejoice, or glory, or boast. There is a concession of some kind of boasting to a Christian; he may glory in his privileges. To state this matter, I shall show you—(1) How he may not boast. (*a*) Not to set off self, self-worth, self-merits; so the apostle's reproof is just (1 Cor. iv. 7). (*b*) Not to vaunt it over others (Isa. lxv. 5). (2) How he may boast. (*a*) If it be for the glory of God, to exalt God, not ourselves (Psa. xxxiv. 2). (*b*) To set out the worth of your privileges (Rom. v. 3). 8. From that "he is exalted." That grace is a preferment and exaltation; even those of low degree may be thus exalted. All the comforts of Christianity are such as are riddles and contradictions to the flesh: poverty is preferment; servants are freemen, the Lord's freemen (1 Cor. vii. 22). The privileges of Christianity take off all the ignominy of the world. 9. The greatest abasures and sufferings for Christ are an honour to us (Acts v. 41). (*T. Manton.*) *Rejoicing in God*:—If any object here that St. James willeth the brother of low degree to rejoice when he is exalted, and the rich man when he is made low, which seemeth contrary to other Scriptures, where we are exhorted to rejoice only in God, as Jer. ix. 23, 24; Phil. iv. 4, hereunto the answer is easy. First, if we acknowledge whatsoever happeneth unto us to be from God, who both casteth down and lifteth up, then either in our low degree being exalted, or in our riches being humbled, to rejoice is to rejoice in that God sendeth, and so to rejoice in the Lord. Secondly, if again we look into our own wretched condition, who of ourselves have nothing, but whatsoever we have we have received it, then in the things which we have received moderately to rejoice is also to rejoice in the Lord, who is the Fountain of all graces and blessings. Finally, if we hold this as a ground and foundation that all good gifts flowing unto man grow of His mere favour and mercy, and not from any merit or desert of ours, then in the good blessings of God, of exaltation, advancement, glory, or other whatsoever, to rejoice is godly, Christian, and dutiful; and thus men rejoicing rejoice in the Lord. The Apostle James, then, in exhorting the brother of low degree to rejoice when he is exalted, and the rich in like manner when he is made low, is in all points answerable unto other Scriptures, wherein we are required to rejoice in the Lord, for thus for God's sake, and in obedience of His commandments to rejoice, is to rejoice in the Lord also. (*R. Turnbull.*) *Chastening and reward*:—In the Old Testament worldly wealth is set forth as the reward of righteousness; in the New Testament poverty is commended and riches contemned. When mankind were in their infancy God rewarded them as infants; but on their attaining to years of discretion He sets before them worthier treasures than those things that perish in the using. When, therefore, Christians look on wealth as the reward of righteousness, they are as grown-up sons mistaking nursery toys for their inheritance. God has, as it were, opened our nursery door, and shown to us the splendid domain to which we are heirs, and has bid us go forth and fit ourselves for the larger life. When, then, He puts away our toys, and sends us to school to learn the duties of the life before us, shall we, as silly children, sit down and cry over our banished plaything rather than submit to the discipline wherein we may learn how to acquit ourselves as men? Do we wish to go into the next stage of being mere milksops, having all to learn which we ought to have learned here? Earthly wealth is a thing of sight, and just in so far as it is loved and leaned on is it a hindrance to the development of faith. If we have grown accustomed to measure life's enjoyment and life's success by the money we possess, shall we not

be at a great disadvantage when we enter a sphere where money is unknown? Christians have been so swept along by the rush of the world after pleasures that wealth procures, that they are little aware of their unfitness for higher joys. (*The Christian World Pulpit.*) *Exaltation and humiliation*:—What is the meaning of the "high estate" (ὕψος) in which the brother of low degree is to glory, and of the "being made low" (ταπείνωσις), in which the rich man is to do the same? At first sight one is disposed to say that the one is the heavenly birthright, and the other the Divine humiliation, in which every one shares who becomes a member of Christ; in fact, that they are the same thing looked at from different points of view; for what to the Christian is promotion, to the world seems degradation. If this were correct, then we should have an antithesis analogous to that in 1 Cor. vii. 22. But on further consideration this attractive explanation is found not to suit the context. What analogy is there between the humiliation in which every Christian glories in Christ and the withering of herbage under a scorching wind? Even if we could allow that this metaphor refers to the fugitive character of earthly possessions, what has that to do with Christian humiliation, which does not depend upon either the presence or the absence of wealth? Moreover, St. James says nothing about the fugitiveness of riches: it is the rich man himself, and not his wealth, that is said to "pass away," and to "fade away in his goings." It is a baseless assumption to suppose that the rich man here spoken of is a Christian at all. "The brother of low degree" is contrasted, not with the brother who is rich, but with the rich man, whose miserable destiny shows that he is not "a brother," *i.e.*, not a believer. The latter is the wealthy Jew who rejects Christ. Throughout this Epistle (chaps. ii. 6, 7, v. 1–6) "rich" is a term of reproach. This is what is meant by the Ebionite tone of the Epistle; for poverty is the condition which Ebionism delights to honour. In this St. James seems to be reproducing the thoughts both of Jesus Christ and of Jesus the son of Sirach (Luke vi. 25, 26; *cf.* Matt. xix. 23–25; Eccles. xiii. 3, 20). But when we have arrived at the conclusion that the "being made low" does not refer to the humiliation of the Christian, and that the rich man here threatened with a miserable end is not a believer, a new difficulty arises. What is the meaning of the wealthy unbeliever being told to glory in the degradation which is to prove so calamitous to him? In the exhortation to the rich man St. James speaks in severe irony: "Let the brother of low degree glory in his high estate; and the rich man—what is he to glory in?—let him glory in the only thing upon which he can count with certainty, viz., his being brought low; because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away." Whether or no this interpretation be accepted it must be clearly borne in mind that no explanation can be correct which does not preserve the connection between the humiliation of the rich man and his passing away as the flower of the grass. This fading away is his humiliation, is the thing in which he is to glory, if he glories in anything at all. The inexorable "because" must not be ignored or explained away by making the wealth of the rich man shrivel up, when St. James twice over says that it is the rich man himself who fades away. (*A. Plummer, D.D.*) *The gospel exalting the humble Christian and abasing the rich*:—I. THE UNEQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE GOOD THINGS OF THIS LIFE IS A FACT WHICH HAS OFTEN PROVED A STUMBLING-BLOCK TO PROUD UNBELIEVERS. 1. The poor Christian is here called a "brother": and this title at once marks his real dignity. He has been adopted into the family of Heaven. He is a child of God, a brother of Christ, an heir of glory. 2. It is not only by the nobleness of their future and eternal prospects that the gospel "exalts" the poor: it equally exalts them as to their present condition and enjoyments. See how it raises them above all those little envyings and grudgings which are too often found in their station of life. It sets before them "the true riches," and thus makes them indifferent about the things of this present evil world. 3. It exalts them above many of the cares of life. While others are "running here and there for meat," &c.—incessantly crying, "Who will show us any good?" and suffering from continual fears of not being provided for—the Christian looks up to that bountiful Hand which has never failed him yet, and which, he knows, never will. 4. The gospel exalts "the brother of low degree," even in his mind and ideas. Worldly learning has indeed its use; and it is a gift of God, for which those who possess it should be thankful; yet is it good for nothing to the owner, if he be at the same time destitute of that "wisdom which cometh from above." It is recorded of a certain great scholar that he exclaimed on his deathbed, "Alas! I have wasted my life in laborious trifling." 5. We might proceed to show, in several other instances, how the gospel, when received into the heart, improves and exalts the poor of this world—how it creates in them habits of in-

dustry, cleanliness, regularity, temperance, domestic affection, liberality, brotherly kindness, and every social virtue. II. THE RICHER CLASS OF CHRISTIANS HAVE ABUNDANT CAUSE TO REJOICE IN THAT ABASEMENT WHICH THE GOSPEL BRINGS WITH IT. 1. Riches themselves are a dreadful clog upon the soul. 2. It is not riches alone that are hurtful to the soul; it is what accompanies wealth, or the higher stations of life, that is so dangerous. 3. Look, again, at the mode of life which prevails among the better classes of society, and there see what dangers surround them on every side. The leisure which the better classes enjoy gives the tempter many a fatal opportunity against them. This leisure must be filled up: for the human mind has an insatiable appetite; and while Satan does everything in his power to keep it from its proper nourishment, "the bread of life," he always takes care, in the meanwhile, to supply it abundantly with the poisonous husks of worldly pleasure—in the shape of trifling and seductive books, fashionable parties, public amusements, &c. If, therefore, at any time the grace of God touches the heart of one who is surrounded by these temptations—humbling him in true repentance, and bringing him to a genuine and active faith in Christ—how clearly do we then perceive the motive for the apostle's exhortation. 1. Let him "rejoice that he is made low" in the spirit of his mind, and in his estimate of his own state and character. 2. In his estimate of the world, and his expectations from it. 3. Should God lay His chastening hand heavily upon the rich brother—to reduce him from affluence to poverty—to bereave him of the dear objects of his affection—to visit him with bodily pain and sickness—or even to bring upon him all these calamities together; yet, even then, he would have cause to rejoice—yes, "to rejoice in that he is" thus "made low"; for affliction is the peculiar mark of the Lord's children; and sanctified affliction is one of the best and most profitable gifts His fatherly wisdom ever bestows on them. (*W. Hancock, B.D.*) **The rich in that he is made low.**—*The rich brother:*—I. WEALTH IS COMPATIBLE WITH PERSONAL RELIGION. Some, in successive ages of the world, have been arrested by Divine grace amidst the splendour of high estate, and, feeling that these are but a paltry portion for a spirit fallen by sin and doomed to immortality, have sought a richer boon—a nobler birthright. Many, too, who were brought to Christ when moving in a humble sphere have, by diligence, honesty, and temperance, become the possessors of a considerable amount of worldly riches. And fearful though it be for a man to be rich before he is converted, and necessary as vigilance ever is, as to others, so not least to the rich believer, piety may flourish as truly in the sumptuous hall as at the cottage-hearth. II. THE RICH BROTHER IS LOWLY. He knows the grandeur and purity of God, and he knows the weakness and corruption of his own soul. He feels how unsatisfactory earthly possessions are. He realises that decisive event which is sure to scatter man's accumulated treasures to the winds, and to lay all earthly honours in the dust. And as for the faith which brought peace and safety to his soul, and the piety that holds its dwelling in his heart, he is ready to exclaim (1 Cor. xv. 10). III. THE RICH BROTHER IS HERE CALLED TO TRIUMPH IN HIS LOWLINESS. Christian humility, on the part of the wealthy believer, is a favourable symptom of his state. It is, according to an oft-repeated principle of Scripture, a prelude of future advancement in the scale of dignity and blessedness. It is an important qualification for a considerate distribution of wealth among the destitute. And finally, it is what the unsatisfactoriness, and transitoriness of earthly riches, and the weakness, as well as sinfulness, of their possessor, may well inspire. (*A. S. Patterson, D.D.*) *Riches:*—1. Riches are not altogether inconsistent with Christianity. Usually they are a great snare. The moon never suffers eclipse but when it is at the full; and usually in our fulness we miscarry (Matt. xix. 24). Plato, a heathen, saith the same almost with Christ, that it is impossible for a man to be eminently rich and eminently good. But you will say, "What will you have Christians to do then—in a lavish luxury to throw away their estates? or in an excess of charity to make others full, when themselves are empty?" No (see Matt. xix. 26; Mark x. 23, 24). Riches in the having, in the bare possession, are not a hindrance to Christianity, but in our abuse of them. Your possessions will not be your ruin till your corruptions mingle with them. Under the law the poor and rich were to pay the same ransom (Exod. xxx. 15), intimating they may have interest in the same Christ. Riches in themselves are God's blessings that come within a promise. Yea, riches with a blessing are so far from being a hindrance to grace, that they are an ornament to it (Prov. xiv. 24). 2. A rich man's humility is his glory. Your excellency doth not lie in the splendour of your condition, but in the meekness of your hearts. Humility is not only a clothing—"Put on humbleness of mind" (Col. iii. 12)—but

an ornament. "Be decked with humility" (1 Peter v. 5). A high mind and a low condition are all one to the Lord, only poverty hath the advantage, because it is usually gracious. If any may glory, they may glory that have most arguments of God's love. Now a lowly mind is a far better testimony of it than a high estate. And so before men, as Augustine said, he is a great man that is not lifted up because of his greatness. You are not better than others by your estate, but your meekness. The apostles possessed all things though they had nothing. They have more than you if they have a humble heart. 3. The way to be humble is to count the world's advantages our abasement. The poor man must glory in that he is exalted, but the rich in that he is made low. Honours and riches do but set us beneath other men, rather than above them, and do rather abate from than add anything to you; and it may be you have less of the Spirit because you have more of the world. 4. If we would be made low in the midst of worldly enjoyments, we should consider the uncertainty of them. Outward riches are so far from being the best things, that they rather are not anything at all. Solomon calleth them "that which is not"; and who ever loved nothing, and would be proud of that which is not? 5. The uncertainty of worldly enjoyments may be well resembled by a flower —beautiful, but fading. (1) Though the things of the world are specious, yet they should not allure us, because they are fading. Flowers are sweet, and affect the eye, but their beauty is soon scorched; the soul is for an eternal good, that it may have a happiness suitable to its own duration. An immortal soul cannot have full contentment in that which is fading. When the creatures tempt you, be not enticed by the beauty of them, so as to forget their vanity. Say, Here is a flower, glorious, but fading; glass that is bright, but brittle. (2) The fairest things are most fading. Creatures, when they come to their excellency, then they decay, as herbs, when they come to flower, they begin to wither; or, as the sun when it cometh to the zenith, then it declineth. "Man at his best estate is altogether vanity" (Psa. xxxix. 5); not at his worst only, when the feebleness and inconveniences of old age have surprised him. So the prophet speaketh of "a grasshopper in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth" (Amos vii. 1). As soon as the ground recovered any verdure and greenness, presently there came a grasshopper to devour the herbage: the meaning is, a new affliction as soon as they began to flourish. Well, then, suspect these outward things when you most abound in them. (*T. Manton.*) *Improved by adversity:*—Many Christian people are like some evening primroses, for whose opening we watched with some friends the other evening. It was a common-looking plant, and the buds were tightly wrapped up so long as the sun shone, and gave but faint promise of the coming beauty. But the moment the sun disappeared, and the gloom of the coming night was threatened in the darkening twilight, they suddenly burst their bonds, displaying sweet blossoms that crowned the homely stock with golden glory. So there are many men and women whose lives are homely and hard and selfish, until their sun of prosperity sets, and the gloom of coming sorrow overshadows them, when, unexpectedly, under that touch of trouble, a hidden bud blossoms in beauty and a sweetness of spirit and character that crowns the whole stock of their lives with goodness and glory. **As the flower of the grass he shall pass away.**—*The blade of grass:*—St. James plays the fabulist, or historian here, and narrates the sad end of a certain blade of grass. In whose field, then, did this grass grow? All the commentators reply, "In that of the prophet Isaiah." St. James is here falling back on Old Testament words which would be familiar to the Jews for whom he wrote—words which his story would be sure to recall to their minds. I. THE STORY OF THE BLADE OF GRASS (Isa. xl. 6-8). As we listen to the prophet, imagination stirs and works; we see the broad, pleasant field bathed in sunlight, fanned with sweet airs, thick with verdant grass, gay with the purely tinted, fragrant wild flowers which clothe the grass as with the robes of a king; and then we feel the fierce, hot blast sweep across the field, under whose breath the grass withers, the bright flowers fade, and all that teeming life, all that exquisite and varied beauty, is swallowed up of death. Who does not feel at times that that is a true picture of human life? And remembering how, in this field, every separate blade of grass and every fragile flower has its own little world of hopes and fears, joys and pains, who can fail to be saddened as he beholds them withered by a breath, their early promise unfulfilled, their goodliness not ripening to its maturity? "All flesh is grass"—all the great heathen races; but also "this people is grass"—a grass which withers like the rest. Like their neighbours, the Jews were in a constant flux, vexed by constant change. One generation came, and another went. The life, vexed with perpetual changes while

it lasted, never continuing in one stay, was soon over and gone. Their only hope lay in obedience to the Divine Word, in appropriating that Word, in steeping their life in it till it became enduring as the Word itself. II. THE MORAL OF THIS STORY. St. James is not content with a lesson so large and general as had contented Isaiah. He has a special purpose in view in telling the story which called up memories, prophetic and historic, from the past. As he had taken a single blade of grass out of Isaiah's broad field, so he selects one man, or one class of men, for special warning. The blade of grass reminds us that human life soon withers, that human fortune often withers even before the man dies. Yes; but it also reminds us that some men wither even while they retain the full vigour of their life, and their good fortune abides. The rich man "withers in his ways," in his goings to and fro along the lines of his traffic, before his health is touched, before his wealth is touched. And therefore, argues St. James, the rich man should rejoice when his riches use their wings and fly away. The alternative the apostle places before him is this: Let the wealth wither that the man may live, or let the man wither amid the abundance of his wealth. It is a hard saying! but, before we reject it as too hard for practical use, let us clearly understand what it means. James had just said, "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is lifted up, but the rich in that he is brought low." Now, however much we may dislike the injunction, or part of it, can we deny that it is based on a true, on a Christian, view of human life? Are not sudden and large reverses of condition severe and searching tests of character? Does it not take a very good poor man to ride straight to God when he is set on horseback, and a very good rich man not to "break down" when he is "brought low"? Great reverses of fortune are very searching and conclusive tests of character. And can we expect a Christian teacher to bid us grieve over any reverse by which our character is tested, matured, perfected? The wealth and the poverty will soon pass, but the character will remain, and will determine our destiny. Does any one object, "It may be easy enough for a poor man to be glad when he gets rich; but how is a rich man to rejoice when he becomes poor? You ask too much of us, more than it is in man to give." I reply: "You are not speaking, and you know that you are not speaking, from the Christian point of view, in the spirit of Him who, when He was rich, for our sakes became poor. You are putting circumstances before character, transitory gains and pleasures before abiding and eternal realities. St. James himself felt that the latter half of his injunction was hard to flesh and blood; in demanding that the rich man should rejoice whenever he is brought low, he felt that he was imposing a very severe test on character, a very heavy strain on virtue. And that, I suppose, is why he told his story of the blade of grass, to which at last we come back. What he meant was, I think, to this effect: "You remember the prophet Isaiah's field of grass, and how it withered beneath the scorching heat, so that the flower thereof fell off, and the grace of its form perished. The rich man is often like a blade of that grass. The sun of prosperity shines on him more hotly than he can bear; all the promise and beauty of his nature fade beneath the scorching heat; he withers in his ways, in the multitude and perplexity of his schemes and pursuits: his fortune grows, but the man decays, dies before his time, dies even long before he ceases to breathe and traffic." Douglas Jerrold, one of our keenest wits and satirists, has depicted "a man made of money." He had only to put his hand into his breast to find it full of banknotes; but as he draws away note after note, he drains away his vitality; he dwindles and pines amid his vast schemes and luxuries month by month, till he wastes into a mere shadow, till the very shadow disappears. The picture is hardly a satire, it is so mere a commonplace. Every day we live we may see men dying of wealth, all that is manly, all that is fine and pure and noble in character, perishing as their fortunes grow. The warning comes home to us in this age as in few previous eras of the world; for our whole life is so rapid and intense, our business is such a strenuous and exhausting competition, we are solicited by so many schemes for our own advancement, or for the good of the town in which we dwell, or for the benefit of the commonwealth of which we form part, that it is almost impossible to make leisure for thought, for a quiet enjoyment of what we have gained, or for those religious meditations and exercises on which our spiritual health in large measure depends. We are literally withering away in our ways, so many are the paths we have to tread, so rapid the pace we have to maintain, so scorching and tainted the atmosphere we breathe. And hence, whether we are rich, or seeking riches, or are labouring with anxious and fretting care for a bare competence, we all need to take heed to the warning which speaks to us as to men;

i.e., as to spiritual and immortal creatures, children of God and heirs of eternity. If we would not suffer this world, which holds us by ties so many, so strong, and so exacting, to crush all high spiritual manhood out of us, we must set ourselves to be in this world as Christ was in the world. Let the mind that was in Christ be in us also; let us cultivate His preference of duty to pleasure, of service to gain, of doing good to getting good; and instead of withering away in our ways, we shall find every path in which we walk a path of life, a path that leads us home. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *The metaphors of St. James*:—The metaphor here used of the rich man is common enough in the Old Testament. Man "cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down," says Job, in his complaint (xiv. 2); and, "As for man, his days are as grass," &c., says the Psalmist (ciii. 15, 16). But elsewhere, with a closer similarity to the present passage, we have this transitory character specially attributed to the ungodly (Psa. xxxvii. 2). None of these passages, however, are so clearly in St. James's mind as the words of Isaiah (xl. 6, 7). Here the words of St. James are almost identical with those of the Septuagint. "Grass" throughout is a comprehensive term for herbage, and the "flower of grass" does not mean the bloom or blossom of grass in the narrower sense, but the wild flowers, specially abundant and brilliant in the Holy Land, which grow among the grass. "The scorching wind" (ὁ καύσων) is one of the features of the Epistle which harmonise well with the fact that the writer was an inhabitant of Palestine. It is the furnace-like blast from the arid wilderness to the east of the Jordan. The fig-tree, olives, and vine (chap. iii. 12) are the chief fruit-trees of Palestine; and "the early and latter rain" (chap. v. 7) points still more clearly to the same district. It has been remarked with justice that whereas St. Paul for the most part draws his metaphors from the scenes of human activity—building, husbandry, athletic contests, and warfare—St. James prefers to take his metaphors from the scenes of nature. In this chapter we have "the surge of the sea" (ver. 6) and "the flower of the grass" (ver. 10). In the third chapter we have the "rough winds" driving the ships, the "wood kindled by a small fire," "the wheel of nature," "every kind of beasts and birds, of creeping things, and things in the sea," "the fountain sending forth sweet water," "the fig-tree and vine" (vers. 4–7, 11, 12). In the fourth chapter human life is "a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (ver. 14). And in the last chapter, besides the moth and the rust, we have "the fruit of the earth," and "the early and latter rain" (vers. 2, 3, 7, 18). These instances are certainly very numerous, when the brevity of the Epistle is considered. The love of nature which breathes through them was no doubt learned and cherished in the village home at Nazareth, and it forms another link between St. James and his Divine Brother. Nearly every one of the natural phenomena to which St. James directs attention in this letter are used by Christ also in His teaching. In some cases the use made by St. James of these natural objects is very similar to that made by our Lord, and it may well be that what he writes is a reminiscence of what he had heard years before from Christ's lips; but in other cases the use is quite different, and must be assigned to the love of nature, and the recognition of its fitness for teaching spiritual truths, which is common to the Lord and His brother. But there is this great difference between Christ's teaching from nature and that of St. James: St. James recognises in the order and beauty of the universe a revelation of Divine truth, and makes use of the facts of the external world to teach spiritual lessons; the incarnate Word, in drawing spiritual lessons from the external world, could expound the meaning of a universe which He Himself had made. In the one case it is a disciple of nature who imparts to us the lore which he himself has learned; in the other it is the Master of nature, who points out to us the meaning of His own world, and interprets to us the voices of the winds and the waves, which obey him. (*A. Plummer, D.D.*) **So also shall the rich man fade away.**—*Fading splendour*:—I. We delight in pictures and emblems, for then the soul, by the help of fancy, hath a double view of the object in the similitude, which is, as it were, a picture of it, and then the thing itself. This was God's ancient way to teach His people by types; still He teacheth us by similitudes taken from common objects, that when we are cast upon them, spiritual thoughts may be awakened; and so every ordinary object is, as it were, consecrated to a heavenly purpose. Well, then, let this be your field meditation; when you see them decked with a great deal of bravery, remember all this is gone in an instant when the burning heat ariseth. 2. Our comforts are perishing in themselves, but especially when the hand of Providence is stretched out against them. The flower fadeth of itself, but chiefly when it is scorched by the glowing, burning east wind.

Our hearts should be loose at all times from outward things, but especially in times of public desolation; it is a sin against Providence to effect great things; when God is overturning all, then there is a burning heat upon the flowers, and God is gone forth to blast worldly glory (Jer. xlv. 4, 5). There are three sins especially by which you make Providence your enemy, and so the creatures more vain. 1. When you abuse them to serve your lusts. Where there is pride and wantonness, you may look for a burning; certainly your flowers will be scorched and dried up. 2. When you make them objects of trust. God can brook no rivals; trust being the fairest and best respect of the creatures, it must not be intercepted, but ascend to God. 3. Worldly men pursue wealth with great care and industry. The rich turneth hither and thither, he hath several ways whereby to accomplish his ends. What pains do men take for things that perish! Do but observe their incessant care and unwearied industry, and say, how well would this suit with the heavenly treasure! It is a pity a plant that would thrive so well in Canaan should still grow in the soil of Egypt; that the zealous earnestness of the soul should be misplaced, and we should take more pains to be rich unto the world than to be rich towards God (Luke xii. 21). Shall a lust have more power upon them than the love of God upon me? And when we see men "cumber themselves with much serving," and bustling up and down in the world, and all for riches that "take themselves wings and fly away," we may be ashamed that we do so little for Christ, and they do so much for wealth. 4. Lastly, again, from that *ἐν ταῖς πορείαις*, "in his ways," or journeys. All our endeavours will be fruitless if God's hand be against us. As the flower to the burning heat, so is the rich man in his ways; that is, notwithstanding all his industry and care, God may soon blast him: they "earned wages, but put it in a bag with holes" (Hag. i. 6), that is, their gains did not thrive with them. Peter "toiled all night but caught nothing," till he took Christ into the boat (Luke v. 5). So you will catch nothing, nothing with comfort and profit, till you take God along with you (Psa. cxxvii. 2). (*T. Manton.*) *Delusive nature of riches*:—There is a fable of a covetous man who chanced to find his way, one moonlight night, into a fairy's palace. There he saw bars, apparently of solid gold, strewn on every side; and he was permitted to take away as many as he could carry. In the morning, when the sun rose on his imaginary treasure, borne home with so much toil, behold! there was only a bundle of sticks; and invisible beings filled the air around him with scornful laughter. Such shall be the confusion of many a man that died in this world worth his thousands, and woke up in the next world not only "miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. iii. 17), but in presence of a heap of fuel stored up against the great day of burning (Rom. ii. 5). *How to be rich*:—Do all rich men know how to be rich? He does not know how to do anything who does that thing so that he brings it to its worst and not its best results. Is that not true? A man does not know how to sail a ship who steers it so that when it ought to go to Liverpool he brings it into Madagascar. Where is the ship of wealth then meant to sail? Her port is clear and certain—to generosity and sympathy, and fineness of nature, and healthy use of powers. What shall we say, then, of the man whose money makes him selfish and cruel, and coarse and idle, or any one of these bad things? There are many hard names which we may call him by, but the real philosophy of the whole matter, the comprehensive definition of it all, is this—he does not know how to be rich! He is a blunderer in a great art. Look at his opposite. Look at the man who takes money into the easy mastery of his character, appropriates it. He makes it part of him. The richer that he grows the more generous and sympathetic and fine and active he becomes. What can you say of him but that he does know how to be rich. I say of a man that he knows how to travel when he makes each new country, as he enters it, open its secrets and render up to him new interest and knowledge. I say of a man that he does not know how to swim when the water takes possession of him and drowns him in itself. So I say that a man does not know how to be rich when his money makes him its slave, and turns him into a coarseness like itself instead of being elevated and refined by the commanding spirituality of his human soul. (*Bp. Phillips Brooks.*) *Dying rich*:—What an awful thing it is to die rich! Imagine the Master auditing the account of a servant who has left behind a million! If that poor wretch who had but one talent was cast into outer darkness because he laid it up instead of using it in his Master's service, what will be the doom of those who, with their half millions and millions (while giving, it may be, a few thousands for decency's sake), have, year after year, hoarded up countless treasures which they could never use? Think of the poor saints pinched with cold and hunger! Think

of the Redeemer's cause languishing for the want of that filthy lucre which they hold with close-fisted selfishness! Yet listen to their talk! "I am but a steward." "I am not my own." "Every believer in Jesus is my brother or sister." What a mockery! Will not this be the Master's language to many a professor: "Out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee"?

Ver. 12. **Blessed is the man that endureth temptation.**—*The rewards for enduring temptation*:—I. IN THE PRESENT LIFE MEN ARE EXPOSED TO TEMPTATIONS. 1. Men are tempted when assailed by Satan. 2. Men are tempted by their fellow-creatures. 3. Men are tempted by the afflictions and privations of life. II. MEN ARE REQUIRED TO ENDURE TEMPTATION. 1. When it is borne in a spirit of unflinching piety. 2. When it induces the cultivation of a spirit of dependence on God. 3. When it is not allowed to hinder progress in piety. III. THE REWARD OF SUCH AS ENDURE TEMPTATION. 1. Great dignity. 2. The enduring character of their reward. IV. THE SECURITY OF THIS REWARD. (*Evangelical Preacher.*) *Enduring temptation*:—This is a blessing which the true disciple of Christ should never weary of holding in remembrance. At the very outset of his letter the apostle strikes this keynote: "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into divers trials, knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh endurance." What the Christian needs is the power of patient endurance, and the apostle goes on to say how this may be secured. We want wisdom to learn the lessons of experience; and wisdom is given to those who ask for it in faith. It is the want of faith which causes instability. Our subject, then, is—The various trials which we meet in daily life, and which put to the proof our faith and power of endurance. Our true life in this world is a life of struggle, and our true wisdom is to learn by experience what is the real good of life. Some of the trials which we have to endure come upon us by God's appointment from the circumstances in which we are placed, and over which we have no control. Just as the worth of a sailor is tested by the length and the roughness of the voyage, as the courage of a soldier is put to proof by the marches and the battles he must go through, so is every one of us put to the test by the ordinary circumstances of life; and according to the stuff that we show ourselves to be made of, according to our worth, so will be our judgment. There is no escaping this process of trial: from our earliest days till we draw our last breath it is the inevitable lot of each one of us. God has appointed to every time of life its own discipline, and true progress is possible only if we make a right use of the advantages which lie to our hand, only if we learn the wisdom of experience from each passing season as it comes and goes. But it is when we go forth from the home and school, and begin to do life's work in earnest, that we find out what it is to live, and how hard it often is to live as we would wish. The conditions of modern society are not altogether favourable to virtue and godliness. On the one hand we have wealth and culture, and refined ease and pleasure-seeking; we have thoughtful inquiry into the nature of things, bold invention, and fertility of resource; science, art, religion, all dressed in their best clothes, and looking very fair and comfortable indeed. On the other hand there is hunger and poverty and degradation, seething discontent and daring impiety and reckless crime prowling like wild beasts outside the circles of respectability, threatening to accomplish their unholy ends by works of violence, hating the light and loving the darkness because their deeds are evil. Every circumstance of daily life becomes a trial of our virtue. The wealth we have, the talents we possess, the station in life we occupy, our knowledge, our leisure, our business capacity are all tests of character whereby we prove to God and man what we are living for—whether we are living all for self and the world, or whether we are living for anything nobler, purer, better. And not only as individuals are we thus tested, but as communities and nations. Our laws and our governments, our inventions, our means of communication, our ships, our railways, our telegraphs—everything by which labour is lessened and wealth increased, every scheme projected for subduing nature and bettering the material condition of mankind—these and the use that we make of them are the things by which we are every day tried and judged, and shall be tried and judged at the last day. In the next place, we must reckon in the category of trials the misfortunes and hard things of life, the disappointments, the losses, the diseases, the sufferings, the thousand ills that natural flesh is heir to—all the things which cause us to have hard thoughts of life, of God, of our brethren. These hard things do not come from chance, nor are they necessarily temptations of the devil. They come to us in the ordinary course of life, as inevitable accidents

if you will; but, better still, they are to be regarded as discipline, appointed by the love of a heavenly Father. Now, the effect which sufferings and hardships have upon us depends entirely upon the way in which we receive them. If we yield to them and grumble, they leave us unsoftened and worse than we were before. But if, on the other hand, we bear them patiently, seeing in them the loving hand of an all-wise Benefactor, then they leave us chastened indeed, but purged of earthy dross, with the true gold of our hearts purified and fit for use in the great temple of the Lord. There is still one other class of trials which we must not forget to mention, and these are temptations proper, as we usually understand the word—the actual inducements to sin which surround us and lie in wait for us, and fall upon us to hurt us in the course of our lives. These temptations may be of two kinds. They may be enticements to that which in itself is sinful, as, for instance, when we are tempted in business to dishonesty, or when in intercourse with others we are tempted to falsehood, malice, unrighteous conduct of any kind. On the other hand, the temptations may arise from what is in itself innocent, but which becomes sinful from an improper use of it. Such are the temptations to excess in the use of stimulants; excess in seeking after pleasure which may be mere frivolity or uncleanness; excess in carefulness of worldly things, the covetousness which is idolatry. A very large number of sins which men commit are of this kind. Most men do not seek after what they know to be evil, but they cannot draw the line at moderation. These, too, are trials or tests which show whether or not we can be true and brave for the right and the pure. If we conquer them they are powerless to hurt us, and become instruments for bracing us up and making us stronger than before; if we yield to them they become our tyrants to oppress us with a slavery worse than the bondage of the Israelites in Egypt. What we all need, then, is the Holy Spirit of God ruling within our hearts in love and power, teaching us to refuse the evil and choose the good, making us steadfast to adhere to the right, and causing us to use our time, our talents, our means, our circumstances, both for the strengthening of our own souls and for the furthering of the cause of righteousness among men. Blessed are we if we can do this, and come out of our trials proved and perfected, holding fast at every cost the true and the right. Blessed are we if we have wisdom to consider our wealth and talents as so many gifts to be used for the glory of God and the good of our fellow-men. Blessed are we if we have the courage in all our business dealings to be absolutely honest and just. Blessed are we if we are not only just but pitiful, loving, forgiving, and merciful. (*A. C. Watson, B.D.*) *The secret and the reward of constancy*:—What the function of evil is, and why it is permitted to exist, is a question which has perplexed the minds of men ever since they used discourse of reason. It is, confessedly, the most difficult of questions, and many, perhaps most, of the wise have given it up as, for the present at least, an insoluble problem. But the question, so difficult to us, seems to have presented no difficulty to the practical and uninquisitive intellect of St. James. According to him, the function of evil is to try men, to test them, to put them to the proof, to show them what they are and what they ought to be. Because trials bring us wisdom, and faith, and patience, we are not to shrink from them, but to glory in them, however trying they may be, and even though they seem to put that which is good in us to jeopardy. In verse 12 the apostle sums up all that he has previously said. As he has mused over his theme his heart has taken fire, and he breaks out into the exclamation, "Happy is the man that endureth temptation!" He has bidden us rejoice when we fall into divers trials; now he pronounces us happy, because we have let patience have her perfect work, because we have sought wisdom of God, because we have risen to an unwavering faith. And, indeed, we may easily see that it is not enough for our welfare that we should simply be exposed to trials, or that we should suffer them. If we are to get the good of them, if they are to refine and complete our character, we must endure them, *i.e.*, as the word implies, we must meet them with a cheerful constancy. I know how hard all this sounds, and is, to the ordinary man. And even if, as yet, we feel that we ourselves cannot endure heavy trials with cheerful fortitude, do we not count those happy who can? do we not wish we were as strong as they? We must admit, then, that St. James is simply uttering an obvious truth when he exclaims, "Happy is the man that endureth trial!" But why is he happy? The apostle hints at one reward in the words, "when he is approved," and distinctly states another reward of constancy in the words, "he shall receive the crown of life." For the phrase, "when he is approved," points to a figure often employed both in the Old and New Testament Scriptures. Both the prophets

and the apostles represent God as a refiner, who sits by the furnace, assaying and purifying gold and silver, and who, when He has purged them of their dross, stamps them as true metal of sterling worth. He has proved them, and He approves them. That a man should like trial for its own sake is no more to be expected than we could expect gold, were it rational and sensitive, to like the fire. But even gold, if it were rational as well as sensitive, might well be content to endure the furnace by which its purity and value are enhanced, by which its alloys and defects are searched out and purged away. Nor does St. James demand that we should like trial for its own sake, but for the sake of the happy effects it will produce on us if it be borne with constancy. How happy, then, is the man who endures trial with a cheerful constancy—happy in that his character is at once refined and approved! This twofold reward we might deem sufficient. But God giveth liberally, with a full hand. To the cheerful endurer He is a cheerful Giver. And hence St. James goes on to promise "the crown of life" to as many as endure. But what is this crown of life? It is simply a life victorious and crowned; or, in other words, it is a royal and perfected character. Now I suppose there is no one thing that a thoughtful man, who takes his life earnestly, so much desires, as the reward St. James here promises to those who endure. In every one of us there are two men, two worlds, at strife, each of which gains the upper hand at times, neither of which ceases to struggle for its lost supremacy. It is because of this doubleness of nature, and the incessant strife between them, that we are so restless. What is there that we so heartily crave as the power to rule ourselves, to subdue, pacify, and harmonise the conflicting energies, whose ceaseless strife carries havoc through the soul? St. James tells us how we may attain it. Trials, he says, come for this very end, to make us perfect and complete men. If we endure them with steadfast patience, they will work in us a noble character, a royal dignity; they will put a crown on our heads, the crown of life. And, mark, he is not dealing with mere figures of speech; or, rather, he is dealing with figures of speech, but with figures that accurately express facts which we may all verify for ourselves. The phrase, "when he is approved," points to the figure of the refiner's furnace. But drop the figure, and is it not true that trials, wisely borne, refine and elevate character? Do not those who have patiently endured many sorrows acquire a gentleness, a tenderness, a quick sympathy which, to mere polish of manner, is as tinsel to gold? That other phrase, "the crown of life," is also a figure, which indicates the royalty of character that makes a man lord of himself and equal to any fate. And if, at first, the promise sounds a little extravagant, is it not nevertheless a literal statement of fact? Look around you and mark who are the men of whom you are most sure, whom everybody trusts, to whom all are glad to run for counsel or succour. Are they not those who have been tested by divers kinds of trial, and have borne them with manly resolution and cheerfulness? Are they not those who are known to have long ruled themselves in the fear of God, who have governed their passions and cravings with a firm hand; men who, when need was, have planted themselves against the world, and have overcome it? Ah! happy and blessed men! They have endured temptation, and they are approved by God and man. They have risen to that royal sway over themselves which is the true crown of a true life. The life eternal is theirs, even as they pass through the fleeting and changeful hours of time. Every part of St. James's promise, then, accords with the plain facts of human life. Trials borne with constancy do refine men, do manifestly win for them the approval of God, do give them a royal self-mastery and control. But we must not expect to "receive" this promise until we have fulfilled its condition. The reward of constancy is only for the constant. What is the secret of that constancy of which the reward is so great? The apostle reveals this secret. "The crown of life," he says, is promised "to them that love Him, *i.e.*, to them that love God; or, as we cannot love the Father whom we have not seen without loving the brother whom we have seen, this crown is promised to those who love God and man. Those who endure are those who love. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *Enduring temptations*:—Nothing can exceed the diversity which characterises the lot of men in this life. Looking abroad on the surface of human society we behold constant and most wonderful mutations. You do not see around you now such a state of things as you ever expected. Some whom you hoped to see in honour are covered with infamy—others are covered in the dust! There is something unpleasant to such beings as we are, in this fluctuating state. We meet with much to try us. We have disappointments, afflictions, fears, reverses. And there is no course or character that can secure

us against disappointment, and the grave of the graceless is dug just beside the grave of the man of God. Let us look beyond these changes. Let us anticipate that state when change shall be no more. I. TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS ARE IN THIS LIFE TO BE EXPECTED. From some ardour of temperament, from some vanity of self-esteem, from some inadequate idea of the station in which religion places us in this world, or some inadequate idea of the duties it requires, we are prone to flatter ourselves that we are going to find it not a very difficult thing, and not very severe to the flesh, to preserve the integrity of a Christian's virtue. But this is a dangerous delusion. But we do say, that in this life believers should expect temptations, and be on their guard. They will not find it easy to be always faithful to their Master. 1. There is nothing said in the Scriptures which gives us any reason to suppose that it is an easy thing to be faithful Christians. Provision is made for us to vanquish assaults; but the security and peace of heaven do not belong to us here. 2. The express declarations of the Holy Scriptures assure us that believers will, in this life, have very much to tempt and try their fidelity. 3. The character of the believer is such, that it is impossible he should be free from temptation. He is sanctified only in part. Now every feeling and every principle of the believer which are not wholly sanctified, are so many weak points at which he is exposed to injury. More than this, there are so many living, active enemies exerting their energies to drive him into sin. We shall find it difficult to endure. When we little think it, some propensity to evil will solicit gratification. There is almost an infinite variety in those ways in which corruption operates. The heart is the fountain of a thousand streams. One of them turned from its channel will often seek out another, and flow onward with accelerated speed. Another, checked in its course, will often accumulate its energies for a more terrible rush. We ought not to feel secure. 4. Whatever we may hope, there is no situation in this world which places us beyond danger. There are temptations of adversity. There are temptations of prosperity. There are temptations of youth. There are temptations of middle life. There are temptations of old age. How difficult for the man of years to give up the world! There are temptations of health. There are temptations of sickness. 5. If we look at the course in which God has led His own people, we shall find that they have been tried so as by fire. Can we find among the biographies of the saints any one that entered into his rest by a smooth path? II. NOW THE OBJECT OF ALL THESE IS OUR TRIAL. "When he is tried," is the language of our text. There may be some obscurity lingering around this idea. Certainly our God does not try us for the same purposes that men make trials. He knows perfectly what we are and what we shall do in every situation, and needs not the evidence of a trial to enlighten His knowledge. 1. The trial may be designed for our improvement. Surely, those who have had the most mature fitness for entering into the assembly of the first-born had been indebted for it, under God, to those circumstances of difficulty which "tried men's souls." Grace is a gift, but it is the nature of grace to improve by action. No man can be of strong body whose muscles have not been used to hard work. No mind can attain much vigour without much severe exercise. And the temptation which tries grace may be necessary for that perfection of grace which fits for heaven. 2. The trial may be designed as a proof to the creatures of God. III. Whatever may be our trials or the design of them, both DUTY AND INTEREST DEMAND OUR UNSHAKEN FIDELITY. God is a righteous rewarder. There is no difficulty or temptation which will excuse us for unfaithfulness. There is no want of gracious resource in God. IV. What shall we do? WHAT SHALL BE OUR RESOURCE AMID THE TEMPTATIONS THAT BESET US—these outward fightings and inward fears? The text holds up a crown of life upon our view; it points to the promise and speaks of the love of God. Listen to three ideas on this point. 1. You will find but little to fortify your souls by hope against temptation, if you do not look beyond time. Here few joys will you have. Your peace will be often interrupted—your pleasures vanish—and many a poisoned arrow enter into your hearts! But there is another and a better world. Look forward to it. 2. And remember the gift is certain. The text mentions a promise. It is the promise of Him who cannot lie. Resort, then, to the promises of God when temptation assails you. 3. But hope and faith need assistance. Things unseen and eternal are not, always, as living realities to such creatures as we. You may muster resolution, array arguments, multiply resolves, and do whatever else you will for your security; but the love of God is worth more than all. Christians often resort to vain contrivances. (*I. S. Spencer, D.D.*) *Enduring temptation*:—I. THE MAN WHO IS BLESSED. We read in Job,

"Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth." So James says here, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation." Here we are to understand troubles, afflictions of whatever kind, all that calls for submission, endurance—all that causes pain, anxiety, apprehension. It may be outward in its nature. It may be personal or domestic affliction. It may be disease. It may be poverty with its toils and cares. It may be persecution, with its reproaches, injuries, and penalties. It may be family difficulty, for what crosses arise from heat of temper, perverseness of disposition, incongruity of character, &c.? Or the temptation may be more internal, spiritual in its nature. It may lie in the buffetings of Satan, in seasons of darkness and depression, in peculiar and painful experiences, in terrible fears and fightings within. Every Christian has to pass through the furnace, while in the case of some it is heated seven times. Now mark, the blessed man is he that endureth temptation. The emphasis lies on the endureth. That is equally removed from two extremes (Heb. xii. 5). We are not to manifest a proud, defiant spirit under trial, to summon up resolution and refuse to bend under the blow, to treat it with a stoical indifference. That is not Christianity. We are to give scope to the sensibilities of our nature, within due limits. And it is only thus it can serve the purpose of trial, can prove and improve our graces. We are to see the hand of our heavenly Father in all that befalls us, to recognise ever His power, wisdom, faithfulness, and love, to guard against everything like charging Him foolishly, like questioning either the equity or the goodness of any of His dealings. We are to apply to Him for needful guidance and strength, to repress the risings of impatience, unbelief, self-will, and to fall back ever on the sure promises of His Word and provisions of His covenant. Thus to wait, thus to suffer, and so to have an unquestionable title to the blessing pronounced by the apostle. II. THE RESPECT IN WHICH HE IS BLESSED. "When he is tried"—that is after he has been thus tested. "He shall receive the crown of life"—shall receive it then, at the last, after the completion of this process of sifting. The reference is to the future inheritance of the saints. It is the prospect of that which makes the believer blessed for ever. It is indicative of spiritual triumph—of the battle fought and the victory won. It is conferred only on him that overcometh. It is also, and in its own nature, a symbol of honour and power. It is the accompaniment and expression of royal dignity and authority. And so it tells us that, whatever the humiliation of the believer here below, whatever the contempt heaped on him, he is to be highly exalted; all reproach is to be wiped away, and as in the case of the Lord Himself, the cross is to be exchanged for the crown. And mark the crown, which elsewhere is described as one of righteousness and of glory, is here spoken of as one of life—that is, it consists in life; it is, as it were, composed of this material. It is here literally and exactly the life—that is to say, the well-known life which is promised to those who fight the good fight of faith, and triumph in the conflict. Here is life worth the having—life most blessed, never-ending, all-perfect—life in comparison with which every other is little better than death. But is the man that endureth perfectly sure of this imperishable crown? Here is his warrant, his guarantee, "which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him." The apostle thus condenses what is spread out at large in many of the exceeding great and precious promises. The believer does not earn the crown by his trials; he does not procure it by means of personal merit. No; the crown is the fruit of the Cross; not any cross borne by us, but that which was endured by the Lord Jesus. All spiritual life is the result and the reward of His atoning death. He alone is worthy; and it is as united to Him by faith that His people are in any sense entitled to the eternal recompense. As it is thus gracious, so the blessedness is not present but future, in respect of its full possession and enjoyment. It is a thing as yet not given, but only promised, so long as the believer is here below. He is here the heir rather than the proprietor, the man of large prospects rather than of large possessions. But the issue is absolutely certain, secured, as it is, by the promise of that God. Not only so, he is favoured with present pledges and earnests of the future glory. In the hope of it he has an element of strength and comfort, by which he is invigorated and gladdened amidst all his struggles and sorrows. On whom is this crown to be bestowed? The question is an important one; and we are not left without a perfectly distinct answer. The Divine Word brings clearly out who may, and who may not, warrantably appropriate the provisions of the covenant, the sure mercies of David. So here the crown is said to be promised "to them that love Him," that is, to those who thus prove themselves the Lord's people. Their love does not constitute their title to it, but it establishes and mani-

fests that title (see John xiv. 21; Matt. x. 37; 1 Cor. xvi. 22; Rom. viii. 28; Jas. ii. 5). And this statement serves to bring out the only true spring and the only scriptural kind of endurance. The source of it is love to God and His Son Jesus Christ. It is this which sweetens the most bitter cup, and eases the heaviest burden. It keeps down dark suspicions and rebellious murmurs. It enables us to take a right view of the gracious design of the Divine dealings, and to kiss the rod which is seen to be held in a Father's hand, and used not for His pleasure, but solely for our profit. It changes the whole aspect of Providence, and imparts a peace and a strength which sustain under the severest temptations or trials. And any constancy, perseverance, which has not this element in it, yea, which is not rooted in it, is not Christian and cannot be crowned with the life everlasting. (*John Adam.*) *The probation of man*:—I. WHAT IS MEANT BY THE TERMS TRIAL AND PROBATION. 1. The power and opportunity—the danger of proving unfaithful, and of incurring the final displeasure of our Maker and Judge. 2. The power and opportunity of doing right; the blessed possibility of answering the purpose of our being; of proving obedient and faithful, and of our so doing this, as to secure at last, the approbation of our Almighty Judge. II. OUR PRESENT EXISTENCE IS PROBATIONARY. III. IT IS GOD HIMSELF WHO PROPORTIONS AND REGULATES THE TRIAL THROUGH WHICH WE HAVE TO PASS. He is too just, too wise, to appoint a trial low and inadequate; and too good to appoint one more severe than the strength He has imparted can sustain. IV. EVERY AGE, EVERY SITUATION IN LIFE, IS A STATE OF TRIAL; it therefore behoves us to be on our guard against that particular danger to which our particular situation exposes us. V. IT WILL BE OUR WISDOM NOT TO MURMUR AT THAT PARTICULAR KIND OF TRIAL TO WHICH WE ARE SUBJECTED, but to endure its severity and avoid its danger. VI. THE PERIOD OF OUR PROBATION WILL CONTINUE NO LONGER THAN IS STRICTLY NECESSARY. VII. A GREAT AND GLORIOUS REWARD is promised to the man who is faithful to his trial. Such a crown as is worn by those who are kings and priests to God; a crown that shall shine with undiminished splendours, when the light of the sun is extinguished, and the stars shall glitter no more! (*James Bromley.*) *Temptation: its origin and end*:—I. Let us inquire into THE ORIGIN OF TEMPTATION. How does temptation arise? Temptation, one of the darkest facts of human life, arises, strange to say, from two sources which are man's peculiar heritage and glory—his moral nature and his moral perfectibility. We can be tempted because we know right from wrong; because right carries with it a feeling in ourselves of obligation to do it; and because with this feeling come into frequent conflict inducements to do the wrong. We can be tempted because the vision of the ideal opens itself out to our inward eye; because we are conscious of the possibility of better things; and because the sluggishness of the natural man prompts us to remain content with present attainments, and represents to us the arduous effort that is necessary if we would reach the things that lie beyond. Let us look at these two points with a somewhat closer attention. We of all creatures on the earth are the sole possessors of what deserves to be called a moral nature. We are sensible that we ought to do this and ought not to do that, that we owe the doing and the not doing to our own life and well-being and to the life and well-being of mankind. The highest moral natures among men are such as feel most strongly that, to use the weighty words of Ruskin, "a duty missed is the worst of loss." But here, as I say, in this moral nature of ours, and in the feeling of duty that has its seat in it, is found one of the two sources whence temptation arises. God, speaking to us through the universe in which we live, through the age-long experience of the human generations of the past, has set before us the acts that lead to life and blessing, and the acts that lead to death and the curse. But again and again we choose death instead of life. Again and again, under the thoughtless impulse of the moment, we prefer the present to the future, immediate gratification to lasting good; the pretty flower that we know will wither in our hand to the seed which, if only we wait for it, will live again. In a word, we know our duty, and yield to the temptation to refuse to do it. In these temptations to neglect of duty lies the virtue that there is in doing it; and from the feeling of duty implied in our moral nature these temptations come. Furthermore, the second source of temptation is, as I have said, the perfectibility, the capacity for increasing progress, of the mortal nature of man. For you must bear in mind that the present is the child of the past, and accordingly has upon it the marks of its parentage. Everybody knows how much in common man has with the animals beneath him. His physical frame is fashioned after a pattern in many respects similar to theirs. In the same way, the spiritual elements in him have not yet

shaken themselves free from the elements pertaining to his animal life. Greed, passion, appetite, the instinct that prompts him to pursue his own happiness without any regard to the good of others; self considered, not as related to society, but as independent of, even if not opposed to it—these characteristics of the lower nature from which the higher has developed, still remain. In the best men they are faint and weak; in the worst men they are pronounced and strong; in all men, except Him who is the Ideal Man—Jesus Christ—something of them still appears. Hence temptation arises—the temptation to sink back again into the brute instead of going on and ever on to the likeness of the Son of God. To proceed. We have sought, in the first place, to answer the question, How does temptation arise? II. We will now, in the second place, endeavour to answer the question, WHAT IS ITS END? For let us be well assured that no fact of the universe is there as a thing of chance. It has its function in the vast cosmic machinery that is working out the final purposes of God. Sable though its livery may be, still it is a servant in the Divine household. Question it with meekness and reverence, and you will find it not without an answer. It seems, then, that the end of temptation is threefold. 1. First of all, it is an education in self-knowledge. We find out our weak points, we learn where we are strongest, we get to know what we possess of moral resource, we discover where we stand in the upward path. Our Father in heaven sets us in the world of temptation that we may come to know what we are. The knowledge is beyond price, for through self-knowledge, wisely used, comes self-conquest. 2. Then, in the second place, it is through temptation that there arises the strengthening of the moral nature. Mere innocence is not the highest moral state; and innocence does not grow into virtue until it has been exposed to temptation, and the right has been voluntarily chosen, and the wrong voluntarily eschewed. Go to the shed where a potter is working. See around him the products of his art. They are beautiful in form, in design. But take one into your hand. Ah! you have marred it; its shape is spoiled. The clay was soft. It has as readily taken the impress of your unskilled touch as it took the impress of the potter's skilful hand. Why? Because it has not yet been put in the fire to have its beauty made permanent. Similar is it with the soul. We should not have been even what we are, if we had not been tempted, and largely by the same means shall we come to be what we hope—souls perfected in goodness, possessors of a will whose currents, deep and strong, flow ever toward the right. 3. We come to the end of temptation—the creation of sympathy between man and man. Self-knowledge is good; moral strength is better; sympathy is best of all. And it is through similarity of experience that sympathy between man and man is produced. It counts for next to nothing that my neighbour sins in different ways from me. We both sin—that is the central fact. What I may feel with regard to his sin and its consequences is a different matter. They deserve denunciation, but he sympathy. Am I without a stain to cast stones at him? Ah, no! the Holiest this earth has seen was the friend of publicans and sinners. Like Him, I should sympathise with my sinful brethren; like Him, myself having suffered being tempted and suffering it every day I live, I should seek, by the power of sympathy, so sweetly strong, to succour them that are tempted. (*H. Varley, B.A.*) *True blessedness here and hereafter*:—The text is a Beatitude. It begins with blessed. We should all like to be blessed. What a more than golden word that "blessed" is! It begins the Psalms of David: there is sweetest poetry in it. It begins the sermon of the Son of David; it is the end of all holy teaching. "Happiness" is the earthly word; "blessedness" is the heavenly one. There are such persons as blessed men, or the eminently practical James would not have written concerning them. It is true the curse has fallen on the world, and man is born to endure toil and suffering in tilling a thorn-bearing earth, and earning his bread with the sweat of his face; but for all that, there are blessed men—men so blessed that the wilderness and the solitary place are glad for them, and by their presence the desert is made to rejoice and blossom as the rose. Great mistakes are made as to the persons who are happy and blessed. Some suppose that the wealthy must be blessed; but if their lives were written, it could be proved to a demonstration that some of those who have had the largest possessions have had the very least of blessedness, especially when those possessions have brought with them the curses of the oppressed and the wailings of the down-trodden. No, look not in gold mines for blessedness, for it gleams not among the nuggets. It cannot be gotten for all the treasures of the miser, or the wealth of nations. But, surely, it is to be found in positions of eminence and power. These are greatly coveted, and men will sell their souls to win them; but

I suppose from what I have read of history that if I were to select the most unhappy set of men beneath the vault of heaven one would only have to select statesmen, emperors, and kings. Not the high but the holy are blessed; not those who sit with the great, but those who serve with the good are marked out of the Lord as blessed. Nobler natures feel no greed for gold, and pine for no distinction of rank; but they count those blessed who know, and are stored with wisdom. But is it so? Doth he that increaseth knowledge increase joy? Doth he not the rather add to his sorrow? If knowledge were bliss the devil would be in heaven. But some think that surely blessedness may be had by a combination of dignity and wisdom and riches. Put these together, and a man might surely be blessed. And yet it does not seem to be so. I should think that no mortal that ever lived had finer opportunities than Solomon. He cast everything into the crucible, and he brought out of it, not gold, but ashes. "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity." No, you cannot find blessedness on a throne nor in making many books, nor in seeking out many inventions, nor in enjoying all luxuries. These things all cry, "It is not in me." If you want blessedness, hear him speak who knows. That is, hear the Holy Ghost speak by the mouth of His servant James: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation." I. Let us behold THE BLESSED IN THIS LIFE. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation." It does seem very startling at first sight that the blessed man should be described in this way. Notice, it does not say, "Blessed is the man that is tempted," nor "Blessed is the man that is beset by temptation." No. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation." That is to say, the man who bears up under it, survives it, is not led aside by it, but endures it as gold endures the fire. You need to have a religion which is tested every day in the week, and which stands you in good stead because it can endure the test. You are blessed if you have a religion which God gives, which God tries, which God sustains, which God accepts. As an uncultivated garden is no garden, so untried godliness is no godliness. A faith that will not bear strain and test is no faith. A love that cannot endure temptation is no love to God at all. The men who bear affliction in a gracious manner, these are the blessed people, for they have a patience that has been tested, a faith that has passed the ordeal, a love that has been more than a conqueror in trial. These according to our text are the blessed people. 1. And they are blessed among other things for this reason: because they have endured temptation through their love to God. To cease from evil ways because the Lord Jesus Christ has loved you and given Himself for you, and you have been led to put your sole trust in the merit of His precious blood—this is a genuine work of grace. 2. Then there arises out of the endurance of temptation a sense of God's acceptance. The text saith, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is approved": that is the new version, and a very correct one, too. Not so much when he *is* tried, but when he *has been* tried—when he has been put into the fining pot, and has come out warranted to be real unalloyed gold; when he is proved, and therefore approved, then he shall receive the crown of life." After the tried man has stood against temptation, God says of him, "Now I know that thou fearest Me," as He said concerning Abraham after He had tried him. "Now I know that thou fearest God." This approval of God breeds a holy delight in the soul. 3. There comes over the back of this a number of things to help to make such a man blessed: for he has great thankfulness in his soul. You remember Bunyan's description of the feelings of Christian when he had passed through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and was able to look back by the morning light. He was struck with awe to think that he had ever passed through such a war as that, with an abyss on one side and a quagmire on the other. The road was haunted with sprites and hobgoblins, and beset with traps and gins and snares beyond all count; and yet he had actually come through that way in safety. When he saw what he had escaped, what could he do but down on his knees and bless God with all his heart that he had been protected through so great a peril? It helps to make a man blessed when his mind is filled with holy gratitude to God who has preserved him. 4. Besides, another feeling comes over him—that of deep humility. "Oh," says he, "what a wonder of grace I am! However is it that I have escaped such peril? With such a base nature as mine, how have I been kept from destruction? I shall to-morrow perish and fall unless the Lord Himself be still my helper." Putting his trust in God, that sense of his own nothingness, accompanied with a sense of his perfect security in God, makes him feel exceedingly happy. 5. And, once more, he enjoys a fearlessness of heart. The forked tongue of slander has no power with him: he has an antidote against the venom of

malice. The noise and strife of this world can little distress him, for innocence walls him up against the onslaught of the enemy. He stands like a rock in the midst of the raging billows, for God has given him steadfastness of soul; and is not that blessedness? II. WHAT THE BLESSED MAN IS TO BE BY AND BY. 1. He shall receive a crown. That crown which is promised us is not for talk, nor thought, nor vow, but it records something done. It was something appreciated—appreciated by Him that gave the crown. It will be no small heaven for God Himself to appreciate our poor lives! It is our blessedness both now and for ever to be accepted in Christ Jesus. A crown meant reward. Now, in the gospel system there is room for a reward, though it is not of debt, but of grace. The child of God, like Moses, has "respect unto the recompense of the reward." He does not run to win a crown by his own merit, but he runs knowing that there will be a crown given to him according to the love and goodness of the God of grace. 2. Now go an inch farther in the text: "A crown of life." What must that be! What is life? To live means to be in health, to be in force, in joy, in fit condition, to have one's whole self in order, and to enjoy all that surrounds you with all that is within you. God will give to all His people by and by such a crown of life. There shall be no sickness, no weakness, no dulness, no emptiness, no sense of depletion, nor of want; we shall be for ever filled with all the fulness of God. There shall be no pain, no misery, but a plenitude of enjoyment at His right hand where there are pleasures for evermore. We shall possess and enjoy all that manhood can desire. Life shall crown all. All your life shall be crowned; and all the crown shall be life! "A crown of life." Does it not mean, however, as well a living crown? The crown they gave in the Olympic games soon faded. That bit of parsley, or olive, or laurel, was soon turned into faded leaves. But you shall have a living crown; that is to say, it shall never be taken from you, nor you from it. When yon sun grows pale with weariness; when his bright eye grows dim with age; when yonder moon shall redden into blood as her brightness is o'ershaded, then shall your crown be as resplendent as ever. Did you ever try to indulge a speculation as to what the crown of life shall be? I mean this: You have a bulb in your hand of an unknown plant. I have had several lately from Central Africa. The missionary said, "Put it in your stove-house"; and I did. It did not look to me worth a half a farthing; it was an uncomely root. But it has developed large green leaves; it is growing rapidly; and "it doth not yet appear what it shall be." I am speculating upon the colour of the flowers, and the form of the fruit. I guess by the delicate velvetness of its leaves that it is going to turn out something very remarkable; but I cannot prophesy what it will be. Man by nature is that uncomely bulb. When he dies, you know what a poor dried-up bulb he seems to those who lay him in his coffin. Yet even here, when God gives spiritual life, what a beautiful thing the Christian is! There is an amazing comeliness about the heavenly life even here below; yet we do not know what it is going to be. We know what spiritual life is, but we cannot guess what the flower of that life will be. Whatever it is to be, God will give that glory to those who by His grace endure temptation because they love Him. You gentlemen who believe in evolution, as I do not, tell us what a man will come to when God has sanctified him fully by His grace, and He has passed through ages of blessedness. What will he be when his life develops into the crown of life? We make poor guess-work of it. But I will tell you what I mean to do. I pray you follow me therein. I mean to go and see what this crown of life is like. We do not know what we shall be, but we have heard a soft whisper say, "When He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The discipline of temptation:*—We pray that we may not be led into temptation; and in using that prayer we acknowledge that it is an imperative duty not to go into temptation. And our Lord speaks more strongly of avoiding temptation than of almost any other duty, bidding us even cut off the right hand or pluck out the right eye, if the right hand or the right eye have proved a temptation. And our own experience agrees with this; and in too many instances where we have fallen, we are compelled to confess that we might have avoided the fall by avoiding the temptation. But still temptations are not scattered all about us without a purpose. As far as we can see, it is by temptations that we are educated. I do not mean that God could not educate us in any other way if He thought fit to do so; nor even that He does not educate some men altogether, and all men, in some degree, without temptations. But the exceptions are not to the point. If two men hold precisely the same principles, and mean to act in precisely the same way,

and if one has been tempted to forsake those principles, and has withstood the temptation, and the other has never been tempted at all, then the principles and character of the two are in reality quite different. I do not mean merely that you do not yet know whether the untempted man is thoroughly sincere or not. I mean more than that. I mean that the passage through temptation actually makes a change in the man. The very same principles which he held before he was tempted he may, to all appearance, hold still; but though they are the same in form, and if you were to put them into words, you would have to put them into the same words, they are not the same in reality. The passage through the fire of temptation has ennobled—has sanctified them. Of course it will be inevitable, if we are to be disciplined by temptation, that we shall sometimes fall. How often, must depend on the energy with which we fight. But what is the use of seeking palliations? Seek as we may, the fact remains that here was the means provided by the Providence of God for disciplining our souls; and, instead of using it as we ought, we have made it an occasion for doing ourselves harm. What is the use of thinking what we might have done if we had not been tempted? It is silly for a man to talk to his own heart in a tone which implies that he could have contrived a better arrangement of the circumstances of his own life; and that if he were left to arrange his own trials and his own temptations he could give himself a proper discipline without the same dangers. We must take the circumstances of our lives as we find them, and make the best use of them. And if we have failed to make the best use of them, we must still learn not to lay the fault on them; for whatever they were, we might as well have done the best that could be done. Even after you have fallen you may still make a better use of the temptation than trying to lay the fault upon it. You may seek out how far you can avoid it, and take care to do so. Why, if there were no danger where would be the soldier's honour or reward? where would be his means of proving his devotion to his duty? why should he even exist? And so too, without temptation, where would be the Christian's crown? or why should we be Christians at all? A general does not send a soldier whom he cannot trust into a service of difficulty. Neither does Christ employ servants whom He does not love on difficult acts of obedience. On the other hand, it is very important to notice that it is not every apparent victory over temptation that is a real victory. There are two ways of resisting and overcoming temptation. You may turn away from the tempter with a cheerful, resolute will, heartily throwing yourself into your duty, endeavouring to find there, not your duty only, but your happiness also, turning out of your head cheerfully but resolutely even the thought which hankers after what is wrong. Or you may resist the temptation, and even overcome it, with anger at your heart, and an eager longing for the forbidden pleasure still ruling your soul; with eyes looking back to what you are quitting, with discontent at the hard duty which has divided you from your wish, with secret complaining and bitterness at the hardness of your trials. Now this last way of overcoming temptation is not that which St. James declares to be blessed. The type of the character is Balaam, the wicked prophet. He obeyed; exactly obeyed what he was plainly commanded. But it is clear as day that his obedience was merely outward. He did not surrender himself heart and soul to the command. Was he much benefited by having overcome the temptation of Balak's offers? Or was he not rather hardened in a subtler but wickeder sinfulness? Yet this kind of victory is by no means uncommon. You are, for instance, plainly called to do some act of unselfishness. Your conscience points out to you that here is an occasion for self-sacrifice; perhaps not only points out that here is an occasion, but that here is a distinct call which you cannot rightly turn away from. You are too conscientious not to listen to the call. You sacrifice your own wish to the wish, the pleasure, the feelings of others. But in what spirit? How very natural is it to indemnify one's self, as it were, by cherishing an angry discontent at having been called on to make such a sacrifice; perhaps to despise the one who has benefited by it, even though he is not in the least degree conscious of the benefit; perhaps to long for some happy turn of accident that shall make the sacrifice unnecessary, and give one the double satisfaction both of enjoying one's wishes and of having sacrificed them; perhaps to brood over it often afterwards, and complain of one's lot, or even of life altogether, so full as it is of hardships like these. How can we expect that unselfishness like this will strengthen the character, will bring us nearer to God. But the same issue is also possible in fighting with other temptations—temptations to vanity, frivolity, idleness; to indulgence of bodily appetite; to pride; to love of power; to wrong ambition, may be resisted, and may be overcome; and yet he that

overcometh may not be blessed, because he has not overcome the inward enemy but only the outward. The evil spirit may have been driven out, and yet may have left behind him a spirit of discontent to keep his place; and that spirit, if left unmolested, shall do as much harm as the spirit that has been expelled. To overcome temptation, not in outer act merely, but with heart and soul, that is what wins the crown of life; the crown emphatically of life, for he who has passed through temptations victorious, he it is who emphatically lives. He has in him the richness of his own experience. He is not using words without meaning, or words with a vague, hazy, indistinct idea, when he speaks of the battle of the Christian, or of the help of his Redeemer. His principles are not mere sentiments, but living powers, whose strength has been tried and proved. His doctines are not mere forms of speech; they correspond with needs of his soul, which he has probed to the bottom in the hour of difficulty. The Bible is not to him a beautiful and awful book, full of wonderful promises which sound like words in a foreign tongue, full of awful threatenings which seem too fearful to be literally true; but a record of realities into which he has himself entered, a world of spirits where he can find his own place, see his own work, obtain his own helps. This is the crown which buds here and blossoms hereafter, and fills all the soul on which it falls with the power of its beauty; and this crown is given to him who, when temptations come, gives himself mind and soul, and will and heart, to fulfil the law of Christ. (*Bp. Temple.*) *Trials endured*:—1. Afflictions do not make the people of God miserable. There is a great deal of difference between a Christian and a man of the world: his best estate is vanity (Psa. xxxix. 5); and a Christian's worst is happiness. (1) Afflictions cannot diminish his happiness. In the greatest want of earthly things there is happiness, and comfort enough in a covenant-interest. (2) Sometimes afflictions increase their happiness, as they occasion more comfort and further experience of grace: God seldom afflicted in vain. They that count God their chiefest good know no other evil but the darkening of His countenance; in all other cases, "Blessed is he that endureth": they lose nothing by affliction but their sins. 2. Of all afflictions those are sweetest which we endure for Christ's sake. (1) That it be for Christ. (2) That your heart be right for Christ. The form of religion may many times draw a persecution upon itself, as well as the power; the world hateth both, though the form less. Oh! how sad is it that a man cometh to suffer, and he hath nothing to bear him out but an empty form. 3. Before crowning there must be a trial. The trial doth not merit heaven, but always goeth before it. Before we are brought to glory, God will first wean us from sin and the world, which the apostle calleth a being "made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. i. 12). He that passeth his life without trial knoweth not himself, nor hath opportunity to discover his uprightness. 4. It is good to oppose the glory of our hopes against the abasure of our sufferings. Here are trials, but we look for a crown of glory. 5. No enduring is acceptable to God but such as doth arise from love. The victory is less over outward inconveniences than inward lusts; for these, being more rooted in our nature, are more harldly overcome. (*T. Manton.*) *The blessedness of enduring temptation*:—I. BLESSED IS THE MAN THAT ENDURETH TEMPTATION! The same word means both trial and temptation. And it is not at all surprising that there should be but one expression for these two things, because though the things seem to be different, yet the difference is more in appearance than in reality. At all events, they generally accompany each other: trials, very commonly, prove temptations to sin; and temptations, when rightly viewed, are the very heaviest of all trials. The temptations, however, of which St. James is speaking were what we more usually denominate trials. They were the outward troubles and persecutions attending a Christian life in his days. Persecution became a temptation to the man to go back, to give up his Christian profession, and return to the world. I might specify many other things which are felt to be trials, and which actually are temptations. But these are sufficient to show how extensively the language of St. James may be applied. Let us, then, apply it to ourselves. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation! But let us come more particularly to religious trials. Every man among you knows, in his conscience, that he ought to seek, above all things, the salvation of his soul. You feel convinced, whenever you think upon these subjects, that it is your duty to repent, to believe in Christ Jesus, to lead a holy life, and to separate yourself, so far as may be practicable, from worldly and irreligious companions. But there are many difficulties attending such a course of life. Still, however, you know that these difficulties do

not alter the real state of the case. They may tempt you to disregard religion. II. THE CROWN OF LIFE WHICH IS HERE HELD FORTH TO THE MAN THAT ENDURETH TEMPTATION HAD BEEN PREVIOUSLY PROMISED, IT SHOULD SEEM, TO THEM THAT LOVE THE LORD. This is, in fact, but another expression describing the same characters. It will supply us, however, with further materials for examining whether we ourselves are of the happy number. Do we, then, love the Lord? Surely, if such be really our character, there will be some clear manifest tokens of this Divine affection visible in our conduct. Love is a feeling which cannot dwell in the heart without producing a perceptible influence upon a man's whole behaviour towards the person whom he loves. On this part of my subject let me give you one necessary caution. God must be loved according to His real character, and not according to any imaginary character which, in our ignorance, we may think fit to ascribe to Him. He must be loved as a God that hateth all sin, and as a God who has given His only Son to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Some think Him "a God all mercy"—too kind to punish a single sin. (*J. Jowett, M.A.*) *Strength through trial:*—The hardy fir-tree that stands the bitter blast on some mountain side is a nobler object than the delicate hot-house exotic. (*J. W. Hardman, LL.D.*) *Christ tried:*—It is recorded of the great soldier, the gallant Montrose, that, finding his followers ill provided with armour, he stripped off breast-plate and steel cap, with his stout leathern coat, and rode into battle in his bared shirt sleeves, at the head of his men, to show them that he scorned to use defences which they could not avail of. Even so our Great Captain laid aside the panoply of heaven, and as a man entered into the conflict. (*Ibid.*) *Trial increases usefulness:*—There is said to be at Birmingham a department where every rifle is tested before it is sent out. At Greenwich Observatory there is a room where the multitude of ships' chronometers are daily corrected and observed, until, being fully tested, they are sent forth as of value and satisfactory usefulness. (*Ibid.*) *Tried Christians useful:*—When Napoleon felt that the crisis had come at Waterloo, when the fate of the battle might be decided by one great effort, he ordered the Old Guard to advance, the tried veterans who had followed his eagles from the Nile to the walls of Moscow, and on whose courage and steadiness he could rely to the utmost. (*Ibid.*) *The flag nailed to the mast:*—At Trafalgar, Nelson ordered the flag of England to be nailed to the mast of his ship, so that it was not possible for it to be hauled down. Such should be the firm resolve of the Christian, as he reflects on the threefold array—the ranks of the world, the flesh, and the devil—drawn up against him. (*Ibid.*) *Blessing in trial:*—There are four possible experiences in regard to the trials of life. 1. They may fail of that which may be their best result. We may have the troubles of life—indeed, we must have them—and yet we may fail of the discipline. 2. They may be made seductions to evil, and yielded to. 3. They may be suffered just as brutes suffer pain. 4. They may be "endured." Blessed is the man who has this last experience, who accepts the troubles of life as trials, who endures them, going on his way of duty as speedily in the storm as in the sunshine, obeying the injunction, "Let those who weep be as though they wept not." These are the blessed ones. There is no blessing for the untried man, as there is no currency for the unstamped bullion—for the metal, however precious, which is not marked so as to show that is has been tested and is now approved. There is no blessing for the man who yields to temptation or fails under trial. There is no blessing to him who has brutal insensibility to the pains of trial, or unconsciousness of the process, as the anvil is unconscious of the blows of the hammer. But there is a blessing for the man who knows what is going forward; who understands the intent, and appreciates the object, and desires the result of the process. For when he has become approved, after the testing and by reason of the testing, "he shall receive the crown of life." (*C. F. Deems, D.D.*) *Advantage of temptation:*—I find it most true that the greatest temptation out of hell is to live without temptations; if any waters could stand they would rot; Faith is the better for the free air and the sharp winter storm in its face; grace withereth without adversity. The devil is but God's master-fencer, to teach us to handle our weapons. (*S. Rutherford.*) *The good life exposed to temptation:*—Let no man think himself to be holy because he is not tempted, for the holiest and highest in life have the most temptations. How much the higher a hill is, so much is the wind there greater; so, how much higher the life is, so much stronger is the temptation of the enemy. (*Wycliffe.*) *The need of testing:*—No chain is stronger than its weakest link; no boiler is stronger than its weakest plate; no character is stronger than its weakest point. (*F. M. Miller.*) *Divine testing:*—At certain

seasons the authorities at the mint go through a certain ceremony, which is to ascertain if the coin issued is true and genuine. So does God try us, to prove whether we be sterling metal, bearing His image and superscription, or base metal of the devil's coining. We have all read how they try the great guns before they use them in the Queen's service. So God tries us, to prove whether we are fit for the service of Christ's militant here on earth. As the brightest jewels have to be cut and ground, and some tried in a fierce fire, so the brightest gems, on the day when God makes up His jewels, will be those people who have suffered, and passed through the fire of affliction, of whom it can be said, "blessed is the man that endureth temptation." (*H. J. Wilmot Buxton, M.A.*) *Temptation does not create evil*:—The wandering Hindoo's pipe, that draws the serpents out of their holes, did not put them there, neither do the temptations which draw out the evil of the heart put the evil there, but only show it. Christ's scrip, with His own and His disciples' little store, did not make Judas the thief he was. It was his lust, his love of money, that made him gladly undertake the trust which, if he had known his own leanings, he would have declined. It was his covetousness, his love of money, which "is the root of all evil," that led him to pilfer from his Master's store. It was his "lust" that made him indignant that that large sum should be lavished on Christ's person, which he said would have been better spent upon the poor, but which he meant would have been better than either in his own hands. (*W. W. Champneys, M.A.*) *Benefit of adversity*:—A smooth sea never made a skilful mariner; neither do uninterrupted prosperity and success qualify for usefulness and happiness. The storms of adversity, like those of the ocean, rouse the faculties, and excite the inventions, prudence, skill, and fortitude of the voyager. The martyrs of ancient times, in bracing their minds to outward calamities, acquired a loftiness of purpose and moral heroism worth a lifetime of softness and security. *The benefits of affliction*:—Afflictions are God's most effectual means to keep us from losing our way to our heavenly rest. Without this hedge of thorns on the right and left we should hardly keep the way to heaven. If there be but one gap open, how ready are we to find it and turn out at it! When we grow wanton, or worldly, or proud, how doth sickness or other affliction reduce us? Every Christian, as well as Luther, may call affliction one of his best schoolmasters, and with David may say, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept Thy word." Many thousand recovered sinners may cry, O healthful sickness! O comfortable sorrows! O gainful hope! O enriching poverty! O blessed day that ever I was afflicted! Not only the green pastures and still waters, but the rod and staff, they comfort us. Though the Word and Spirit do the main work, yet suffering so unbolts the door of the heart that the Word hath easier entrance. (*R. Baxter.*) *Trial a source of fruitfulness*:—After a forest fire has raged furiously, it has been found that many pine-cones have had their seeds released by the heat, which ordinarily would have remained unsown. The future forest sprang from the ashes of the former. Some Christian graces, such as humility, patience, sympathy, have been evolved from the sufferings of the saints. The furnace has been used to fructify. **He shall receive the crown of life.**—*The crowning of patient endurance*:—I. Temptation, a testing, AN INEVITABLE EXPERIENCE, a necessity of our condition. Needful to prove us, and develop strength and symmetry of character. Teaches us to feel for others. II. Temptation to be STEADFASTLY ENDURED TILL CONQUERED. Yielding is weakening. Love endures, God's grace sustains. III. CROWNING OF THE CONQUEROR. Not of merit, but grace. (*J. M. Sherwood, D.D.*) *The tempted soul crowned*:—I. First of all, we shall take a view of THE TRIED BELIEVER, because he belongs to a very large class of God's family. The buffetings of Satan. What a mercy it is that all he can do is to buffet us. He has buffeted me about my belief. Ah, they are high doctrines, and crude notions. Then he will buffet the Church of God about their birthright. Ah, it is all presumption, he will tell you. How do you know that you are born of God? Go on to the blessings. Satan will buffet us about them. The promises, the spirit of adoption, the joys of God's salvation. Very precious all these; but has the devil never said to you, "These are only the movings of the natural passions"? Now I pass on from these things, though I might write a volume upon them, and look, under the term "tempted," at life's calamities, and exercises, and cares. But just go on to mark the exercise of experimental conflicts. I presume my hearers are fully aware that every corruption belonging to the old Adam nature is at war with, and will be at war with, every grace of the Holy Spirit. Now for the sustaining power by which we endure. Why have not you and I made shipwreck of faith? We would have done so long ago but for

that sustaining power of which the Lord spake by the prophet, "Fear not, for when thou passeth through the fire, I will be with thee, and the flames shall not kindle upon thee; and through the floods, they shall not overflow thee, I will uphold thee, I will sustain thee with the right hand of My righteousness." "Blessed is the man that endureth,"—patiently, with resignation, I may add with satisfaction. To endure with patience. "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good." To endure with resignation. "Good is the word of the Lord concerning me." To endure with anticipation. "When He has tried me, I shall come forth like gold.' This is what I call enduring; not merely bearing because I must bear, and cannot help myself, but approving the will of God; and the point I want to reach is that which I last named—satisfaction. My faith has got it, but my feelings have not. Well, then, I want to endure so as to suck some honey out, as Samson did. II. Now about THE HIGH ATTAINMENT. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him." With regard to the word "tried," I take a different view of it altogether to that which we have just indulged in with regard to temptation. I understood it in the very same way that I understand that portion of Scripture in which it is said, "It came to pass that the Lord tempted Abraham when he was tried"; and if you read the sequel, you can come to no other conclusion than that it means that He put his graces to the test; and I believe that all our temptations, all our trials, are intended for this very purpose, that the Spirit's graces may be put to the test as to whether they are genuine. You must be aware that there is much among professing multitudes in our day that is spurious. Well, now, how shall we know whether they are genuine or spurious? "When he is tried." There is a blessedness in this. The devil may take his bellows, and blow the fire, and bring his fuel, and ply his temptations—there is faith in lively exercise. "He is my Lord and my God." There is hope entering into that within the veil—there is love glowing, so that the very mention of the name of Jesus, so dear to me, brought a flood of tears of delight. So of all the other graces. I tell you, it is in this way that the believer is blessed as well as tried. His graces are tried, to see whether they are genuine; and if they are proved to be so, they will endure, they will shine brighter, after all they have been called to experience. Then mark the establishment, the establishment of the soul in every feature of vital godliness. That is true blessedness. I suppose you have read that sweet Scripture of the apostle, "It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, and not with meats." Now I meet with but few established Christians. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation." If temptations kill his religion, the sooner it is killed the better, but if his religion endure the temptation he shall get the blessedness, and stand fast in the Lord, in the power of His might. O how precious is Christ to such a soul! A word more here. The Divine glory is and must be thus promoted. Referring again to the good old patriarch, it is written, that he was "strong in faith, giving glory to God." III. Now ABOUT THE END. "When he is tried he shall receive the crown of life." "The crown of life." There are many crowns spoken of in the Scripture. The Church in the Apocalypse is exhorted to hold fast that which she had, that no man "take her crown"—her crown of distinction, and dignity, and attainment. Our Lord Himself was seen wearing many crowns—but these are not to our point. Then again He was crowned with thorns. What a mercy that you and I can never be crowned with them. He may mean that life which is manifested in this world first of all—and there is a crown—for if spiritual life be uppermost, and Divine life the life of God in the soul, it contains the idea of reigning—a crown—"The crown of life." A man may have mental life, but it is not worth calling a crown. He may be crowned in some attainments with honours, literary honours, and the like, but to have a crown of life is to have a life that is supernatural, the life of God in the soul—life that cannot live on earth without visiting heaven every day—a life that shall last for ever—a life that lives upon spiritual and eternal realities—a life of a dignified description. But I apprehend the precise meaning to be the crown of eternity which the apostle elsewhere calls a crown of glory. It cannot be withheld. What is that poor tired soul, tempted, harassed, ready to die in this wilderness journey to be crowned? Ah! but he must strive first, and he must strive lawfully. Just mark further here, that this crown is appointed and said in my text to be given. And who is it to be given by? "The Lord." The Lord hath promised it. He never promises without giving—His promises and performances are always inseparable. But do just mark the naming of the recipients—"Them that love Him." It is not to them that hate Him—it is "to them that love Him." It is not to them that care

nothing about Him—not to them that are strangers to Him—it is "to them that love Him." Ask then the question, Do I really love the Lord—love Him so as to take Him at His word—love Him so as to delight in no company like His—love Him so as to cleave to Him with purpose of heart—love Him so as to lay out my life to honour, and exalt, and glorify Him. (*J. Irons.*) *The crown of life:*—We always associate with the term "crown" the idea of living in power, affluence, honour, and glory. But such a life, the reward of the tried sufferer, does it lie on this or the other side of death? My friends, from facts which fall under our own observation, we learn, that as it seldom goes well with the ungodly to the end of his days, but punishment seizes him even here below, so the afflictions of the righteous often reach their termination on earth, and he receives a partial recompense for the sufferings he has undergone in earthly prosperity. But will such instances authorise us to say that he who has been proved in tribulation, who has kept the faith, and exercised patience under the chastening hand of God, will be certainly recompensed by a day of sunshine and prosperity, and at last succeed in his wishes and undertakings, and that this will form "the crown of life" of which our text speaks? God has not promised the reward of earthly prosperity to those who love Him, nor do the Scriptures term it a crown of life. Must we then say that it is delayed till after the death of the Christian sufferer or conqueror? It is true that St. Paul says, (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8). But he had referred just before, in explicit terms, to his approaching death. "The time of my departure is at hand"; and thus the crown of righteousness was his consolation, when he had nothing more to expect in and from this earthly life. Yet do not the beatitudes at the beginning of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount relate to the present life? and does not St. Paul declare "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come?" "He that believeth on the Son of God *hath* everlasting life." Yes, such is the fact. Have we learned in our humiliation to glory in our exaltation, and in our exaltation to glory in our humiliation? Do we endure the manifold temptations to which we are exposed, and preserve our faith unimpaired? How glorious is the crown of life, even already on our heads, invisible to men of the world, who are sensible only of external pomp and splendour, but visible to the children of God, to whom Divine wisdom is justified in all her ways. Only let this crown adorn us, and we will consent to lie in the dust, the scorn and by-word of the people. Our apostle was stoned to death; but among the martyrs his countenance would appear like that of the first martyr, Stephen, "as the face of an angel." That was his crown here below. That adorable head, which on earth had not a place where to lay itself, wore no visible crown but a crown of thorns; but those who looked upon it with the eye of faith, beheld it still replendent with the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, even when He hung upon the Cross; and that was His crown even on earth. But at the right hand of God His crown shines still more gloriously; and there also the crown of the Christian will shine with its full lustre. (*B. Jacobi.*)

Vers. 13–15. **Let no man say, . . . I am tempted of God.**—*The temptation not from God:*—I. THE CHARACTER GIVEN OF GOD. 1. "God cannot be tempted of evil." (1) The absolute and infinite self-sufficiency of His blessedness. That blessedness is altogether independent of every other being whatever besides Himself. It is full; incapable of either diminution or increase: springing as it does from the infinite perfection of His own immutable nature. He can never have anything for which to hope; and never anything to fear. (2) He is placed beyond all such possibility by the absolute perfection of His moral nature. "God cannot be tempted with evil." His nature is necessarily and infinitely opposed to everything of the kind; and to such a nature what is sinful or impure never can present aught capable of exerting even the remotest influence. 2. "Neither tempteth He any man." (1) God tempts no man, by presenting to him inducements, motives, persuasives, to sin. (2) God tempts no man by any direct inward influence; by infusing evil thoughts, inclinations, and desires. (3) God "tempteth not any man" by placing him in circumstances in which he is laid under a natural necessity of sinning. II. Proceed we now to THE ADMONITION FOUNDED ON WHAT IS SAID OF GOD:—"Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God"; "for God tempteth no man:" or to put it according to the order of thought we have chosen to follow—"God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man: let no man therefore say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man." It is because every such

thought of God is impious, that the saying is condemned as impious. The delusion before us is one of the most fearful palliations of sin, and opiates to the conscience, that the deceitful heart of man has ever suggested. But, if conscience is allowed to speak in sincerity, its utterance will be—"I am a voluntary sinner. No extraneous force has kept me back from good; no such force has compelled me to evil. I have followed my own inclinations. My heart and my will have been in all the evil I have done. It is all my own." 1. Let the unbelieving sinner beware of imagining that the guilt of his rejecting the gospel lies anywhere else than with himself. 2. There is one view in which you would do well to remember God "cannot be tempted with evil." He can never be induced to act, in any step of His procedure, inconsistently with any attribute of His character, or, in a single jot or tittle, to sacrifice the claims of the purest moral rectitude. III. THE TRUE NATURE OF TEMPTATION. "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." In this description temptation is to be understood as relating to the state of the mind between the moment of the first entrance of the sinful thought, and the actual commission of the evil;—the state of the mind while the enticement is working within among the hidden desires and appetencies of the heart, exerting there its seductive influence. "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust." This is evidently meant to be emphatic. It refers back to the preceding verse—"Let no man say, I am tempted of God": God "tempteth not any man." The "lust" by which he is tempted, is not of God: it is "his own lust." And all evil that is in man is his own. Within our own hearts are seated many evil desires. The devil needs not introduce them. There they are. He acts upon them, no doubt, in his own mysterious and insidious way. But the extraneous operations of a tempter are not at all required to stir up their evil exercise. They work of themselves. From all the objects around us, that are fitted to gratify those desires, our senses are so many inlets of temptation to our hearts. Nor are even our senses necessary to the admission of temptation. The imagination can work independently of them. And both in waking and in sleeping hours, many a time is it busy in summoning tempting scenes before them. The principle of the words before us may be applied alike to prosperity and adversity. In adversity, "our own lusts" may tempt us to "charge God foolishly," and that too both in our hearts and with our lips; and thus to give sinful indulgence to ungodly tempers of mind. Then again, in the time of prosperity; "our own lust" may often tempt us to the abuse of it. We may be led to forget God, at the very time when His accumulated kindnesses give Him the stronger claim on our grateful and devout remembrance. We may give, in our hearts, the place of the Giver to His gifts. IV. THE FEARFUL CONSEQUENCES OF YIELDING TO TEMPTATION. "When lust hath conceived." The obvious meaning of the figurative allusion is, that when the evil desire is admitted into the mind, and, instead of being resisted, prayed against, and driven out, is retained, fostered, indulged, and through dwelling upon the object of it, grows in strength, and at length is fully matured, it will come forth in action; as after the period of gestation and growth, the child in the womb comes to the birth. The lust, having thus conceived, "bringeth forth sin"; that is, produces practical transgression—sin in the life—actual departure from the way of God's commandments. "And sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." That God's righteousness may not only condemn justly, but appear as condemning justly, the sentence is thus connected with the act—with the effect and manifestation of the evil principle. Bnt the very language implies that the sin did not begin with the act: it is finished in the act; and the evil of the act concentrates in it all the previous evil of the thoughts, desires, and motives from which it arose, and by which it was ultimately matured into action. The "death"—that death which is "the wages of sin"—follows on the commission of it, as surely as, in nature, the birth follows the conception. V. THE IMPORTANCE OF FORMING AND CHERISHING RIGHT, AND OF AVOIDING WRONG, CONCEPTIONS ON THIS SUBJECT. "Do not err, my beloved brethren." It is as if the apostle had said—"Beware of mistakes here." And certainly there are few subjects on which it is of more essential consequence to have correct ideas, or on which misapprehensions are more perilous. The thought that is specially reprobated in the passage which has been under review is one which cannot fail to affect all the principles, and feelings, and practices of the Christian life. It affects our views of God: and these lie at the foundation of all religion. According as they are right or wrong, must our religion be right or wrong. It must equally affect our views of ourselves—of ourselves as sinners; inasmuch as all the penitential humiliation, all the contrite broken-heartedness, on

account of our sins, which we ever ought to feel, lose entirely their ground, and are inevitably gone, the moment we say, or think, that "we are tempted of God"—that in any way our sin and guilt are attributable to Him. It must, in the same way, affect our conceptions of sin itself; of its "exceeding sinfulness" and unutterable guilt. And thus it will affect our views of our need of a Saviour; and especially of such a Saviour, and such a salvation, as the gospel reveals. 1. Let believers be impressed with the necessity of unceasing vigilance over their own hearts. Their worst enemies are in their own bosoms. 2. Let all consider the necessity of the heart being right with God. It is only in a holy heart, a heart renewed by the Spirit, a heart of which the lusts are laid under arrest, and crucified, that He can dwell. 3. Ponder seriously the certain consequences of unrepented and unforgiven sin: and by immediate recourse to the Cross, and to the blood there shed for the remission of sins, shun the fearful end which otherwise awaits you. (*R. Wardlaw, D.D.*) *The workings of sin*:—I. IT REMINDS US OF THE DEPRAVITY OF HUMAN NATURE. II. WE ARE TAUGHT HOW SURELY THE EVIL PRINCIPLE WILL WORK IN THE HEART, IF UNCHECKED AND UNRESTRAINED, TILL IT HAS BROUGHT FORTH FRUIT UNTO DEATH. Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. It is the internal desire which gives temptation its power over man. Were there no appetite for the intoxicating liquor, the cup which contains it would be offered in vain. Were there no covetous desire, the prospect of gain would be no temptation to deviate from the path of rectitude. In every case it is the state of the heart which gives to temptation its power to subdue. Its suddenness may surprise into transgression, but when its success is owing entirely to this circumstance, repentance may be expected quickly to arise. The case supposed in the text is not of this nature. The temptation is embraced and followed. The sinner is "drawn away of his own lust and enticed" to his ruin. The stronger the sinful propensity has become by indulgence, the greater is the power which every corresponding temptation has to overcome him. He is the less disposed, and therefore the less able to resist. Pleasure in some form is the bait that hides the hook by which he is drawn and enticed. The death which is the end of sin will therefore be of as long duration as the life which is the fruit of holiness. It will not be an arbitrary undeserved punishment, but the wages of sin, its proper desert. Such is the death which sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth. III. WE LEARN HOW EASILY GOD CAN BRING SIN TO LIGHT. Should sin escape detection in this life, we know that nothing can be concealed from the eye of God, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of all hearts. The day shall declare every man's work of what sort it is. Every one must give an account of himself to God, must narrate his own proceedings, and unfold his own character, before an assembled universe. IV. THE IMPORTANCE OF SUPPRESSING THE FIRST RISINGS OF EVIL IN THE HEART, AND GUARDING AGAINST THE FIRST STEP IN A WRONG COURSE. V. WE LEARN THAT NOTHING CAN BE MORE WRONG THAN FOR ANY MAN TO THROW THE BLAME OF HIS SINS UPON GOD. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man." The all-wise, pure, perfect, self-sufficient, almighty Creator and Ruler of the universe can be under no temptation to evil, neither can He place temptation in the way of any one to induce him to sin. This would be to act in direct contrariety to His own nature. A wicked man may say, "If God has given me such passions how can I help being led astray by them?" God has not given you such passions; you have given them to yourself. The desires He gave you were needful to the great purposes of human existence. Without them the powers of man could not be called into action. You have perverted them, and allowed them to gain the mastery over reason, conscience, and religion. Suppose a friend recommended to you a servant whom he had uniformly found, after a long trial, faithful and obedient, and you had spoiled that servant, after taking him into your service, by every unwarrantable indulgence, till he had tyrannised over you, and wasted your property, would you have any right to complain of your friend for recommending him, would not the blame rest entirely with yourself? Everything becomes a temptation to a depraved heart—prosperity or adversity; wealth or poverty; success or disappointment. On the other hand, "All things work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to His purpose." VI. Finally, WE LEARN, THAT SUCH BEING THE DEPRAVITY OF MAN, THERE IS NO SECURITY FROM THE RUIN WHICH SIN WILL INEVITABLY BRING UPON THE TRANSGRESSOR, BUT IN THAT COMPLETE RENOVATION OF OUR NATURE WHICH IN SCRIPTURE IS CALLED REGENERATION—A NEW CREATION. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh"—corrupt in its tenden-

cies. But, "whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin because he is born of God." (*Essex Remembrancer.*)

The sinner's progress:—Archbishop Trench points out that many words, which when first used had an innocent and even commendable meaning, have come by use to carry a doubtful or malignant sense; and in this degradation of our words he sees a proof and illustration of human depravity. The word "temptation," both in Greek and English, is a case in point. According to its derivation and original use, the word simply means "test," whatever tends to excite, to draw out and bring to the surface, the hidden contents of the heart, whatever serves to indicate the ruling bent. But in process of time the word has come to have a darker significance. For if there is much that is good in us, there is also much that is evil. And because, in their intercourse with each other, men are too often bent on provoking that which is evil in each other, rather than on eliciting and strengthening that which is good, the word "temptation" has sunk from its original plane, and has come to signify mainly such testings and trials of character as are designed to draw out the evil that is in us; trials and tests skilfully adapted to our besetting infirmities, and likely to develop the lower and baser qualities of our nature. It is because of this double meaning of the word that we meet in Scripture such apparently contradictory phrases as, "Lead us not into temptation," and, "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." It is in this double meaning of the word, moreover, that we find the key to the apparently contradictory statements that God does tempt men, and that He does not tempt them. He does tempt us all in the sense that He puts us all to the proof, and compels us at times to see what manner of men we are. But if, in this sense, God tempts every man, there is a sense in which "He tempts no man." For it is never the design of the trials to which He puts us to bring out and confirm that which is evil in us. It is always His purpose to bring out and confirm that which is good in us; or, if He show us wherein we are weak, it is not that we may remain weak and foolish, but that we may seek and find strength and wisdom in Him. When we have fallen into "temptation," in the bad sense of that word—when, that is, we have yielded to an evil influence, and have suffered our baser passions to be excited—we are apt to say, "I am tempted of God," to plead: "Well, after all, *He* made me what I am. Am *I* to blame for my passionate temperament, or for the strength and fierceness of my desires?" Or, again, we say: "Circumstances were against me. The opportunity was too tempting, my need or my craving was too importunate, to be resisted. And are not our circumstances and condition appointed by Him?" Thus we charge God foolishly, knowing and feeling all the while that it is we ourselves who are to blame whenever the lower part of our nature is permitted a supremacy against which the higher part protests. God tempts no man, affirms St. James, and assigns as a reason, "for God is unversed in evil," or, "God is incapable of evil," or, "God is untemptable with evil"; for in these three several ways this one word is translated. His implied argument is sufficiently clear, however we may render his words. What he assumes is, "Every one who tempts another to do evil must have some evil in his own nature. But there is no shadow or taint of evil in God, and therefore it is impossible that God should tempt any man." But if the evil temptations we have to encounter do not come from God, whence do they come? St. James replies, "Every man is tempted when he is drawn aside of his own lust, and enticed"—the man's lust being here conceived of as a harlot who lavishes her blandishments upon him; "then the lust, having conceived, bringeth forth sin; and the sin, when it is mature, bringeth forth death." The origin of sin is in man's own breast, in his own hot and extravagant desires for any kind of temporal or sensual good; and the apostle traces the sinner's career through the successive steps that lead down to death. 1. First, the man is drawn aside. James conceives of him as occupied with his daily task, busily discharging the duties of his daily calling. While he is thus engaged, a craving for some unlawful or excessive gratification, for a gain that cannot be honestly secured, or an indulgence which cannot be taken soberly and in the fear of God, springs up within his mind. The craving haunts his mind, and takes form in it. He bends his regards on it, and is drawn towards it. At first, perhaps, his will is firm, and he refuses to yield to its attraction. But the craving is very strong; it touches him at his weak point. And when it comes back to him again and again, it swells and grows into what St. James calls a "lust." It is "his own lust," the passion most native to him, and most potent with such as he—the love of gain, or the love of rule, or the love of distinction, or some affection of a baser strain. For a time he may resist its fascination; but ere

long his work is laid aside, the claims of duty are neglected, the warnings of conscience unheeded. All he means is to get a nearer view of this strange, alluring visitor, to lift its veil, to see what it is like and for what intent it beckons him away. And so he takes his first step: he is drawn aside from the clear and beaten path of duty. 2. Then he is enticed, "allured," as the Greek word implies, "with pleasant baits." His craving waxes stronger, the object of desire more attractive, as he advances. All specious excuses—all that moralists have allowed or bold transgressors have claimed—are urged upon him, until at last his scruples are overborne, and he yields himself a willing captive to his lust. 3. Then lust "conceives." The will consents to the wish: the evil desire grows toward an evil deed. He can know no rest till his craving be gratified. The good work in which he was occupied looks tame and wearisome to him. He is fevered by passion, and absorbed in it. 4. Having conceived, "lust bringeth forth sin." The bad purpose has become a bad deed, and the bad deed is followed by its natural results. Coming to the light, his evil deeds may be reproved. When the sin is born, the man may recognise his guilt. He may repent, and be forgiven and restored. 5. But if he do not turn and repent, the last step will be taken, and sin, being matured, will bring forth death. Action will grow into habit, the sinful action into a habit of sinning. As sin grows and matures, it will rob him of his energy. He will no longer make a stand against temptation. He will wholly surrender himself to his lust, until all that makes him man dies out of him, and only the fierce, brutal craving remains. Hogarth has left us a familiar series of pictures entitled "The Rake's Progress," in which the career of a profligate spendthrift is sketched from its commencement to its close. Were I an artist, I would paint you a similar series on a kindred but wider theme—the Sinner's Progress. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *Temptations to evil not from God:*—Now, affliction is an evil of which God Himself is the author, very consistently with the perfect purity of His nature, and with the tenderest compassion for His servants: "Whom He loveth, He rebuketh and chasteneth"; and the design is worthy of supreme goodness as well as rectitude, for it is to try the virtues of the afflicted in order to strengthen them, that they may be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. i. 7). But there is another kind of temptation here spoken of, of which God is not the author or cause. The meaning of this, certainly, is a solicitation to sin; when the intention is not to prove the sincerity of feeble virtue in order to confirm and increase it, but to subvert and destroy it; to draw the weak and unwary into wickedness which leadeth to their ruin. This is what the perfectly holy and good God is not capable of. I. THAT GOD IN ALL HIS WORKS AND WAYS, THE WHOLE OF HIS ADMINISTRATION TOWARDS MANKIND, STANDETH PERFECTLY CLEAR OF TEMPTING THEM TO MORAL EVIL. He is not in the least degree, or by a fair construction, in any part of His conduct, accessary to any one of their offences. But all religion resteth upon this principle, utterly inconsistent with His tempting any man or any creature, that God is only pleased with rational agents doing that which is right, and displeased with their doing what is wrong in a moral sense: if that be denied, piety is entirely subverted, and all practice of virtue on the foundation of piety. A being who is wholly incapable of any moral turpitude, cannot solicit any others to it, nor give them the least countenance in it, which must always necessarily suppose a corrupt affection. Another of the Divine attributes is goodness, equally essential to his character, but if God be good, He cannot tempt any man. 2. Let us proceed to consider the works of God which relate to man, and we shall be convinced that far from having a tendency, or showing a design, to draw him into sin, which is tempting him, on the contrary, they provide against it in the best manner. And, first, if we look into the human constitution, which is the work of God, this sense of right and wrong discovereth itself early; it is not the result of mature reflection, close reasoning, and long study, but it plainly appeareth that the gracious author of our being intended to prevent us with it, that we should not be led astray before our arriving at the full exercise of our understanding. To this sense of good and evil, there is added in our constitution a strong enforcement of the choice, and the practice of the former, in that high pleasure of self-approbation which is naturally and inseparably annexed to it. Must it not be acknowledged, then, that the frame of our nature prompteth to the practice of virtue at its proper end, and that the designing cause of it did not intend to tempt us to evil, but to provide against our being tempted? It is true that liberty is a part of the constitution, which importeth a power of doing evil, and by which it is that we are rendered capable of it. This, as well as the other capacities of our nature, is derived from God; but there is no rational pre-

tence for alleging that gift to be a temptation, because liberty is not an inclination to evil, but merely the mind's power of determining itself to that, or the contrary, according as the motives to the one or the other should appear strongest; and that the author of the constitution hath cast the balance on the side of virtue, we may see from what hath been already said, since He hath given us virtuous instincts, with a sense of moral obligations, and added a very powerful sanction to them. Besides, liberty is absolutely necessary to the practice of virtue, as well as to the being of moral evil; nor could we without it have been capable of rational happiness. 3. Again, if we consider the administration of providence, and the Divine conduct towards all men, we shall find that the same design is regularly pursued by methods becoming the wisdom of God, and best suited to our condition; the design, I mean, not of tempting us to sin, but preserving us from it. As God sent men into the world, a species of rational beings, fitted by the excellent faculties wherewith He endued them for rendering Him very important service, and enjoying a great measure of happiness, so He constantly careth for that favourite workmanship of His hands. Of all the nations of men who are made to dwell on the face of the earth, none are without witness of their Maker's mercies, for He continually doth them good, "sending them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, and filling their hearts with food and gladness." Now if such kindness be the character of the Divine administration, what is the tendency of it? Is it to tempt men, to lead them to sin, which is rebellion against Himself, and against their own reason? But when men had wilfully corrupted their ways, and turned the bounty of God into lasciviousness, Providence hath sometimes interposed in a different manner, that is, by awful judgments suddenly spread over nations or cities. 4. And, lastly, if we consider the revelation of the gospel, and that whole Divine scheme contained in it, which God in love to mankind hath formed for our salvation, we must see that the whole design of it is directly opposite to the design of tempting; it is to turn every one of us from our iniquities. But for the general tenor of the Divine administration towards men, it designedly favoureth their escape from temptations, and directeth them to the paths of virtue (1 Cor. x. 13). Some, indeed, to shun the dangerous mistake of imputing sin and temptation to God as in any respect its cause, have run into the opposite equally absurd extreme of withdrawing moral evil altogether from under God's government of the world, and deriving it from an original independent evil principle; which scheme, as it destroyeth the true notion of vice representing it not as the voluntary act of imperfect intelligent beings, but as flowing from an independent necessity of nature. The generality of Christians, owning the unity of God, do also acknowledge His perfect purity and goodness, and in words, at least, deny Him to be the author of sin: but I am afraid the opinions received among some of them are not perfectly consistent with these true principles. For instance, to represent the nature of men as so corrupted, without any personal fault of theirs, that they are under a fatal necessity of sinning, and that it is utterly impossible for them to do anything which is good. What thoughts can a man have of this, but that it is the appointed condition of his being, to be resolved ultimately into the will of his Maker, just like the shortness of his understanding, the imperfection of his senses, or even the frailty of his body? The counsels of God concerning men's sins, and the agency of His providence about them, not in overruling the issue, but in ascertaining and by its influence determining them, as intending events, ought also to be considered with the utmost caution. 1. And, first of all, that God is not tempted with evil, neither tempteth any man, tendeth to preserve in our minds the highest esteem and reverence for Him. It is not possible for us to have a veneration for a tempter. 2. This doctrine tendeth to beget and confirm in us an utter abhorrence of sin, because it is the thing God hateth, and will have nothing to do, no kind of communication with it. II. The second instruction relating to temptations, now to be considered, amounteth to this, that the true and most useful account of the origin of sin to every particular person, that which really is the spring of prevailing temptation, IS HIS OWN LUST; but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. 1. What is meant by lust. To understand this we must look into the inferior part of the human constitution. Since it pleased God to form man as he is, compounded of flesh and spirit, it was necessary there should be in his nature affections suitable to both. This leadeth us to a true notion of what the apostle calleth lust; it signifieth the whole of those affections and passions which take their rise from the body and the animal part of our nature, and which terminate in the enjoyments and conveniences of our present state, as distinguished from the moral powers and

pleasures of the mind, and the perfection of them, which requireth our chief application as being our principal concern and ultimate happiness. That inferior part of our constitution, in itself innocent and necessary for such beings, yet giveth the occasion whereby we, abusing our liberty, are drawn away and enticed to evil by various ways; such as, vehement desires beyond the real value of the objects; an immoderate indulgence in the gratification of those desires, either in instances which are prohibited by reason and the laws of God, or even within the licensed kinds, above the proper limits which the end of such gratification hath fixed; all tending to weaken the devout and virtuous affections which are the glory of our nature and the distinguishing excellence of man. Other affections also tempt us, as sorrow, which often through our weakness exceedeth in proportion the event which is the occasion of it. 2. To consider how men are tempted by lust, being drawn away and enticed. And here what I would principally observe is, that lusts are only the occasions or temptations to moral evil, not necessitating causes. The mind is free, and voluntarily determineth itself upon the suggestions of appetites and passions, not irresistibly governed by them; to say otherwise, is to reproach the constitution and the author of it; and for men to lay upon Him the blame of their own faults, which yet their consciences cannot help taking to themselves. Let us reflect on what passeth in our own heart on such occasions, to which none of us can be strangers; and we shall be convinced that we have the power of controlling the inclinations and tendencies which arise in our mind, or not consenting to them, and a power of suspending our consent till we have farther considered the motives of action, and that this is a power often exerted by us. The most vehement desires of meat and drink are resisted upon an apprehension of danger; the love of money and the love of honour are checked, and their strongest solicitations sometimes utterly denied, through the superior force of contrary passions, or upon motives of conscience. 3. To show, that in the account which the text giveth, we may rest our inquiry, as to all the valuable purposes of it, concerning the origin of sin in ourselves. The true end of such inquiry is our preservation and deliverance from sin, that we may know how to avoid it, or repent of it when committed; excepting so far as they contribute to those ends, speculations about it are curious but unprofitable. What I have just now hinted directeth us to the proper application of this subject. 1. And, first, upon a review of the whole progress of temptation from the first occasion of it to the last unhappy effect, the finishing of sin, which, I suppose, we are all agreed is the just object of our deepest concern, we may see what judgment is to be made, and where we ought to lay the blame. 2. From this doctrine of the apostle which I have endeavoured to explain, we see where our greatest danger is of being led into sin, and whence the most powerful and prevailing temptations arise, that is, from the lusts of the heart. 3. And therefore, thirdly, if we would maintain our integrity, let us keep the strictest watch over our own appetites and passions, and here place our strongest, for it will be the most effectual defence. (*J. Abernethy, D.D.*)

The sins of men not chargeable upon God, but upon themselves:—Next to the belief of a God, and His providence, there is nothing more fundamentally necessary to the practice of a good life than the belief of these two principles. First, that God is not the author of sin, that He is in no way accessary to our faults, either by tempting or forcing us to the commission of them. For if He were, they would not properly be sins, for sin is a contradiction to the will of God; but supposing men to be either tempted or necessitated thereto, that which we call sin would either be a mere passive obedience to the will of God, or an active compliance with it, but neither way a contradiction to it. Nor could these actions be justly punished; for all punishment supposeth a fault, and a fault supposeth liberty and freedom from force and necessity; so that no man can be justly punished for that which he cannot help, and no man can help that which he is necessitated to. And though there were no force in the case, but only temptation, yet it would be unreasonable for the same person to tempt and punish. Secondly, that every man's fault lies at his own door, and he has reason enough to blame himself for all the evil that he does. And this is that which makes men properly guilty, that when they have done amiss, they are conscious to themselves it was their own act. I. THAT GOD DOTH NOT TEMPT ANY MAN TO SIN. 1. The proposition which the apostle here rejects, and that is, that God tempts men, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God." Now, that we may the more distinctly understand the meaning of the proposition, which the apostle here rejects, it will be very requisite to consider what temptation is, and the several sorts and kinds of it. Temptation does always imply something of danger. And men are thus tempted, either from them-

selves, or by others; by others, chiefly these two ways. First, By direct and downright persuasion to sin. And to be sure God tempts no man this way. He offers no arguments to man to persuade him to sin; He nowhere proposeth either reward or impunity to sinners; but, on the contrary, gives all imaginable encouragement to obedience, and threatens the transgression of His law with most dreadful punishments. Secondly, men are likewise tempted, by being brought into such circumstances, as will greatly endanger their falling into sin, though none persuade them to it. The allurements of the world are strong temptations; riches, honours, and pleasures are the occasions and incentives to many lusts. And, on the other hand, the evils and calamities of this world, especially if they threaten or fall upon men in any degree of extremity, are strong temptations to human nature. That the providence of God does order, or at least permit, men to be brought into these circumstances which are such dangerous temptations to sin, no man can doubt, that believes His providence to be concerned in the affairs of the world. All the difficulty is, how far the apostle does here intend to exempt God from a hand in these temptations. Now, for the clearer understanding of this it will be requsiite to consider the several ends which those who tempt others may have in tempting them; and all temptation is for one of these three reasons. First, for the exercise and improvement of men's graces and virtues. And this is the end which God always aims at, in bringing good men, or permitting them to be brought, into dangerous temptations. And this certainly is no disparagement to the providence of God, to permit men to be thus tempted, when He permits it for no other end but to make them better men, and thereby to prepare them for a greater reward. And this happy issue of temptations to good men the providence of God secures to them either by proportioning the temptation to their strength; or, if it exceed that, by ministering new strength and support to them, by the secret aids of His Holy Spirit. And where God doth secure men against temptations, or support them under them, it is no reflection at all upon the goodness or justice of His providence to permit them to be thus tempted. Secondly, God permits others to be thus tempted, by way of judgment and punishment, for some former great sins and provocations which they have been guilty of (Isa. vi. 10). So likewise (Rom. i. 24) God is said to have given up the idolatrous heathen "to uncleanness, to vile and unnatural lusts" (Rom. 28; 2 Thess. ii. 11). But it is observable, that, in all these places which I have mentioned, God is said to give men up to the power of temptation, as a punishment of some former great crimes and provocations. And it is not unjust with God thus to deal with men, to leave them to the power of temptation, when they had first wilfully forsaken Him; and in this case God doth not tempt men to sin, but leaves them to themselves, to be tempted by their own hearts' lusts; and if they yield and are conquered, it is their own fault. Thirdly, the last end of temptation which I mentioned is to try men, with a direct purpose and intention to seduce men to sin. Thus wicked men tempt others, and thus the devil tempts men. But thus God tempts no man; and in this sense it is that the apostle means that "no man when he is tempted, is tempted of God." God hath no design to seduce any man to sin. 2. I now proceed to the second thing which I propounded to consider, viz., the manner in which the apostle rejects this proposition, "Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God." By which manner of speaking he insinuates two things. First, that men are apt to lay their faults upon God. For when he says, "Let no man say" so, he intimates that men were apt to say thus. It is not unlikely that men might lay the fault upon God's providence, which exposed them to these difficult trials, and thereby tempted them to forsake their religion. But however this be, we find it very natural to men to transfer their faults upon others. They think it is a mitigation of their faults, if they did not proceed only from themselves, but from the violence and instigation of others. But, especially, men are very glad to lay their faults upon God, because He is a full and sufficient excuse, nothing being to be blamed that comes from Him. Secondly, this manner of speech, which the apostle here useth, doth insinuate further to us, that it is not only a false, but an impious assertion, to say that God tempts men to sin. 3. Third thing I propounded to consider; namely, The reason or argument which the apostle brings against this impious suggestion; that "God cannot be tempted with evil"; and therefore no man can imagine that He should tempt any man to it. First, consider the strength and force of this argument: and—First, we will consider the proposition upon which this argument is built, and that is, that "God cannot be tempted by evil." He is out of the reach of any temptation to evil. For, first, He hath no temptation to it from His own inclination. The holy and pure

nature of God is at the greatest distance from evil, and at the greatest contrariety to it. He is so far from having any inclination to evil, that it is the only thing in the world to which He hath an irreconcilable antipathy (Psa. v. 4; Hab. i. 13). Secondly, there is no allurement in the object to stir up any inclination to Him towards it. Thirdly, neither are there external motives and considerations that can be imagined to tempt God to it. All arguments that have any temptation are founded either in the hope of gaining some benefit, or in the fear of falling into some mischief or inconvenience. Now the Divine nature, being perfectly happy, and perfectly secured in its own happiness, is out of the reach of any of these temptations. 2. Consider the consequences that clearly follow from it, that because God cannot be tempted with evil, therefore He cannot tempt any man to it. For why should He desire to draw men into that which He Himself abhors, and which is so contrary to His own nature and disposition? Bad men tempt others to sin, to make them like themselves, and that with one of these two designs; either for the comfort or pleasure of company, or for the countenance of it, that there may be some kind of apology and excuse for them. And when the devil tempts men to sin, it is either out of direct malice to God, or out of envy to men. But the Divine nature is full of goodness, and delights in the happiness of all His creatures. His own incomparable felicity has placed Him as much above any temptation to envying others as above any occasion of being contemned by them. Now, in this method of arguing, the apostle teacheth us one of the surest ways of reasoning in religion; namely, from the natural notions which men have of God. Inferences: First, let us beware of all such doctrines as do any ways tend to make God the author of sin; either by laying a necessity upon men of sinning, or by laying secret designs to tempt and seduce men to sin. We find that the holy men in Scripture are very careful to remove all thought and suspicion of this from God. Elihu (Job xxxvi. 3), before he would argue about God's providence with Job, he resolves, in the first place, to attribute nothing to God that is unworthy of Him. "I will (says he) ascribe righteousness to my Maker." So likewise St. Paul "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid" (Rom. vii. 7). "Is the law sin?" that is, hath God given men a law to this end, that He might draw them into sin? Far be it from Him. "Is Christ the minister of sin? God forbid" (Gal. ii. 17). Secondly, let not us tempt any man to sin. All piety pretends to be an imitation of God; therefore let us endeavour to be like Him in this. Thirdly, since God tempts no man, let us not tempt Him. There is frequent mention in Scripture of men's tempting God, *i.e.*, trying Him, as it were, whether He will do anything for their sakes that is misbecoming His goodness, and wisdom, and faithfulness, or any other of His perfections. Thus the Israelites are said to have "tempted God in the wilderness forty years together," and, in that space, more remarkably ten times. So likewise if we be negligent in our callings, whereby we should provide for our families, if we lavish away that which we should lay up for them, and then depend upon the providence of God to supply them, and take care of them, we tempt God to that which is unworthy of Him; which is to give approbation to our folly, and countenance our sloth and carelessness. II. THAT EVERY MAN IS HIS OWN GREATEST TEMPTER. "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn aside of his own lust, and enticed." In which words the apostle gives us a true account of the prevalency of temptation upon men. It is not because God has any design to ensnare men in sin; but their own vicious inclinations seduce them to that which is evil. To instance in the particular temptations the apostle was speaking of, persecution and suffering for the cause of religion, to avoid which many did then forsake the truth, and apostatise from their Christian profession. They had an inordinate affection for the ease and pleasure of this life, and their unwillingness to part with these was a great temptation to them to quit their religion; by this bait they were caught, when it came to the trial. And thus it is proportionably in all other sorts of temptations. Men are betrayed by themselves. First, that as the apostle doth here acquit God from any hand in tempting men to sin, so he does not ascribe the prevalency and efficacy of temptation to the devil. I shall here consider how far the devil by his temptations is the cause of the sins which men, by compliance with those temptations, are drawn into. First, it is certain that the devil is very active and busy to minister to them the occasion of sin, and temptations to it. Secondly, the devil does not only present to men the temptations and occasions of sin; but when he is permitted to make nearer approaches to them, does excite and stir them up to comply with these temptations, and to yield to them. And there is reason, from what is said in Scripture, to

believe that the devil, in some cases, hath a more immediate power and influence upon the minds of men, to excite them to sin, and, where he discovers a very bad inclination or resolution, to help it forward (John xiii. 27; Acts v. 3). Thirdly, but for all this the devil can force no man to sin; his temptations may move and excite men to sin, but that they were prevalent and effectual proceeds from our own will and consent; it is our own lusts closing with his temptations that produce sin. Fourthly, from what hath been said it appears that though the devil be frequently accessary to the sins of men, yet we ourselves are the authors of them; he tempts us many times to sin, but it is we that commit it. I am far from thinking that the devil tempts men to all the evil that they do. I rather think that the greatest part of the wickedness that is committed in the world springs from the evil motions of men's own minds. Men's own lusts are generally to them the worst devil of the two, and do more strongly incline them to sin than any devil without them can tempt them to it. Others, after he has made them sure, and put them into the way of it, will go on of themselves, and are as mad of sinning, as forward to destroy themselves, as the devil himself could wish; so that he can hardly tempt men to any wickedness which he does not find them inclined to of themselves. So that we may reasonably conclude that there is a great deal of wickedness committed in the world which the devil hath no immediate hand in. Second observation, that he ascribes the efficacy and success of temptation to the lusts and vicious inclinations of men, which seduce them to a consent and compliance with the temptations which are afforded to them. "Every man is tempted when he is drawn aside of his own lust, and enticed." Lay the blame of men's sins chiefly upon themselves, and that chiefly upon these two accounts: First, the lusts of men are in a great measure voluntary. By the lusts of men I mean their irregular and vicious inclinations. Nay, and after this it is still our own fault if we do not mortify our lusts; for if we would hearken to the counsel of God, and obey His calls to repentance, and sincerely beg His grace and Holy Spirit to this purpose, we might yet recover ourselves, and "by the Spirit mortify the deeds of the flesh." Secondly, God hath put it in our power to resist these temptations, and overcome them; so that it is our own fault if we yield to them, and be overcome by them. First, it is naturally in our power to resist many sorts of temptations. If we do but make use of our natural reason, and those considerations which are common and obvious to men, we may easily resist the temptations to a great many sins. Secondly, the grace of God puts it into our power, if we do not neglect it, and be not wanting to ourselves, to resist any temptation that may happen to us; and what the grace of God puts into our power, is as truly in our power as what we can do ourselves. Learn: First, not to think to excuse ourselves by laying the blame of our sins upon the temptation of the devil. Secondly, from hence we learn what reason we have to pray to God, that He would "not lead us into temptation," *i.e.*, not permit us to fall into it; for, in the phrase of the Scripture, God is many times said to do these things which His providence permits to be done. Thirdly, from hence we may learn the best way to disarm temptations, and to take away the power of them; and that is by mortifying our lusts and subduing our vicious inclinations. (*Abp. Tillotson.*) *Transferring the blame of sin*:—1. Man is apt to transfer the guilt of his own miscarriages. (1) Beware of these vain pretences. Silence and owning of guilt is far more becoming; God is most glorified when the creatures lay aside their shifts. (2) Learn that all these excuses are vain and frivolous, they will not hold with God. 2. Creatures, rather than not transfer their guilt, will cast it upon God Himself. (1) Partly because by casting it upon God the soul is most secure. When He that is to punish sin beareth the guilt of it, the soul is relieved from much horror and bondage; therefore, in the way of faith, God's transacting our sin upon Christ is most satisfying to the spirit (Isa. liii. 6). (2) Partly through a wicked desire that is in men to blemish the being of God. Man naturally hateth God; and our spite is shown by profaning His glory, and making it become vile in our thoughts; for since we cannot raze out the sense of the Deity, we would destroy the dread and reverence of it. We charge God with our evils and sins divers ways—(*a*) When we blame His providence, the state of things, the times, the persons about us, the circumstances of Providence, as the laying of tempting objects in our way, our condition, &c., as if God's disposing of our interests were a calling us to sin: thus Adam (Gen. iii. 12). (*b*) By ascribing sin to the defect and faint operation of the Divine grace. Men will say they could do no otherwise; they had no more grace given them by God (Prov. xix. 3). (*c*) When men lay all their miscarriages upon their fate, and the unhappy stars that shone at their birth, these are but blind flings at God Himself.

veiled under reflections upon the creature. (*d*) When men are angry they know not why. (*e*) Most grossly, when you think God useth any suggestion to the soul to persuade and incline it to evil. (*f*) When you have an ill understanding and conceit of His decrees, as if they did necessitate you to sin. Men will say, "Who can help it? God would have it so"—as if that were an excuse for all. 3. God is so immutably good and holy that He is above the power of a temptation. Men soon warp and vary, but He cannot be tempted. And generally, we deal with God as if He could be tempted and wrought to a compliance with our corrupt ends, as Solomon speaketh of sacrifice offered with an evil mind (Prov. xxi. 27); that is, to gain the favour of heaven in some evil undertaking and design. 4. The Author of all good cannot be the author of sin. (*T. Manton.*) *God tempts no man:*—I. THERE IS A TENDENCY IN THE MIND OF TRANSGRESSORS TO TRACE THEIR ERRORS AND INIQUITIES TO TEMPTATIONS PLACED IN THEIR WAY BY THE MORAL RULER OF THE WORLD. II. TO EVINCE THE UTTER ABSURDITY AND INCONSISTENCY OF ASCRIBING, IN ANY MANNER OR TO ANY EXTENT, THE MORAL DELINQUENCIES OF MEN TO THE AUTHOR OF THEIR BEING, THE APOSTLE REMINDS US OF THE MORAL RECTITUDE OF THE DIVINE CHARACTER. He cannot be imagined as making any arrangements of the natural, or forming any plans in the moral world, of which the direct and necessary effect would be to lead His creatures into that which He has so solemnly declared that He cannot look upon but with abhorrence. Since He views with unmixed complacence the progress of His rational offspring in holiness and benevolence, can we imagine that He should either endow them with capacities, or place them in circumstances, the direct tendency of which should be to lead them into the paths of malevolence and impurity? III. Having shown from the holiness of the Divine character that God is not the author of human temptations, he next grounds this assertion on THE DIVINE CONDUCT TO THE HUMAN FAMILY. 1. Examine, O man! the moral constitution of thy nature, and see if thou canst detect there any arrangement for thy departure from the path of holiness and peace. God has so formed the human mind that the perception of virtue awakens a sentiment of pleasure, and the presence or discovery of vice a feeling of disapprobation and disgust. 2. Look next into the history of Divine providence. Why has He been so mindful of man, and so careful of his comfort? Not, surely, to tempt him to ingratitude against his bountiful Benefactor, or to encourage him in rebellion against His authority and law. No! the goodness of God is designed to lead them who are the objects of it unto repentance. 3. Turn, now, to the revelation of the gospel, and see if there be any statements or provisions there that tend to countenance or confirm the strange delusion with which sinners seek to allay the alarms of conscience. Was not the Son of God manifested to destroy the works of the devil? Was He not sent to bless us, in turning every one of us from our iniquities? (*John Johnston.*) *Temptation to sin not from God:*—I. In support of the first, or negative part of the proposition—THAT GOD IS NOT THE AUTHOR OF SIN OR TEMPTATION, I confine myself entirely to the argument suggested by the text, "God cannot be tempted with evil." There must be a certain analogy, or congenial resemblance, between every cause and its effect. We cannot find in the effect any attribute or quality which was not first inherent in the cause by which it was produced. How then can evil, moral evil, flow from the Divine nature, from which it is not only excluded, but to which it is directly opposite and contradictory? II. In the text, TEMPTATIONS ARE POSITIVELY ASCRIBED TO THE LUSTS OF MEN; and therefore the guilt and misery arising from them must centre entirely in the person of the offender. Reflect upon that fatal hour when temptation assailed, and at last prevailed against you. What did you then feel? Why did you hesitate for a moment about gratifying the favourite passion? Did not another principle within you suggest danger, and hold you in suspense? Was not every concession to the tempting object extorted against the most earnest remonstrances, and the most awful forebodings of conscience? Lessons: 1. The doctrine, now illustrated, affords the strongest consolation and encouragement under the manifold dangers and trials to which we are exposed in the present state of probation and discipline. God tempts no man to sin. Omnipotent power and goodness are ever ready to interpose in the defence of struggling virtue. 2. From the doctrine of the text we may discern not only the weakness and folly, but the arrogance and impiety of those subterfuges and apologies to which sinners have recourse in order to extenuate or cancel their personal guilt. 3. Let us abhor every sentiment and expression tending so much as to insinuate that God is the author of temptation. Some errors may be set on foot while yet no more than the outworks of religion are attacked. But whatever mis-

represents the perfections and moral government of God is immediately levelled against the foundation which supports the whole fabric of our faith. (*T. Somerville, D.D.*) *Man not tempted by God*:—Even a Christian master is especially careful not to throw temptations in the way, for instance, of his servants. He would not leave sums of money about, because it would be throwing temptation in their way. If he did it through accident, then the honest servant would preserve the money, and put it into the master's hands when he returned. If he purposely did it to try his servant, then he would be guilty if the servant took it; and if the man left it about for the very purpose, we know whose servant that master would be. It was nothing less than devilish to place the helmet and broadsword in sight of the imprisoned Joan of Arc, expecting that the sudden impulse of old and dear associations, the sudden spring of reviving habit, would lead her to put them on, and so break her word and forfeit her life. To think, then, that what a Christian master would not knowingly do, God would do, were blasphemy. (*W. W. Champneys.*) **Drawn away of his own lust.**—*Sin's beginning, progress, and end*:—I. HOW SIN BEGINS. Now here is a point on which a most profane idea is often held, which our text begins with contradicting. Sin, says an old proverbial saying, is a child that nobody will own. Men are forward to commit it, but they are backward to acknowledge that they gave it birth. But "drawn away of his own lust," does the apostle say? Why does he not rather say "Drawn away by Satan"? Because the Lord is evidently aiming in this place to make men see that sin is their own doing—and that they are inexcusable in doing it. As some men are profane enough even to charge their sins upon the Lord, so many are glad, however, to lay all the blame of their transgressions at the door of Satan. "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." But no, says the doctrine of our text—you are self-tempters. It is your own lust that is to blame. However busy Satan is to ensnare you he has an active fellow-worker in your own ungodly bosom. God made man upright; but man has spoiled the nature which his God bestowed on him. II. SIN'S PROGRESS. "Lust, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin." Now this I call sin's progress, because the lust itself, that is to say, the desire of what is evil, is a sin as well as the act of sin which it brings forth. The law of God reaches to the heart. It says, "Thou shalt not covet." Evil desires, that is, when cherished in the heart, lead on to evil deeds. III. THE END OF SIN. Many of those who practise it seem to think its end is peace. Lessons: 1. To lay the blame of sin at the right door. 2. To prize unspeakably the tender mercies of a Saviour, and to plead hard for them. 3. That we should "keep our hearts with all diligence, for out of them are the issues of life." (*A. Roberts, M.A.*) *Evil: its origin*:—Here James traces the whole evil done by man, first, back to its proper source, and then forward to its final issue. He says, in this case the temptation is not from God; the inducement to sin, and the influence by which it is yielded to, are not from Him but from ourselves. I. THE SOURCE OF SUCH TEMPTATION. 1. It does not originate with God. It is here clearly implied, on the one hand, that some are ready to say this, either with their lips or in their hearts. It has been supposed that the reference is to the fatalism which characterised many of the Jews; but for that there seems to be no good warrant. The error is a common one, and has ever been found springing up, under this or that form, in the soil of our depraved nature. It appeared at a very early period, and is indeed coeval with the fall itself (Gen. iii. 13). In every age men have sought to cast the burden off themselves, and if possible to implicate the great Author of their being in the impurities of their character and conduct. They have done it in various ways. Some have identified sin with God, with His very nature. They have espoused the Pantheistic philosophy, which makes good and evil alike emanate from Him, yea, alike constitute Him, be equally manifestations and features of Him, parts of the universal, all-embracing Deity. Not a few who stop short of that monstrous but fascinating system, yet bring matters to the same issue, so far as the responsibility of their vices and crimes is concerned. They attribute them to Divine suggestion. It has not been uncommon to trace the foulest deeds to ideas and impulses of heavenly origin. Less directly, but not less really, is the same thing done by those who find a shelter in their corrupt dispositions and desires, in those propensities and passions which strongly incite to and issue in evil courses. Genius has boldly, defiantly urged this plea in defence of irregular habits, of gross excesses, and rolled back on the Author of our being the guilt of the darkest misdeeds. Persons of this stamp have appealed to Him, as knowing that He has framed them with passions wild and strong, and have traced their wildest wandering to light from heaven (Burns). And what is perhaps worse, their blind and foolish

admirers have endorsed the impious plea, and deemed it sufficient excuse for the foulest immorality and profanity to talk of the poet's galloping blood and quick nerves, of "the gunpowder in his composition," separating him from tame, cold precisions, and raising him far above the common rules of judgment and action. These parties forget that God made man upright, after His own image, without an evil tendency, without one lust, vanity, or imperfection in his constitution. Everything of the sort is the fruit of the fall, of the change wrought in us by apostasy, of our voluntary, wilful, presumptuous rebellion against the authority of heaven. All that is corrupt is of ourselves. The origin of it is human and Satanic; it is not, in whole or part, Divine. Others say, in effect, that they are tempted of God, because of the position they occupy, the circumstances in which they are placed, and the objects by which they are surrounded. High or low, rich or poor, young or old, learned or ignorant, we have each that in our condition which not only tries, but tempts; and for that is not the great Disposer of affairs, He who has fixed our position and appointed our lot, is not He responsible? He fills and directs that stream which is flowing all around, carrying us down by its constant, swollen, resistless current. How can we bear up against it, and if we are swept away by it, is it at all wonderful? God does it, and He could have ordered things far otherwise, He could have shielded us from all such malign influences. Those who entertain the thought overlook the fact that we have often very much to do with these circumstances ourselves. How common a thing is it to choose our own way, regardless of the will of God, and presumptuously to place ourselves in that situation, and among those objects, on which we afterwards cast the blame of the sins we there commit, of the errors and impurities into which we are there seduced! Further, these persons fail to realise the truth, that circumstances in themselves have comparatively little power over us, that they derive their mastery, not from what is in them, but what is in us—from the dispositions and desires on which they operate. And they forget that these very circumstances which are complained of are meant to furnish a wholesome discipline, to supply that moral and spiritual training which we need, and that in the exercise of reason and conscience—above all, by grace sought and obtained, we are to control, to govern them, to rise superior to them, and, instead of allowing them to be masters, make them our servants. Let no man then say that, in these respects or any others, he is tempted of God; let him guard against the most distant approach to such foul blasphemy. So far from anything of the kind, God sets before us the most powerful inducements to reject evil under every form, to avoid it as we should a serpent in our path. How authoritative the commands, how awful the sanctions of His law! while the operations of His providence, and indeed the very constitution of our being, which is His workmanship, supply us with the most convincing evidence that He hates sin and punishes its commission. James gives a reason for this, he founds it on the Divine nature itself. "For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man." "He cannot be tempted with evil." He is infinitely far removed from it, raised above it, under all its forms. He is so because of the absolute perfection of His being and blessedness. He has no want to be supplied, no desire to be gratified. He can gain nothing, can receive nothing. His happiness is complete, absolute, admitting neither of diminution nor enlargement. What inducement, then, can evil present to Him, what bribe can it offer to such a being? "Neither tempteth He any man." The two statements are closely connected. The one follows from, and is based on, the other. He who cannot be tempted cannot tempt. He whose holiness shuts out all solicitation to evil will not, cannot present such solicitation. His spotless, glorious character is opposed equally to either supposition. 2. It originates with man himself. It springs from elements which have their seat in his own bosom. It rises from, it centres in, "lust." This term is not limited here, as it often is in common use among us, to sensual passion, to licentiousness. It is far more general and comprehensive. It denotes strong desire of any kind; and here, as often elsewhere, it means irregular, sinful desire—desire either of what is not lawful, or of what is lawful in an inordinate degree. It may be evil in its very nature, irrespective of extent, or it may be so only by reason of perversion and excess. There is much of this in every bosom. It is the corrupt principle in its various tendencies and motions—its striving, craving for certain objects and indulgences. It is the body of sin in its manifold appetites and members. Here is the primary, prolific source of transgression. The apostle says, "his own lust," and this is a significant and emphatic circumstance. Each person has a particular lust, a master-passion, an evil tendency, which has the chief influence in determining

his conduct and moulding his character. All of us have sins that do more easily beset us, by reason of the special principles and propensities which hold sway in our bosom. One is governed by the love of pleasure, another by the love of power. This man is ambitious, that is covetous. Here it is the filthiness of the flesh, there it is the filthiness of the spirit, which is dominant. But what is brought out by "his own," is that the lust by which we are tempted is a thing strictly belonging to ourselves. It excludes the idea of foreign action or influence; it confronts and condemns the imagination that God is at all implicated in the matter. Our own lust is more to be dreaded than all Satan's assaults, though these are ever to be watched and feared. But the temptation in question, that which issues in sin, operates, takes effect, has its success in the manner here described. "When he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed." We take the first step in the direction of real and overt acts of disobedience when we allow ourselves to be drawn away and enticed by it; for it acts in both cases, brings about the latter step as well as the former, in this downward process. We break loose from the restraints of various kinds which have helped to hold us back from evil, and gradually yield to the enticements presented, to the fascinations of vanity or vice, of folly or wickedness. The one step precedes and prepares for the other. (*John Adam.*) *The depravity of the will the cause of sin*:—It is natural for men, in the commission of sin, to design to themselves as much of the pleasure and as little of the guilt as possible; and therefore, since the guilt of sin unavoidably remains upon the cause and author of sin, it is their great business to find out some other cause, upon which to charge it, beside themselves. 1. What the apostle here means by being tempted. 2. What is intended by lust. 1. For the first of these: it is as certain that the Scripture affirms some men to have been tempted by God, and particularly Abraham, as that it is positively affirmed in the verse before the text, that God tempts no man. In the sense that it is ascribed to God, it signifies no more than a bare trial; as when, by some notable providence, He designs to draw forth and discover what is latent in the heart of man. In the sense that it is denied of God, it signifies an endeavour, by solicitations and other means, to draw a man to the commission of sin: and this the most holy God can by no means own, for it would be to take the devil's work out of his hands. But neither does this sense reach the measure of the word in this place; which imports not only an endeavour to engage a man in a sinful action, but an effectual engaging him with full prevalence, as to the last issue of the commission. And thus a man can be only tempted by his own lust; which is—2. The second thing to be explained. By lust the apostle here means, not that particular inordination or vice that relates to the uncleanness of the flesh; but the general stock of corruption that possesses the whole soul, through all its respective faculties. But principally is it here to be understood of the prime commanding faculty of all, the will, as it is possessed and principled with sinful habits and depraved inclinations. I. THE MISTAKEN CAUSES OF SIN; in the number of which we may reckon these that follow:—1. The decree of God concerning things to come to pass is not a proper cause for any man to charge his sins upon; though perhaps there is nothing in the world that is more abused by weak and vulgar minds in this particular. It has no casual influence upon sinful actions; no, nor indeed upon any actions else: forasmuch as the bare decree, or purpose of a thing, produces or puts nothing in being at all. A decree, as such, is not operative or effective of the thing decreed. But it will be replied, Does not everything decreed by God necessarily come to pass? And yet I suppose that none will say that God's foreknowledge of a man's actions does, by any active influence, necessitate that man to do those actions; albeit, that this consequence stands unshakeable, that whatsoever God foreknows a man will do, that shall certainly be done. Otherwise, where is God's omniscience and His infallibility? God hath shown thee, O man, what is good and what is evil. He has placed life and death before thee. This is the rule by which thou must stand or fall: and no man will find that his fulfilling God's secret will, will bear him out in the breach of His revealed. 2. The influences of the heavens and of the stars imprint nothing upon men that can impel or engage them to do evil; and yet some are so sottish as to father their villainies upon these; they were born, forsooth, under such a planet, and therefore they cannot choose but be thieves or rebels all their life after. But admitting that the heavens have an influence upon inferior bodies, and that those glorious lights were not made only to be gazed upon, but to control as well as to direct the lesser world; yet still all communication between agent and patient must be in things that hold some proportion and likeness in their natures; so that one thing can pass no impression upon

another, of a nature absolutely and in every respect diverse from it, provided it be also superior to it; and such a thing is a spirit in respect of body. Upon which grounds, what intercourse can there be between the stars and a soul? 3. Neither can any man charge his sins upon the constitution and temper of his body, as the proper cause of them. The body was made to serve and not to command. All that it can do is only to be troublesome, but it cannot be imperious. They are not the humours of the body, but the humours of the mind, to which men owe the irregularities of their behaviour. The sensitive appetites having their situation in the body, do indeed follow the peculiar complexion and temper of it; but reason is a thing that is placed solely and entirely in the soul, and so depends not upon those inferior faculties; but though it is sometimes solicited by them, yet it is in its power, whether or no it will be prevailed upon. And for all the noise and tumult that is often raised amongst them; yet reason, like the uppermost region of the air, is not at all subject to the disturbances that are below. No man is made an adulterer, a drunkard, or an idle person by his body; his body indeed may incline him to be so, but it is his will only that makes him so. And besides, there have been some in the world, who by the conduct of their reason have made their way to virtue, through all the disadvantages of their natural constitution. Philosophy has done it in many, and religion may do it in all. 4. And lastly, to proceed yet higher: no man can justly charge his sins upon the devil, as the cause of them; for God has not put it into the power of our mortal enemy to ruin us without ourselves; which yet he had done, had it been in the devil's power to force us to sin. The Spirit of God assures us that he may be resisted, and that upon a vigorous resistance, he will fly. He never conquers any, but those that yield; a spiritual fort is never taken by force, but by surrender. It is confessed, indeed, that the guilt of those sins that the devil tempts us to, will rest upon him; but not so as to discharge us. He that persuades a man to rob a house is guilty of the sin he persuades him to, but not in the same manner that he is who committed the robbery. I shall remark this by way of caution: that though I deny any of these to be the proper causes of sin, yet it is not to be denied but that they are often very great promoters of sin, where they meet with a corrupt heart and a depraved will. And it is not to be questioned but that many thousands now in hell might have gone thither in a calmer and a more cleanly way at least, had they not been hurried on by impetuous temptations, by an ill constitution, and by such circumstances of life as mightily suited their corruption, and so drew it forth to a pitch of acting higher and more outrageous than ordinary. For there is no doubt but an ill mind in an ill-disposed body will carry a man forth to those sins, that otherwise it would not, if lodged in a body of a better and more benign temperament. As a sword, covered with rust, will wound much more dangerously, where it does wound, than it could do if it were bright and clean. All this is very true; and therefore, besides those internal impressions of grace, by which God sanctifies the heart, and effectually changes the will, many are accountable to His mercy for those external and inferior assistances of grace. As, that He restrains the fury of the tempter; that He sends them into the world with a well-tempered and rightly disposed body; and lastly, that He casts the course of their life out of most of the snares and occasions of sin: so that they can with much more ease be virtuous than other men. But on the other side, where God denies a man these advantages, and casts him under all the forementioned disadvantages of virtue, it is yet most certain that they lay upon him no necessity of sinning. II. THE PROPER AND EFFECTUAL CAUSE OF SIN IS THE DEPRAVED WILL OF MAN, expressed here under the name of LUST. The proof of which is not very difficult; for all other causes being removed, it remains that it can be only this. We have the word of Christ Himself that it is from within, from the heart, that envyings, wrath, bitterness, adulteries, fornications, and other such impurities do proceed. I shall endeavour further to evince this by arguments and reasons. 1. The first shall be taken from the office of the will, which is to command and govern all the rest of the faculties; and therefore all disorder must unavoidably begin here. The economy of the powers and actions of the soul is a real government; and a government cannot be defective without some failure in the governor. 2. The second argument shall be taken from every man's experience of himself and his own actions; upon an impartial survey of which he shall find, that before the doing of anything sinful or suspicious, there passes a certain debate in the soul about it, whether it shall or shall not be done; and after all argumentations for and against, the last issue and result follows the casting voice of the will. 3. A third reason is from this, that the same man, upon

tho proposal of the same object, and that under the same circumstances, yet makes a different choice at one time from what he does at another; and therefore the moral difference of actions, in respect of the good or evil of them, must of necessity be resolved into some principle within him; and that is his will. 4. The fourth and last reason shall be from this, that even the souls in hell continue to sin, and therefore the productive principle of sin must needs be the will. All the blowing of the fire put under a cauldron could never make it boil over, were there not a fulness of water within it. Some are so stupid as to patronise their sins with a plea that they cannot, they have not power to do otherwise; but where the will is for virtue, it will either find or make power. III. THE WAY BY WHICH A CORRUPT WILL (here expressed by the name of lust) IS THE CAUSE OF SIN; and that is, by "drawing a man aside, and enticing him." 1. It seduces, or draws a man aside; it actually takes himself from the ways of duty: for as in all motion there is the relinquishment of one term before there can be the acquisition of another; so the soul must pass from its adherence to virtue before it can engage in a course of sin. Now the first and leading attempt of lust is to possess the mind with a kind of loathing of virtue, as a thing harsh and insipid, and administering no kind of pleasure and satisfaction. This being done, and the mind clear, it is now ready for any new impression. 2. The other course is by enticing; that is, by using arguments and rhetoric, to set off sin to him with the best advantage, and the fairest gloss. And this it does these two following ways: (1) By representing the pleasures of sin, stripped of all the troubles and inconveniences of sin. But now it is the act of lust to show the quintessence and the refined part of a sinful action, separate from all its dregs and indecencies, so to recommend it to the apprehension of a deluded sinner. Lust never deals impartially with the choice, so as to confront the whole good with the whole evil of an object; but declaims amply and magnificently of one, while it is wholly silent of the other. (2) Lust entices by representing that pleasure that is in sin greater than indeed it is; it swells the proportions of everything, and shows them, as it were, through a magnifying-glass, greatened and multiplied by desire and expectation; which always exhibit objects to the soul, not as they are, but as they would have them be. Nothing cheats a man so much as expectation: it conceives with the air, and grows big with the wind; and like a dream, it promises high, but performs nothing. They are cursed like the earth, not only with barrenness, but with briars and thorns; there is not only a fallacy, but a sting in them: and consequently they are rendered worse than nothing; a reed that not only deceives, but also pierces the hand that leans upon it. But the exceeding vanity of every sinful pleasure will appear by considering both the latitude of its extent and the length of its duration. 1. And first, for the latitude or measure of its extent. It seldom gratifies but one sense at a time; and if it should diffuse a universal enjoyment to them all, yet it reaches not the better, the more capacious part of man, his soul: that is so far from communicating with the senses, that in all their revels it is pensive and melancholy, and afflicted with inward remorses from an unsatisfied, if not also an accusing conscience. 2. And then secondly, for its duration or continuance. (*R. South, D.D.*) *Of the nature of temptations*:—The word "lust" signifies in this place every desire or inclination after things unlawful in any kind. The desire of unlawful pleasures, which is the vice of sensuality. The desire of unlawful riches, which is the foundation of unrighteousness, oppression, and fraud. The desire of obtaining honour by corrupt methods, which is the sin of ambition. The desire of being religious without true virtue, without the sincere love of God and of our neighbour, which is the foundation of idolatry, and of all superstitions. When by any of these desires a man is drawn away from what he knows is right, and enticed to do what the reason of his mind condemns, then is he led into sin. I. In the nature of things EVERY SIN IS A DEVIATION FROM SOME RULE; and such a deviation as the person is sensible of at the time he acts, and knows that he ought not to have so acted. This it is that makes the action blameworthy in its own nature, and justly punishable by a wise and good governor. But, man being endued with rational faculties, and knowing well the difference between good and evil, is still placed in such a situation as to be frequently tempted to depart from reason, and to act contrary to what he knows is right. II. Second place, to illustrate and confirm this doctrine BY COMPARING IT WITH SOME REMARKABLE EXAMPLES of sinful men and sinful actions, recorded in Scripture for our admonition. Men at all times, and in all places, when they have been seduced by sin, and begun to apprehend the ill consequences of it, have endeavoured to shift off the blame from themselves, and to lay at least part of the

fault upon whatever else they could. But the Scripture, in every history there recorded, has always taken care to direct us with sufficient clearness to the true source of the evil. Our first parent, Eve, when she had eaten of the forbidden fruit, immediately her excuse was, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." Saul comforted himself under his disobedience to an express command of God, with an imaginary intention of sacrificing the choice of his forbidden spoils unto the Lord his God. But the true motive that drew him away from his duty was a covetous desire of the spoil (1 Sam. xv. 21, 24). David, in the committing of that great crime, the murder of Uriah, flattered himself with that shameful apology, because Uriah fell by the hand of the Ammonites (2 Sam. xi. 25). Ahab was willing to persuade himself that he had a right to Ramoth-Gilead, and that God too, by His prophets, encouraged the undertaking. Yet had not his ambition and his passions drawn him away, and blinded his attention, it was easy for him to have perceived that in this whole matter he was acting contrary to the will of God (1 Kings xxii. 8). (*S. Clarke, D.D.*) *Evil self-originated*:—1. The cause of evil is in a man's self, in his own lusts, the Eve in our own bosom. God gave a pure soul, only it met with viciously disposed matter. 2. Above all things, a man should look to his desires. 3. The way that lust takes to ensnare the soul is by force and flattery. (1) By violence. (*a*) When your desires will not endure the consideration of reason, but you are carried on by a brutish rage (Jer. v. 8). (*b*) When they grow more outrageous by opposition, and that little check that you give to them is like the sprinkling of water upon the coals, the fire burns more fiercely. (*c*) When they urge and vex the soul till fulfilled, which is often expressed in Scripture by a languor and sickness. (2) By flattery. This is one of the impediments of conversion—lust promises delight and pleasures (Job. xx. 12). (*a*) Learn to suspect things that are too delightful. That which you should look after in the creatures is their usefulness, not their pleasantness—that is the bait of lust. (*b*) Learn what need there is of great care. Noonday devils are most dangerous, and such things do us most mischief as betray us with smiles and kisses. (*T. Manton.*) *Drawn and dragged*:—We are tempted, it seems—"drawn" into sin. Who draws us? Not God. He is perfectly holy, and by a necessity of nature does good and not evil. God is for us; who is against us? There is indeed a tempter. The evil spirit has no power at all over any of us, except what we concede to him. As the prince of the power of the air, he could do a soul no harm: it is when he is welcomed within a man's own heart that he ensnares. So then, in the last resort, "every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." From this striking figure we learn some specific features of the sad process. The two terms are literally, "drawn out, and hooked." The first expression does not yet mean drawn by the hook; it means rather drawn to the hook. There are two successive drawings, very diverse in character. The first is a *drawing* towards the hook, and the second is a *dragging* by the hook. The first is a secret enticement of the will, and the second is an open and outrageous oppression by a superior force, binding the slave and destroying him. The first process, as applied to hunting and fishing, is well known and easily understood. This part of the process is carried on with care and skill and secrecy. No noise is made, and no danger permitted to meet the eye of the victim. By smell or by sight, the fish or the wild animal is "drawn" from the safe, deep hiding-place in the bush or in the river. The victim, not perceiving the danger, is by its own "lust"—its own appetite—drawn to its doom. The next part of the process is the act of fixing the barbed hook in the victim's jaws. The word is "baited"; that is, enticed by the bait to swallow the hook—the hook that is in the first instance unsuspected. When the hook is fastened, there is another drawing; but oh, how diverse from the first! The angler does not now hide himself, and tread softly, and speak in a whisper. There is no more any gentleness. He rudely drags his helpless prey to shore, and takes its life. I have often seen the same process, with the same difference between its commencement and its conclusion, in the tempting of human souls. The best, the only real preventive against these baited hooks, is to be satisfied with a sweetness in which there are no sin and no danger. The human soul that is empty—that is not satisfied with the peace of God—is easily drawn into the pleasures of sin. In a certain Highland lake, I have been told, sportsmen at one season of the year expect no sport. There are plenty of fishes, but they will not take the bait. Some vegetable growth on the bottom at that period is abundant and suitable as food. I have observed, in the process of fishing, that on the part of the victim there are two successive struggles, both violent, both short, and both, for the most part, unavailing. When first it feels the hook, it makes a vigorous effort to shake

itself free. But that effort soon ceases, and the fish sails gently after the retreating hook, as if it were going towards the shore with its own consent. What is the reason of its apparent docility after the first struggle? Ah, poor victim! it soon discovers that to draw against the hook, when the hook is fastened, is very painful. Then, when it feels the shore, and knows instinctively that its doom has come, there is another desperate struggle, and all is over. I think I have observed these two struggles, one at the beginning and one at the end, with the period of silent resignation between them, in the experience of an immortal man. There is an effort to resist the appetite, after the victim discovers that he is in its grasp. But the effort is painful, and is soon abandoned. "I will seek it yet again," is the silent resolution of despair. The struggle, with all the agonies of remorse, may be once more renewed when the waters of life grow shallow, and the soul is grazing the eternal shore. The result? Alas! the darkness covers it; we know it not. After the first drawing, which is soft and unexpected, the way of transgressors is hard. The fish with the hook in its jaws is the chosen glass in which the Scripture invites us to see it. The snare of intemperance is the one in which the victim is tormented, and made a show of openly, in sight of the world. (*W. Arnot.*) *Drawn away and enticed:*—Of the two verbs used here to describe the temptational agency of lust, the former was originally a venatorial, the second a piscatorial term. Each has its own significance in the description. Before the wild beast can be captured it must be drawn out of its lair. It must be enticed away from its defences, out into the open, where it can be surrounded on all sides, where the assaults can be conducted with greater freedom, where all retreat will be cut off. So temptation will be most effectual when the soul can be enticed out of its retreat, when it exposes itself to the solicitations of evil, and puts itself at the mercy of its foes. When man has lost his adjustments, when his spiritual centre of gravity is disturbed, he is much more susceptible to the power of assaults made upon his integrity, and much more easily overthrown. This, then, is the first endeavour of the *Epithumia* to induce a change of locality and of environment, to urge man further away from the source of true security, to lead him to advance so far out into the place of exposure that he will fall an easy prey to his adversaries. The other figure carries us a step further. The angler baits his hook to catch the fish. He lures his unwary victim to its death. He offers in sight what he knows will surely attract, and hides within the barbed point which is to capture and to destroy. So in temptation there is this same combination of allurement and destruction. First comes the lure—pleasure, fame, wealth, honour, power, knowledge—the fatal barb which lurks within, so placed that to snatch at it is to swallow death. Man is allured, deceived; yet not unwittingly nor unwillingly. He is "baited from his own lust." His morbid appetite seeks out the forbidden fruit, and greedily plucks it. (*J. Caldwell, D.D.*) *The origin of evil:*—Thus James gives us the genesis of evil. It is in the individual man. The man is drawn away from good and caught in evil by his own lust. The writer lays special emphasis on this: it is "*his own*"; it is not of God—not of the devil—not of the world; it is of the man's self, and in the man's self. It is that in his self without the exhibition of which there would be nothing to which the work of the devil could appeal. It is most important to inculcate in all children that it is a mistake to lay their faults on any one else, even on the devil. That personage has enough to bear without having our sins laid upon him. No sinner can be reformed so long as he makes Satan or any one else responsible for his transgressions. I knew a child of strong character and strong passions who used to have paroxysms of rage. Her parents and others would sometimes tell her to open her mouth and let the bad spirit go under the table. The child was growing into the belief that she was the innocent victim of an unseen being, who was another person, and she was learning to shift all the responsibility upon that person, that person not herself. A friend one day taught her the fallacy of this; showed her that she was the only person responsible; that she herself was the bad spirit, and there was nothing to do but have that spirit, namely, herself, totally changed. She went to her closet and prayed—prayed as David prayed (Psa. li.), when the conviction seized him that it was against God, and God only, that he had sinned. There was no third party in the transaction. From the hour the child had that conviction she was a changed person. So must we all feel. We can never resist temptation as we should, so long as we hold God or any one else responsible for *our* sins. (*C. F. Deems, D.D.*) **It bringeth forth sin.**—*Sin:*—Sin is a reality. It is not a weakness, but a power; a power which gnaws at the very core of life; a power encompassing and swaying the entire range of our being. It is an inward strife, a pain

reaching even to the heart. Let us, then, seek first of all to discern the full significance of sin, that in sincere penitence we may turn away from it. It gives sin's history. The history naturally divides itself into three parts:—Sin. I. In its origin. II. In its essence. III. In its results. I. EVERY MAN IS TEMPTED, WHEN HE IS DRAWN AWAY OF HIS OWN LUST, AND ENTICED. "His own lust"—the emphasis lies there. Do not throw the blame on any external power; least of all upon God, the Holy One, who has written His law in your hearts! He condemns and punishes sin. He desires that you should be holy as He is holy. Do not seek for the guilt outside yourself, among the people who surround you. I know, indeed, how great is the power of custom, of education, of companionships, the power of men over men; how overmastering are the first impressions of youth, made upon the unconscious spirit and the undeveloped will. But, nevertheless, all these external influences only *tempt*—they cannot *compel*; there is no inseparable connection between them and the soul. The tempting lust! Ah, how insignificant and harmless does it appear at first! How beautiful, in the brilliant colours of childhood! The lust after outward show, after enjoyment, after the possession of earthly things—selfishness, vanity, ambition! At first these seem only a childish playfulness, as it were, a snatching at things; a sweet gratification in the absorbing attractions of the outer world; but soon they become a habit. II. But now, further, SIN IS BORN OF LUST. It surrounds us everywhere—nay, it is within us—it has taken possession of our senses and our thoughts. And in what does it essentially consist? In the opposition between the flesh and spirit! Selfishness and the desires of the senses—these are the two fundamental forms of all sin. You perhaps ask me if sin is indeed so universally powerful and universally diffused? Be assured, sin has manifold forms—refined and gross; concealed and bare; violent and torpid. III. And so our text proceeds: "AND SIN, WHEN IT IS FINISHED, BRINGETH FORTH DEATH." That is the end—dissolution, ruin, death. And how does the corruption of the spirit show itself? Thus:—The conscience becomes dumb; the sense of spiritual realities dull; the nobler feelings of honour vanish; virtue is only an uncomprehended idea; goodness is only policy, or that which is approved by the lax judgment of so-called good society; truth is trampled under the feet of falsehood; and humanity becomes venal, and makes its bargain with the world. And these are the ruinous lineaments of the face of death—indifference, joylessness, hopelessness! And these not only take possession of the individual, but proceed further, and, in their moral ruin and destruction, bear violently away everything which comes within the range of the sinful life: they destroy the entire house which is built upon the sand. Not yonder only, in the other world, are the punishment and recompense received; there is a Divine justice even upon this earth. (*Dr. Schwarz.*) *The natural history of sin*:—I. THE BEGINNING OF SIN. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." This is the source of all evil. Before the act can be committed the purpose must be formed in the breast, which takes time, design, deliberation. Seduction, theft, perfidy, drunkenness, injustice, murder, the popular vices of the day, require design, arrangement, decision. II. THE PROGRESS WHICH IT MAKES IN ITS INFLUENCE OVER THE HEART AND CHARACTER OF MAN. 1. The causes brought into operation to produce this. One is the popular reading of the age. Associations with those who have made some advances in vice. 2. Let me show how these principles advance. "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." No man can become suddenly wicked. At first there must be awful violence done to the conscience. But when you have once gone into this moral contamination, when you cast off the fear of man, no one is astonished, because previously to this you have cast off the fear of God. III. THE END OF SIN. 1. The death of the body. "Death has passed upon all men, for all have sinned." But there is a natural tendency in sin to hasten this end. I read in my Bible, "Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days." The glutton, the intemperate, the lascivious person, the debauchee, all these men shorten their days. 2. The death of the soul. And what is that? I cannot tell. (1) Allow me to make an appeal to those who are invested with parental authority. Beware lest by connivance and withholding due restraint, you become accessories to the ruin of your children. (2) Let me warn the young against the danger of yielding to the first temptation. (*T. East.*) *The vigour of lust*:—1. Sin encroaches upon the spirit by degrees. Lust begetteth vigorous motions, or pleasing thoughts, which draw the mind to a full and clear consent; and then sin is hatched, and then disclosed, and then strengthened, and then the person is destroyed. (1) Oh, that we were wise, then, to rise against sin

betimes! that we would "take the little foxes" (Cant. ii. 15), even the first appearances of corruption! A Christian's life should be spent in watching lust. Small breaches in the sea-bank occasion the ruin of the whole if not timely repaired. (2) This reproves them that boldly adventure upon a sin because of the smallness of it. Consider the danger to yourselves. Great faults do not only ruin the soul, but lesser; dallying with temptations is of a sad consequence. Cæsar was killed with bodkins. 2. Lust is fully conceived and formed in the soul, when the will is drawn to consent; the decree in the will is the ground of all practice. Well, then, if lust hath insinuated into your thoughts, labour to keep it from a decree and gaining the consent of the will. Sins are the more heinous as they are the more resolved and voluntary. 3. What is conceived in the heart is usually brought forth in the life and conversation. "Lust, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin." That is the reason why the Apostle Peter directeth a Christian to spend the first care about the heart—"Abstain from fleshly lusts," and then "have your conversations honest" (1 Pet. ii. 11, 12). As long as there is lust in the heart there will be no cleanness in the conversation; as worms in wood will at length cause the rottenness to appear. (1) Learn that hypocrites cannot always be hidden; disguises will fall off. (2) Learn the danger of neglecting lust and thoughts. If these are not suppressed, they will ripen into sins and acts of filthiness. (3) Learn what a mercy it is to be hindered of our evil intentions, that sinful consequences are still-born, and when we wanted no lust we should want no occasion. Mere restraints are a blessing. We are not so evil as otherwise we would be. 4. The result and last effect of sin is death (Rom. vi. 21; Ezek. xviii. 4). Draco, the rigid law-giver, being asked why, when sins were equal, he appointed death to all, answered he knew that sins were not all equal, but he knew the least deserved death. (1) It teacheth us how to stop the violence of lust; this will be death and damnation. Oh! consider it, and set it as a flaming sword in the way of your carnal delights. Observe how wisely God hath ordered it—much of sin is pleasant; aye! but there is death in the pot, and so fear may counterbalance delight. Another part of sin is serious, as worldliness, in which there is no gross act, and so there being nothing foul to work upon shame, there is something dreadful to work upon fear. Well, then, awaken the soul; consider what Wisdom saith (Prov. viii. 36). Why will you wilfully throw away your own souls? Sin's best are soon spent, the worst is always behind. (2) It showeth what reason we have to mortify sin, lest it mortify us. No sins are mortal but such as are not mortified; either sin must die or the sinner. The life of sin and the life of a sinner are like two buckets in a well—if the one goeth up the other must come down. When sin liveth the sinner must die. There is an evil *in* sin and an evil *after* sin. The evil in sin is the violation of God's law, and the evil after sin is the just punishment of it. (*T. Manton.*) *Evil: its issue:*—I. SIN. Lust—that is, impure or inordinate desire, at first harlot-like, for that idea runs through the whole passage—draws away its victims with an art resembling that of a skilful fisher or hunter. Having so far worked on them, got them into its embrace, it conceives—as it were becomes pregnant. This is a decisive stage in the process. It determines all that follows. It leads at once to the bringing forth of sin, and by another step to the bringing forth of death. What, then, is its nature? What are we to understand by this conception? It is produced by the union of lust with the will, the passing of prompting into purpose, desire into determination. It takes place when the two meet and mingle, when inclination, instead of encountering resistance, secures acquiescence. It is consenting, yielding to the workings of corruption, and lending ourselves to the doing of its bidding. When, instead of praying and striving against evil stirring within us and seeking to lead us captive, we tolerate it, dally with it, let it gain strength, and finally obtain the entire mastery, then the impure, criminal union is consummated. The actual transgression straightway ensues. It is sin in the strongest sense of the word—sin actual, obvious, complete in its nature. But are we to infer from this that there is nothing of the kind until it is brought forth? Is all faultless which precedes the birth of the monster? No. 1. There can be no doubt as to the nature and desert of the conception. It is the giving ourselves up to be voluntary slaves of that law which is in the members. We thereby embrace the evil, and it matters little whether action follow or not. He who plans a robbery is a real thief, though in point of fact he may not take away a farthing's worth of his neighbour's property. He may have been defeated in his design; he may not have found the fitting opportunity; he may have failed in courage when the resolution had to be carried into effect. The intention was there, and that is enough;

for while human tribunals can deal only with palpable acts, the Divine law is fettered by no such restrictions. Suppose we are not answerable for the rising up of the foul harlot lust, for the blandishments it practises, we certainly are for not rejecting its offers and escaping from its impure embraces. The will is not overmastered by force, but is seduced from its allegiance, and plays the traitor. 2. It is not otherwise with the lust that conceives. We find sin lurking in its bosom, marking every one of its forms and motions. The effect reveals the nature of the cause by which it is produced. The two necessarily correspond. The fruit is good or bad according as the tree on which it grows is the one or the other. Were the fountain-head pure, the waters which issue from it would not be so poisonous. And the testimonies of Scripture on the subject are explicit. One of the commandments of the moral law is directed against coveting—that is, lusting after what is our neighbour's. The works of the flesh enumerated by Paul largely consist of inward dispositions, mental tendencies. Jesus Himself represents evil thoughts as among the things which defile a man. What is often more involuntary, instinctive, than hasty, causeless anger? and yet He makes it a species of murder, and declares that a person chargeable with it is in danger of the judgment. But we are not left to inference, however direct and obvious. We have this concupiscence expressly called sin (Rom. vii. 7, 23; viii. 7). Does any one ask, How can I be held responsible for a thing thus belonging to the very constitution of my being that lies beyond the control of the will, at least in its first stages, in those early risings and actings of it we are now considering? Lust is a feature and function of our inner man as fallen, depraved; and that inner man, as such, we may not trace to God, the great Maker and Governor. He created us in His own image, and we lost, defaced its Divine features by our wilful and inexcusable apostasy. And, further, let it be noted how much of our lust is, in a far more direct and personal way still, the workmanship of our own hand, the fruit of our own doings. We produce and foster it, either entirely originating it or immensely strengthening it; in short, we make it what it actually is by association and indulgence, by the scenes we frequent, the companions we choose, the habits we form, the lives we lead. II. DEATH. This is the ultimate issue. "And sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Sin itself is the offspring of lust; but in turn it becomes a parent. In due time it gives birth to a child, "a grizzly terror," a dark, devouring monster. This takes place when sin is finished; and the most important question here is, How are we to understand that expression? James, we apprehend, speaks here of the act of sin which follows the submission of the will to impure or inordinate desire. Whenever lust conceives it brings forth sin; and that child in every instance grows up, and on arriving at maturity, in turn becomes a parent, its issue being death. There is no transgression which is not pregnant with this hideous progeny. The law connects every violation of its precepts with death, as its righteous, inevitable punishment. The execution of the sentence may be long deferred, but nothing is more certain; and indeed it is in part inflicted from the time the sin is committed. The evil deed passes away as soon as done, but the guilt remains, staining and burdening the conscience; and not only so, for a virus proceeds from it, an active, malign influence which continues to operate, and that in an ever-widening, augmenting degree. The natural tendency of it is to darken the mind and harden the heart, to increase the strength of depravity and fasten more firmly its yoke, to lead on to repetitions of the same act, and to others still more heinous in their nature. It has wrapped up in it multiplied evils which develop themselves more and more fully, advancing from bad to worse, unless in so far as they are checked and overcome by counteracting influences. But it is not finished, does not produce its mature and final result, until it issue in inevitable separation from God and the endurance of His wrath to all eternity (Rom. vi. 16, 21, 23). How terrible the death which sin, when finished, thus brings forth! That of the body is but the passage to the region where it reigns in all its horrors. Its nature will not be fully manifested, its work will not be fully done, until it brings forth its brood of future terrors, the pains of hell for ever. James adds an equally tender and solemn warning—"Do not err, my beloved brethren." These words point both backward and forward. They respect what goes before, and introduce what comes after, by way of confirmation. They form the transition from the one to the other, and so may be viewed in connection with either. There is here implied exposure to error. We are prone to go astray as to the origin of temptation; for that is the matter in hand, and to which reference is made by the apostle. The language intimates not less the danger of error in this matter. It is not a light

thing to fall into such a mistake. On the contrary, it is perilous in the extreme. It perverts our views of the Divine character; it deadens the sense of sin; it renders us blind and insensible to the only effectual remedy; it fosters pride, self-deception, and fatal delusion. It is pregnant with evils of incalculable magnitude and eternal duration. (*John Adam.*) *The connection between disease and sin:*— In this passage we have held up before us the genesis of death. Now, the difficulty is to know whether the death spoken of refers to the spirit or the body. In a large number of cases in Scripture the word refers to spiritual death. But there are passages in which the word "death" seems to refer to that of the body. I am disposed to regard the passage before us in this way, and that for two reasons. First, St. James is a writer who deals chiefly with the outward and visible; and a second reason may be found in the fact that he is here speaking of a form of sin whose results are emphatically, though not exclusively, physical. Lust is the enemy of the body. There are senses, then, in which bodily death is the result of sin. Not in all senses. We must be careful to limit the statement that the death of the body is the result of sin. We are told that "the wicked do not live out half their days." If there had been no wickedness men would have lived out all their days. In the midst of life there would not have been death, but only at the end of life—when its appointed term had been reached. There would have been no death from disease, but only from what we call the decay of nature. I do not speak positively on this matter. The evidence is not sufficient to do so. I only give this as my conception of the subject. It is significant, too, that our Lord, the only sinless one ever seen on our earth, did not, so far as we can judge from the record, suffer from any disease. Nor must we connect too closely bodily disease with personal sin. In many a case the life begins with a diseased or feeble frame inherited from others. But none the less it is true that the connection between disease and sin is both real and close. We think of consumption as the most fruitful cause of the premature mortality in our land. It does slay its thousands every year; but if it slays its thousands, sin slays its tens of thousands, whilst no small proportion even of what we call consumption is traceable either directly or indirectly to sin. Men of the world talk glibly of young men sowing their wild oats. They are silent as to the harvest which springs therefrom. Were such sins to cease out of our land a marvellous change would come over the health of the nation. A complete crusade against disease must include spiritual as well as sanitary weapons. Minds as well as bodies diseased must have their ministry. We must fight the lust within which leads to sin and, at last, to death. Now, how is this fruitful source of disease and death to be grappled with and overcome? The first essential is that we should feel that it must be dealt with. That was the first step taken in relation to other causes of disease. There was a time when men regarded epidemics like cholera as visitations of God—punishments for sin; and so long as this was the feeling nothing was done. All that men did was to pray for their removal. And when men realise that the most fruitful and constant cause of disease and mortality is sin, they will see that these can cease only as the sin producing them is overcome. There are those who say, "Teach all alike the facts of physiology—let men know all about their bodies, and they will then preserve them from defilement." I have not a particle of faith in such a remedy. Knowledge of the body is no preservation; if it were, the people whose chief business is to understand the body would not need the warning now before us: "Then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is full grown, bringeth forth death." Is it thus? Careful inquiry has satisfied me that the students of medicine in our great hospitals are not purer, even if they are as pure, as youths in other walks of life. There are others who say, "Trust to education. Increased knowledge will bring about purer ways. As schools and scholars multiply vice will decrease." Doubtless some forms of vice will decrease. In certain realms knowledge will accomplish much. But no one who knows much of life will say that this is one of those realms. It is not knowledge that is needed. It is the impulse which will prompt to the good, the constraint which will hold us from the evil. There is no force mighty enough that I have ever heard of to grapple with sin save the gospel. Christ alone raises a barrier strong enough to resist the onslaughts of this great enemy. And why is it thus? 1. Because the Christian faith makes us realise that there is a Divine Spirit within us which renders holy even the temple of the body in which it dwells. 2. The Christian faith alone holds up an ideal lofty enough to keep us from impurity. 3. By the constraint of His peerless love He constrains us to live not to ourselves, yielding not to our lower impulses and pas-

sions, but unto Him who died for us and rose again. (*W. G. Horder.*) *The progress and end of sin*:—The word here translated "lust" might be more aptly rendered *concupiscence*, that fleshly principle which seems to have been engendered in the hearts of our first parents at the instant of committing the primal sin; and which is the root of all that is sinful and irregular in our thoughts, words, and actions. The seeds of sin are lodged in the bosom of every infant, and naturally grow up to death. And even those in whom the counteracting principle of Divine grace has done its work most thoroughly are yet made painfully sensible, from time to time, that the flesh, or natural corruption, so "lusteth against the Spirit," that if they do not yield to its wicked solicitations, they are nevertheless greatly hindered from doing the good they would in the manner they would. Thoughts and wishes that savour of original depravity force their way into our minds, and would fain take possession of our will, before we are almost aware. But observe, it is not the first incursion of such thoughts and wishes that makes us actual sinners, though it proves our sinful nature. Evil desire does not conceive, does not become the mother of sin, until married to the will. The wicked inclination has become a fixed purpose; the fixed purpose has been consummated; and now it only remains for retribution to follow. And that retribution is set forth, by a similar figure to what was used before, as the child of sin. Sin being "finished," being ripe and strong and active, and perhaps having signalised itself by many appropriate feats, becomes the parent of death. It fixes a deadly sting in the conscience; is frequently the cause of a premature and violent death among men; and hands over its wretched victim to eternal death by God's righteous judgment. We go for our first example to Eve, the mother of mankind. Concupiscence has now conceived sin; and sin is not long in coming to the birth. And, oh, how quickly does sin produce death! The dissolution of soul and body indeed is somewhat delayed by Divine compassion. But shame has come; for Adam and his wife see themselves to be naked, and gird fig-leaves about their loins. Fear has come; for they dare not meet the Almighty, as aforetime, but slink away, and try to hide themselves. Disease is come; for the principles of decay are even now at work in them, and they have already set out on their journey to the grave. Go on to Cain, and see how another form of concupiscence proceeds. In his case it is envy. A deadly malice is conceived; and so, when some occasion presents itself—a very small one would suffice—to set the bad passion in a flame, he brings forth the sin that has long been breeding within him, and sheds a brother's blood. Wretched man! that innocent blood is not wholly drunk up by the ground. It has gone up to heaven, and cried for vengeance. It is sprinkled on the murderer's conscience; and henceforth Cain's life is a living death. Then Ahab, what a striking instance does he present of the effect of covetousness being nourished instead of stifled. I must allude to one other form of natural corruption—I mean, impure desire. Of the sins and calamities that grow out of this headlong appetite, when it is not held in by the strongest moral and religious curbs, David has furnished a mournful example in his own person. Oh, what would he not have given, when the Law poured a stream of fiery wrath into his conscience, and incest and murder became the furies of his house, what would he not then have given to undo what he had done! (*J. N. Pearson, M.A.*) *Sin in the heart*:—A large oak-tree was recently felled in the grove adjoining Avondale, near the centre of which was found a small nail, surrounded by twenty-nine cortical circles, the growth of as many years. The sap, in its annual ascents and descents, had carried with it the oxide from the metal, till a space of some three or four feet in length, and four or five inches in diameter, was completely blackened. Is not this a striking illustration of sin as it exists in the hearts of many sincere Christians? The nail did not kill the tree; it did not prevent growth; it did not destroy its form and beauty to the eye of the casual observer; but year after year it was silently spreading its influence in the interior of the tree. So, after a believer has been justified by faith in a crucified Saviour, he is made conscious of inherent evil. He may be sensible of pride, envy, ambition, worldly desires, impatience, anger, and unbelief. Should he fail to apply for deliverance to the all-cleansing blood of Jesus, such inherent evils will remain, year after year, corroding and corrupting the seat of his affection and desires. His outward profession may be steady and consistent. His religious life may be continued. There may be growth in religious knowledge, and increased fixedness in religious habits. And yet sin, though hidden, may be percolating through his thoughts and at the end of thirty, forty, or fifty years, he may still be sensible that his nature is not thoroughly renewed. (*T. Brackenbury.*) *Beginnings of sin*:—The trees of the forest held a

solemn parliament, wherein they consulted of the wrongs the axe had done them. Therefore they enacted that no tree should hereafter lend the axe wood for a handle on pain of being cut down. The axe travels up and down the forest, and begs wood of the cedar, ash, oak, elm, and even the poplar, not one would lend him a chip. At last he desired as much as would serve him to cut down the briars and bushes, alleging that these shrubs did suck away the juice of the ground, hinder the growth and obscure the glory of the fair and goodly trees. Herein they were content to give him so much; but, when he had got the handle, he cut themselves down, too! These be the subtle reaches of sin. Give it but a little advantage, on the fair promise to remove thy troubles, and it will cut down thy soul also. Therefore resist beginnings. (*T. Adams.*) **Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.**—*Iniquity finished:*—Nothing here reaches maturity in a moment. Things begin to be, they grow, they ripen. It is so in nature, in character, and in the moral world. Sin is a growth; it matures, and then its fruit is death. The growth of sin may be slow at first, but it ripens fast as the time of harvest draws nigh. I. The game of chance finds its maturity in the abandoned gambler. II. Indulgence in the cup is matured in the sot. III. Covetousness finds its maturity in the swindler, the thief, the robber. IV. Lasciviousness has its maturity in the pollutions and obscenities of the brothel. V. Profanity has its maturity in those unrestrained blasphemies which have sometimes been uttered at the very juncture when life was going out. VI. The growth of infidelity may be traced from its low beginnings to the same destructive maturity. VII. So we may trace the sin of lying, from the first instance of prevarication on to the fixed habit of dauntless and deliberate perjury. Conclusion: 1. How may we know when sin has approached nigh to maturity? (1) Maturity in sin stuns the sensibility of conscience. (2) Maturity in sin progressively excludes shame. 2. The subject addresses itself to parents. (1) We should be careful not to corrupt our children by example or precept. (2) If we love our children, we shall be careful and watchful that others do not corrupt or lead them astray. (3) In view of this subject, be warned not to let any sin ripen in your heart. (*Daniel A. Clark.*) *The consequences of sin:*—St. James tells us that, finally, all "sin" brings forth "death"! And I believe this to be true in many senses, that death has a Protean form. 1. It is quite certain that every allowed sin—of any kind—kills the power of the perception of truth. I might put it more strongly still. Sin weakens, and tends to destroy, every power we possess. Physical sin weakens physical strength. And both physical and mental sin weaken both mental and spiritual powers. And if the weakening process is allowed to go on, it will weaken till it kills! It will go on till it "brings forth death"! This is the result of two causes. (1) In the first place, by natural cause and effect, whatever weakens the moral condition, weakens the whole man. It weakens the action of the brain and of the heart; and so affects the whole being. (2) But still more, all the perception of spiritual truth depends upon the operation of the Holy Ghost; and each sin, grieving the Holy Ghost, causes Him to withdraw His assisting power; and, in the same degree, in which He withdraws from us, we are left impotent, and incapable of understanding, or even seeing truth. One habitually allowed sin will deaden the grace both of the mind and the heart, till, by more and more withering processes, the grace of both will die! Why are so many young men and young women prone to infidelity? Why have they grown sceptical of old and familiar truths which were dear to their parents, and were once dear to themselves? Look at their lives, their worldliness, their frivolity, their private habits, their secret or their open sins! There is the reason. Infidelity is a deadening thing. And "sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth that death." 2. Another consequence of any indulged sin is, that it necessarily involves some concealment, if not further positive sin. It cannot be compatible with a perfectly open character. No sin can go on without some hiding; and that hiding of one thing fosters a reservation, and an uncandidness, and untruthfulness in the whole life. And if once this openness goes, almost everything goes with it! Self-respect is essential to make life worth the living. But who can feel self-respect who is conscious of a hidden sin? The whole world may respect him; but self must bleach and tremble! And sin—any habit or affection which is unsanctioned by God and conscience—is destructive of all pure love. True love is too sacred a thing to stay in a breast with wrong deeds or wicked actions! The wrong love kills the good love. It "beings forth death"; and the good love dies. And what is love worth which is always carrying about with it a bad conscience? And who, that is tampering with any sin, whatever may be the service of his life, can escape a bad conscience? What—if all be happy and

prosperous outside—and that conscience is gnawing within a man? You are praised by a great many people, and conscience tells you all the while you would not have that praise if they but knew everything! What is all the praise but a very mockery! You are trusted; but you do not deserve that trust! You go on your knees, and say your prayers, but you feel all the while, with that secret sin in the heart, no prayer will avail. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." So sin kills prayer. A life—a real life—is to be useful, and do good to others. But if a person is living in any sin, that sin will paralyse, if not the will, certainly the power, to live to any good purpose. The consciousness of sin will always come across his mind, when he is speaking, checking him, incapacitating him. "Who am I to speak?" I, who am living myself so sinfully! And men are keen judges of each other. They very soon discover what is unreal in all your fine talking! And can God bless any effort that such a man makes? He may speak as an angel; but God has not sent him. This sin will turn his most living words to death! 3. But still more, when that man thinks of his own death, will he not foresee and know how that sin which he is now allowing will come up to his memory! How it will be a thorn in his dying pillow! And what a double dying will that "death" be—when the present "sin brings forth," at the end, its deathly power, to double and increase, a thousand-fold, the pangs of dying! But yet further, and far above all, that "sin" is wounding his own Saviour; and the more you confess it, and the more you hate it, as a Christian, the more you see how it wounds Him. It brings "death" on the Son of God! And no less it is grieving that Holy Spirit who has drawn him so often, and strove with him so patiently and so tenderly! And how can his soul live if that Spirit goes? And it wrongs his Father in heaven. And how can he call himself God's child, or plead the children's right, or claim a Father's love, at the hand of a wronged and outraged God? It kills his sonship! So "sin"—any one indulged sin even now—will be always sapping life, and weakening faith, till faith can believe nothing, and, removing all consciousness, "brings forth" the "death" of hope and heaven! And that is not all. 4. "Sin" is not "finished" yet. All sin has in it a necessity to increase. Sin makes sin. One barrier broken down, the stream of evil rushes on with a greater force; and another barrier giving way, the current swells, till it scarcely knows a check. But what will "sin finished" be? What will it be when, stripped of its soft and beautiful colours, it stands out, without a mask, in its true and native form? What a monster will every, least, sin look beside Perfect Holiness. (*Jas. Vaughan, M.A.*)

The allegory of sin and death:—In looking at the allegory as a whole, we note—1. Its agreement as to the relation of sin and death with the teaching of St. Paul (Rom. v. 12). 2. Its resemblance to like allegories in the literature of other nations, as in the well-known Choice of Hercules that bears the name of Prodicus, in which Pleasure appears with the garb and allurements of a harlot. 3. Its expansion in the marvellous allegory of Sin and Death in Milton's "Paradise Lost," where Satan represents Intellect and Will opposed to God, Sin its offspring, self-generated, and Death the fruit of the union of Mind and Will with Sin. In the incestuous union of Sin and Death that follows, and in its horrid progeny, Milton seems to have sought to shadow forth the shame and foulness and misery in which even the fairest forms of sin finally issue. (*Dean Plumptre.*)

Death, the result of sin:—The working of sin does not end with the angry speech, the lie, the act of dishonesty or sensual indulgence: it hardens, darkens, debases the nature, renders the heart opener than before to all evil influences, and less open to all good; and unless the Divine mercy intervene, will certainly at last yield as its result death, in the most comprehensive and awful sense of that word. From the nature of things, death, in the great Bible use of the term—blight and desolation over the whole man, spirit, soul and body—is the consequence of sin. Sin renders intercourse with God, who is the Fountain of life, impossible. It consists in the exercise of feelings that in their own nature are utterly inconsistent with true happiness; and it increases constantly in strength, in malignity, in power to destroy the peace of the soul. Death follows sin as naturally, and by as constant a law, as the deadly nightshade bears poison berries. Besides, looked at apart from these essential tendencies of sin, the relation which it bears to conscience and to the justice of God renders the connection between it and death—between iniquity and misery—indissoluble. Death is "the wages of sin," due to it in justice. Under the righteous administration of the affairs of the universe by God, there is the same obligation in justice that sin should be followed by death, as that a labourer should receive the recompense he has been promised and has worked for. *Sin is* spiritual death, and every act of sin

intensifies the spiritual deadness; to sin, and sin alone, is due that awful and mysterious change which severs soul from body, and which we commonly call death; and when sin is "finished"—when it is allowed to go on to its legitimate issues—"it bringeth forth" that intensity of misery, transcending our present powers of conception, which John calls "the second death," and which the Lord Himself, the Faithful Witness, describes as "outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (*R. Johnstone, LL.B.*) *Sin's consummation*:—Mr. Spurgeon says that he saw, while on a visit to the gardens of Hampton Court, many trees almost entirely covered, and well-nigh strangled by the huge coils of ivy, which were wound about them like the snakes about the unhappy Laocoon. There is no untwisting the folds; they in their giant grip are fast fixed, and the rootlets of the climbers are constantly sucking the life of the trees. There was a day when the ivy was a tiny aspirant, only asking a little aid in climbing; had it been denied, then the tree need not have become its victim, but by degrees the humble weakling grew in strength and arrogance, and at last it assumed the mastery, and became the destroyer. Just the same with the beginning of sin; the least little act of disobedience, it may be a lie, then another, then something else, and they become alarmingly frequent, and each time a little more wicked until they gain the mastery over us, and overwhelm us, and at last drag our souls down to hell. *Sin will destroy the sinner*:—Many years ago I saw in a museum a round stone, as large as a cannon-ball and quite round. It had been cut through by tools to see what was inside; and what was found? Right in the centre was a little rusty nail. A card stated that this stone had been found in the stomach of a horse. It had first swallowed that little nail, then petrifying matter had gathered round it little by little, till at length it had reached this size and destroyed the life of the animal. So in the end sin will destroy the sinner. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *Sin is fatal to the soul*:—The bosom sin in grace exactly resembles a strong current in nature, which is setting full upon dangerous shoals and quicksands. If in your spiritual computation you do not calculate upon your besetting sin, upon its force, its ceaseless operation, and its artfulness, it will sweep you on noiselessly, and with every appearance of calm, but surely and effectually to your ruin. So may we see a gallant ship leave the dock, fairly and bravely rigged, and with all her pennons flying; and the high sea, when she has cleft her way into it, is unwrinkled as the brow of childhood, and seems to laugh with many a twinkling smile, and when night falls the moonbeam dances upon the wave, and the brightness of the day has left a delicious balminess behind it in the air, the ship is anchored negligently and feebly, and all is then still save the gentle drowsy gurgling, which tells that water is the element in which she floats, but in the dead of the night the anchor loses it hold, and then the current, deep and powerful, bears her noiselessly whither it will; and in the morning the wail of desperation rises from her decks, for she has fallen on the shoal, and the disconsolateness of the dreary twilight, as the breeze springs with the daybreak and with rude impact dashes her planks angrily against the rock, contrasts strangely with the comfort and peacefulness of the past evening. Such was the doom of Judas Iscariot. Blessed with the companionship of our Lord Himself, dignified with the apostleship, and adorned with all the high graces which that vocation involved, he was blinded to the under-current of his character, which set in the direction of the mammon of unrighteousness, and which eventually ensured for him an irretrievable fall. (*Dean Goulburn.*) *The bitterness of finished sin*:—There is more bitterness following upon sins ending than ever there was sweetness flowing from sins acting. You that see nothing but *well* in its commission will suffer nothing but *woe* in its conclusion. You that sin for your profits will never profit by your sins. *A tremendous genealogy*:—What a frightful picture James paints! Desire has successfully solicited the will to an impure embrace. In the unblessed union the child, Sin, is conceived and finally brought forth. It is a little one. It may be as pretty and as playful as a tiger's kitten. But it grows. When Sin, which is so vigorous, has attained its growth, it becomes a dreadful parent, and its fearful offspring is Death. Before a man sins let him consider this tremendous genealogy. The sinner is the father of his own sin, and the grandfather of his own death! (*C. F. Deems, D.D.*) *Sin destructive*:—When Nicephorus Phocas had built a strong wall about his palace for his own security in the night-time, he heard a voice crying to him, "O, emperor! though thou build thy wall as high as the clouds, yet if sin be within, it will overthrow all."

Ver. 16. **Do not err.**—*A caution against error*:—I. WE ARE LIABLE TO ERR. 1.

From the weakness of our understandings, and the limited operation of the human faculties. 2. From the awfully mysterious subjects to which our attention is directed. 3. From the impositions and cheats practised upon us. II. IT IS NOT NECESSARY. If error were involuntary, it would be unnecessary to guard us against it. We need not err—1. Because we have a comprehensive and an all-sufficient directory. 2. Because we have a perfect Pattern and Exemplar. 3. Because we have an infallible Guide to conduct us into all truth. III. WE SHOULD BE ON OUR GUARD AGAINST ERROR. 1. Because error is discreditable. 2. Because error is uncomfortable. 3. Because error is unsafe. (*Sketches of Sermons.*) *Error*:—1. It is not good to brand things with the name of error till we have proved them to be so. After he had disputed the matter with them, he saith, "Err not." General invectives make but superficial impressions; show what is an error, and then call it so. Truly that was the way in ancient times. Loose discourses lose their profit. Blunt iron, that toucheth many points at once, doth not enter, but make a bruise; but a needle, that toucheth but one point, entereth to the quick. 2. We should as carefully avoid errors as vices; a blind eye is worse than a lame foot, yea, a blind eye will cause it; he that hath not light is apt to stumble (Rom. i. 26); first they were given up "to a vain mind," and then "to vile affections." Many, I am persuaded, dally with opinions, because they do not know the dangerous result of them: all false principles have a secret but pestilent influence on the life and conversation. 3. "Do not err"; that is, do not mistake in this matter, because it is a hard thing to conceive how God concurreth to the act, and not to the evil of the act; how He should be the author of all things, and not the author of sin; therefore he saith, however it be difficult to conceive, yet "Do not err." (1) You see, then, what need you have to pray for gifts of interpretation, and a "door of utterance" for your ministers, and a knowing heart for yourselves, that you may not be discouraged by the difficulties that fence up the way of truth. Chrysostom observeth that the saints do not pray, Lord, make a plainer law, but, Lord, open my eyes, that I may see the wonders of Thy law; as David doth. (2) It showeth how much they are to blame that darken truth, and make the things of God the more obscure. 4. Again, from that "Do not err." Take in the weightiness of the matter. Ah! would you err in a business that doth so deeply intrench upon the honour of God? The mistake being so dangerous, he is the more earnest. Oh! do not err. There is nothing more natural to us than to have ill thoughts of God, and nothing more dangerous; all practice dependeth upon it, to keep the glory of God unstained in your apprehensions. 5. From that "my beloved brethren." Gentle dealing will best become dissuasives from error. Certainly we had need to use much tenderness to persons that differ from us, speak to them in silken words. Where the matter is like to displease, the matter should not be bitter: pills must be sugared, that they may go down the better: many a man hath been lost through violence: you engage them to the other party. (*T. Manton.*) *On self-deception*:—I. MEN ERR BY ATTACHING GREATER IMPORTANCE TO THE AFFAIRS OF THIS LIFE, THAN TO THOSE OF ETERNITY. How many and great privations and dangers will the warrior pass through to gain the honour of a victory! Yet to conquer himself, to win a kingdom that cannot be moved—this never engaged his serious thoughts, never excited his desire. II. MEN DECEIVE THEMSELVES BY THE HOPE OF A DEATH-BED REPENTANCE. Is it not highly presuming on the patience of God when we expect that God will grant us "repentance unto life" eternal, in the day of sickness, after we have spent our best days in the service of sin? III. MEN ERR IN THEIR VIEW OF THE NATURE, THE EVIL, AND THE CONSEQUENCE OF SIN. Every sin, how small or insignificant soever it may seem to us, is an act of black ingratitude for multiplied mercies. It is a provoking of the wrath of God. Again, every sin, however secretly committed, will be brought to light in the day of judgment. The sins of omission as well as the sins of commission; the sins of the heart as well as the sins of the life; all will then be brought forward against every impenitent sinner, and exhibited to an assembled world. The pleasures of sin for a season are purchased at too dear a rate. What are the luxuries of life which "drown the soul in perdition," when contrasted with their reward—an eternity of anguish! IV. MEN ERR IN THEIR VIEW OF THE DIVINE LAW: THAT IS, THE MORAL LAW. They are not aware that the law of God "is spiritual"; that it extends to the secret chambers of the heart; that it condemns everything that the sinner does, says, or thinks, because it is not done, said, or thought, as the law requires. Multitudes erroneously imagine that the law is of no force, or, at least, that its exactions are greatly relaxed, since the death of Christ. This is a fundamental mistake. The

law of God, being a transcript of His own unchangeable holiness, is itself unchangeable. It will be the standard by which the righteous Judge will at the last day critically try all actions, words, and affections of men. V. MEN ERR AND DECEIVE THEMSELVES IN THE VIEW OF THEIR OWN CHARACTER. They imagine that though they are not what they ought to be, yet they are not so bad as others, and have a good heart, and mean well. If they are wrong, what must become of thousands? Some conclude that their state is good, because they are born of Christian parents, educated in a Christian land, admitted to Christian ordinances (Rev. iii. 17). VI. MEN ERR IN THEIR APPREHENSION OF THE CHARACTER OF GOD. They think Him to be altogether such an one as themselves. They venture upon sin, and presumptuously flatter themselves that God is not so rigid as to notice everything they do amiss. They foolishly conclude that because the Lord delayeth the execution of His threatenings, He will not pour out His fury on the ungodly. Application: 1. To those who may be under the influence of self-deception. If you are deceived, you neither will seek safety nor apprehend any danger: and if you are not undeceived before you die, you will be awfully convinced, but too late, of your fatal error. 2. To those who feel the vast importance of their souls' concerns, and are anxious to be preserved from error. Do you abandon the vain refuge of lies in which you once sought shelter? If it be so, we may pronounce your case a hopeful one. Yet rest not in present attainments; but press forward to the mark. Examine yourselves. Adopt the prayer of the Psalmist (Psa. cxxxix. 23, 24). (*E. Edwards.*) *Errors concerning God to be avoided:*—This verse emphasises the importance of having correct views of God. In regard to other things, wander into the forests of falsehood so far as one may, the man who holds the truth as to God can never be finally lost. And yet how few seem to appreciate that. Any philosophy of physical science is unsound and untrustworthy in proportion to its holding unsound relations to the truth as to God. The same is true in civil life: heresies in doctrine, errors in morals, and wrongs in life are to be traced almost invariably to some mistake of the truth as to God. Let a man be right here, and he has formed a hasp on which he may hang the first link of any chain of thought or action or life which he may be able to forge in time and in eternity. Do not wander from the great central truth as to God. (*C. F. Deems, D.D.*)

Vers. 17, 18. **Every good gift . . . is from above.**—*Gifts from above:*—It is not from the lowest but from the highest points that the best things in the world always come. We get from the sky, and not from the earth, all those gracious influences without which our world would be only a gigantic lifeless cinder rolling through space. Light and heat come down to us from above; and so do the sunshine that warms and quickens and beautifies everything, and the rain and the dew that refresh the face of nature. The ground is to the plant mainly the soil in which its roots are fixed; it obtains its food chiefly from above, from the air and the sunshine and the showers of heaven. Then, too, it is from the highest parts of the earth's surface, not from the lowest, that all the good things come which make the earth such a beautiful and comfortable home for man. The mountains, not the plains, are the sources of our greatest and most precious gifts. Were it not for the mountains there would be no streams to quench our thirst and water our fields—no winds to purify the air—no clouds to overshadow the earth in the heat of the day, and to keep in the warmth from being diffused in space at night. And is it not a very beautiful, as well as a very striking, thought, that all our flowers come to us originally from the mountains—from the highest and not from the lowest parts of the earth? They bloomed on the heights; and when the foul atmosphere of the plains and valleys vanished gradually, and the air and sunshine became so clear and bright that flowers could breathe in them, they descended as God's good and perfect gifts from above to beautify the lowlands with their lovely presence. Thus you see that even in the natural world every good and perfect gift literally is from above. The things that make this world most beautiful and best fitted to be our abode come from the heights. And is there not a wise lesson for your souls from this fact? If your ordinary natural life is supported and enriched by the good things which come from the sky and the highest parts of the earth, how much more should your true life—the immortal life of your souls—be nourished and enriched by the good things that come to you from the highest of all sources, from the Author of every good and perfect gift—the Father of Lights? The best and most perfect of all gifts has come from above, the unspeakable gift of God's dear Son; and with the gift of His own Son He gives you the gift of the Holy Spirit, that you may know and appreciate fully all the goodness

and perfection of Jesus Christ, and make Him your own; that He may work in you the faith which is the gift of God, by which you may believe in Christ to the saving of your soul, and enjoy all the blessings of salvation. In Christ the blessings of this life itself come to you from above, strained and filtered of all their evil, and made truly satisfying without any sorrow being added. And you will get every good and perfect gift from above—from the Father of Lights, by that wonderful ladder set up between earth and heaven along which the angels are ascending and descending—the new and living way of Christ's finished work—in answer to that real earnest prayer of yours which brings your heart and mind into closest contact with the mind and heart of God. (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*) *The best things are from above*:—It is not the things that come to you from the earth that will fill the void of your nature, but the things that come to you from heaven. You cannot call any gift that comes to you from below a good gift, for it is mixed with the evil of the earth, like the pure snow when it is soiled by the mud of the ground; or a perfect gift, because it is passing and perishing, and even when at its best it cannot satisfy your nature. There is ever some drawback to the goodness of the gift that you get from below; some imperfection that, like the worm in the apple, spoils the beauty and the sweetness of it. It is about the things that come from below that people always quarrel; about their lands and wealth and houses and properties—all of the earth, earthy. These are the causes of the frequent strifes and jealousies and greeds that make life often so unhappy. People do not quarrel about the things that come from above—the sunshine and the rain and the sweet influences of the starry Pleiades; and the things of Divine grace from a higher source still—the love and the beauty of heaven. The things that come from above sweeten and ennoble life, reconcile and unite men to one another, and make one family, one loving brotherhood of the human race. (*Ibid.*) *The Divine bounty*:—To the bounteous hand of God we owe all that we have, more than we deserve, and all that we hope for. The breath of life was given us by Him, and is dependent upon His pleasure. The stores from which we draw our subsistence are only ours by His permission. It is in His power to withdraw them from us, or us from them, at any moment. We have cause to be thankful that He has so long allowed us the benefit of His mercies. By the "good and perfect gift which is from above," he means more especially the Divine grace by which all other spiritual blessings are rendered attainable. Aptly, indeed, may the preventing and assisting influence of God's Holy Spirit be denominated a "good and perfect gift," since without it we could not make a beginning, much less any progress, in Christian goodness and perfection. (*Jas. Aspinall, M.A.*) *Divine goodness in human history*:—I. ALL THE GOODNESS IN HUMAN HISTORY COMES FROM GOD. This principle applies in a specially direct manner to the spiritual forms of human good. Divine influences on the soul come directly from God. Strength, consolation, hope, holiness, are the results of the soul's fellowship with God. Christian virtues are fruits of the Divine Spirit, coming down and operating on the individual character. II. THE DIVINE GOODNESS IN HUMAN HISTORY COMES IN SEPARATE GIFTS AND DIFFERS IN DEGREE. 1. It comes in separate gifts as man's demands arise (1 Kings xiii. 10). 2. It comes in different forms: physical; intellectual; spiritual. These forms differ in their intrinsic worth: "Good"—physical and intellectual; "perfect"—spiritual. This subject—(1) Sheds new light on the good of human life, and reveals its sacredness. (2) Fixed as a habit is favourable to the culture of religious sentiment: humility; gratitude; devotedness. (3) Reveals the stewardship of humanity. (4) Discloses the wickedness of a selfish life. (*Homilist.*) *God not the Author of evil, but of good*:—The origin of evil is a problem which, in all probability, will never be solved until we reach the world in which there is no evil. And I think we should do well to approach this problem from its brighter rather than from its darker side. I see more hope of our learning what evil is, and even whence it came, if we first ask ourselves what goodness is and whence that came. Now by "goodness" we mean moral goodness; goodness as it exists, or may exist, in man. And by human or moral goodness we mean, not a mechanical and involuntary conformity to law, but a free and willing choice of the righteousness which the law ordains. Moral goodness implies free choice, and how can there be a free choice of that which is good if there be no possibility of choosing evil rather than good? The will of man must have this solemn alternative before it—good or evil—if it is ever to become a good will. God does not make us good, therefore, but He has so made us that we may become good; and in order that we may become good we must be free to choose evil. He is good, perfectly and absolutely good,

because His will is fixed in its choice of goodness; and only as our wills rise to that steadfast attitude can we become good. Now if we start from this conception of goodness we shall define its moral opposite, evil, as the wrong choice of the will; we shall say that, just as men become good by freely choosing and doing that which is right, so they become evil by freely choosing and doing that which is wrong. And we shall not blame God for their bad choice, nor for leaving them free to make it; we shall admit that He must leave their will free if they are to be really good, and that, if the will is to be left free, it must be possible for them to choose evil rather than good. Thus we shall reach the conclusion that evil is from man, not from God; that it is not fatal necessity imposed upon them from above, but a wrong choice which they have made when a right choice was open to them. That evil springs from human lust, not from the will of God, St. James has shown us in the verses which precede these; and he now goes on to show how impossible it is that evil should come from God by considerations drawn from what God is in Himself, and from what He has done for us. Even his opening phrase, "Do not err, my beloved brethren," indicates that he is about to resume and carry further the argument with which he has already dealt. Now on this question of the origin of evil men do perpetually err. They ascribe it to a Divine origin. St. James will have no part in such opinions as these. Evil only too certainly is, but he is sure that it is not from God. And he tries to make us sure by giving us the facts and arguments which had most impressed his own mind. His first argument is drawn from the conception he had formed of the nature of God. God cannot be the Author of evil, he argues, because He is the Author of good, because He is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. "Every good gift and every perfect boon" is from Him; or, as the Greek implies, all that comes to us from God is good, and every good gift of His bestowal is perfect as well as good, perfect in kind and degree. But if all He gives is good, and even perfect, how can evil and imperfection spring from Him. As Bishop Sanderson has it, "We are unthankful if we impute any good but to God, and we are unjust if we impute to Him anything but good." St. James, however, is not content with the argument from the acknowledged and absolute goodness of God. With the ease and simplicity which we so much admire in the proverbs and parables of our Lord, he rises into a fine illustration of his argument. The illustration comes to this: "You might as well, and much more reasonably, attribute darkness to the sun as impute evil to God." But mark for a moment with what a natural and unforced ease he passes to his illustration. He had said, "Every good gift and every perfect boon is from above," from yonder fair, pure world on high. And as, in thought, he glances upward to that world, he sees the sun which God has set to rule the day, the moon and the stars which He has set to rule the night. Of these lights God is "the Father," and of all lights. But can the Source and Fountain of all light be the source and fountain of all darkness? Impossible. The sun gives light, and only light. If we are in darkness, that is only because the world has turned away from the sun, or our hemisphere of the world. And, in like manner, God gives good gifts, and only good. Thus, and so naturally, does St. James bring in his illustrative thought. But even yet he is not content with it. The thought grows as he considers it, grows somewhat thus. The Father of the lights must be more perfect than the lights He has called into being. They vary; even the sun for ever shifts its place, and its relation to the earth. But whatever inconstancy there may be in them, there is none in Him who made them. He is good, and doeth good only and continually. And now he advances another step. He argues that evil cannot be of God, because, of His own free will, God sets Himself to counterwork the death which evil works in us, by quickening us to a new and holy life: "Of His own will begat He us, by a word of truth." If we, when we were sinners, were redeemed and made anew by the free action of Divine will, can we for a moment suppose that evil sprang from the will which delivered us from evil? We acknowledge with joyful certainty and gratitude that He who begat us to a new and holy life, when we were "dead in trespasses and sins," must hate the evil from which He delivered us, that He cannot have been the Author of that which He sent His Son to destroy. It may be said, "You who are redeemed and born anew by the grace of God, at the word of His truth, may have reason to believe in His goodness: but what reason has the world at large, the world which is not saved as yet? Perhaps, in logic, it would be a sufficient answer to this objection were we to say: "The world may be saved if it will; God is always trying to save it; but, as we have seen, good as He is, He cannot make men good against their will." Logically, the answer is fair enough; but our hearts are not

to be satisfied by mere logic, and they crave a more tender and hopeful answer than this. Happily, St. James supplies the very answer they crave. God, he says, has begotten us, by some word of truth which met our inward needs, into a new and better life; and therefore we are sure that He hates evil and death. But He has begotten us, not simply that we ourselves may be saved from evil, but also "that we should be a kind of first-fruit of His creatures." Now the consecration of the first-fruits of the earth was a recognition of God's claim to the whole harvest, and a pledge that it should be devoted, in various ways, to His service. This was the great lesson of the first-fruit offering. It was not a tax on payment of which the harvest was to be exempted; it was a confession that it was all the gift of God, and was all due to Him. When, therefore St. James says that the regenerate are a kind of first-fruit of the creation, so far from implying that they alone are to be saved, he implies that "all flesh shall see the salvation of God," and that "the whole creation" shall have a part in their redemption. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *Every good and perfect gift*:—A gift is something that expresses the mind and betokens the love of the giver, and at the same time brings happiness to the receiver. What, then, is "a good gift"? That which fulfils these two requisitions. And what is "a perfect gift"? That which entirely fulfils these two ends. Now everything we have in the world—from the blade of grass, or the ray of sunshine—up to eternal glory; from the slenderest thought that darts through the mind to the highest flights of philosophy; from the earthly songs to the triumphant anthems of heaven—everything we touch, or feel, or see, or hear, everything is "a gift." A gift! We did not make it; we did not buy it; we did not deserve it. It is God who gives it, and He gives it lovingly of His own free will, and He give it to make whoever receives it happier and better. That is "a gift." But you may say, Is everything God gives us good? Does not He give us trials, sorrows, separations, sickness, bereavement, death? Are these good gifts?" Yes, as they came from Him they were "good." St. Paul was "caught up to the third heaven, and heard unutterable things." It was "a gift." Presently "there was given him"—it is his own expression—"a thorn in the flesh." It was "a gift," and a second gift. It was necessary to balance and make safe the first gift. Each alone was "a good gift," but the two in combination make "a perfect gift." Is there any difference between "a good gift" and "a perfect gift," or are we to take it only as a repetition of the same thought, expressing the same meaning, rising to the same climax? I think there is a difference. "A perfect gift" is one which exactly fits the minds and the taste of the receiver; expresses the whole heart of the giver, and can never be taken away. A gift which has in it perfect adaptation and eternity. Now we might say that all light—the light of the world—was but one light; but we see it broken up into its prismatic colours. There is the light of nature; there is the light of reading; there is the light of grace; there is the light of knowledge; there is the light of love; there is the light of heaven. But it all comes from the same spring, and in every case it is "the light" which is on it which makes the value of "the gift." Some of us have many "gifts." They are all "from above," from the same Father; but from the want of "the light" which should reign in that "gift," the gift is valueless. Nay, more, it is an unfulfilled possibility; it is the handle of temptation; it turns to self, to pride, to sin. The "gift" is abused; and in proportion as the "gift" is "good and perfect," it becomes evil, and it incurs the heavier "gift" of condemnation. (*Jas. Vaughan, M.A.*) *The work of God's Spirit*:—This text, I believe more and more every day, is one of the most important ones in the whole Bible; and just at this time it is more important for us than ever, because the devil is particularly busy in trying to make people forget God, to make us acknowledge God in none of our ways, to make us look at ourselves and not to God, so that we may become earthly. He puts into our hearts such thoughts as these: "Ay, all good gifts may come from God; but that only means all spiritual gifts. We are straightforward, simple people, who cannot feel fine fancies; if we can be honest, and industrious, and good-natured, and sober, and strong, and healthy, that is enough for us—and all that has nothing to do with religion. Those are not gifts which come from God. A man is strong and healthy by birth, and honest and good-natured by nature." Have you not all had such thoughts? But have you not all had very different thoughts; have you not, every one of you, at times, felt in the bottom of your hearts, after all, "This strength and industry, this courage, and honesty, and good-nature of mine, must come from God; I did not get them myself. If I was born honest, and strong, and gentle, and brave, some one must have made me so when I was born, or before. The devil cer-

tainly did not make me so, therefore God must. These, too, are His gifts!" Let us go through now a few of these good gifts which we call natural, and see what the Bible says of them, and from whom they come. First, now, that common gift of strength and courage. Who gives you that?—who gave it to David? For He that gives it to one is most likely to be He that gives it to another. David says to God, "Thou teachest my hands to war, and my fingers to fight; by the help of God I can leap over a wall: He makes me strong that my arms can break even a bow of steel." That is plain-spoken enough, I think. God is working among us always, but we do not see Him; and the Bible just lifts up, once and for all, the veil which hides Him from us, and lets us see, in one instance, who it is that does all the wonderful things which go on round us to this day, that when we see anything like it happen we may know whom to thank for it. So, again, with skill and farming in agriculture. From whom does that come? The very heathens can tell us that; for it is curious, that among the heathen, in all ages and countries, those men who have found out great improvements in tilling the ground have been honoured and often worshipped as divine men—as gods; thereby showing that the heathen, among all their idolatries, had a true and just notion about man's practical skill and knowledge—that it could only come from heaven; that it was by the inspiration and guidance of God above that skill in agriculture arose. Again, wisdom and prudence, and a clear, powerful mind—are not they parts of God's likeness? How is God's Spirit described in Scripture? It is called the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of prudence and might. Or, again, good-nature and affection, love, generosity, pity—whose likeness are they? What is God's name but love? Has not He revealed Himself as the God of mercy, full of long-suffering, compassion, and free forgiveness; and must not, then, all love and affection, all compassion and generosity, be His gift? Yes. As the rays come from the sun, and yet are not the sun, even so our love and pity, though they are not God, but merely a poor, weak image and reflection of Him, yet from Him alone they come. Or honesty, again, and justice—whose image are they but God's? Is He not The Just One—the righteous God? Are not the laws of justice and honesty, by which man deals fairly with man, His laws—the laws by which God deals with us? Now here, again, I ask: If justice and honesty be God's likeness, who made us like God in this—who put into us this sense of justice which all have, though so few obey it? Can man make himself like God? Can a worm ape his Master? No. From God's Spirit, the Spirit of Right, came this inborn feeling of justice, this knowledge of right and wrong, to us—part of the image of God in which He created man—part of the breath or spirit of life which He breathed into Adam. From whom else, I ask, can they come? Can they come from our bodies? What are they?—Flesh and bones, made up of air and water and earth—out of the dead bodies of the animals, the dead roots and fruits of plants which we eat. They are earth—matter. Can matter be courageous? Did you ever hear of a good-natured plant, or an honest stone? Then this good-nature, and honesty, and courage of ours must belong to our souls—our spirits. Who put them there? Did we? Does a child makes its own character? Does its body make its character first? Can its father and mother makes its character? No. Our characters must come from some spirit above us—either from God or from the devil. And is the devil likely to make us honest, or brave, or kindly? I leave you to answer that. God—God alone is the Author of good—the help that is done on earth, He doeth it all Himself: every good gift and every perfect gift cometh from Him. (*Canon Kingsley.*) *All good gifts from above:*—I. THE GENERAL TRUTH THAT GOD IS THE GIVER OF EVERYTHING GOOD. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above." The words rendered "gift" are not the same in the original. They are closely related, but not identical. The one signifies properly the act of giving, the other the thing given. A little before God is represented as He "who giveth liberally and upbraideth not." He stands pre-eminent alone, in His mood of giving. In His case, act and object entirely harmonise. All giving which is really, absolutely good—good in its origin and exercise—good without any mixture of evil, is from the hand of the infinitely, only good God. "And every perfect gift." Here He speaks of what is bestowed, of the benefaction itself. By "perfect" we are to understand complete of its kind, without radical defect, what is adequate, entire, fitted to serve the end, to accomplish the purpose intended. Every gift of this description, be it natural or spiritual, providential or gracious, ranging from common week-day mercies up to the highest crowning blessings of salvation, is of Divine origin and communication. Through whatever channel they reach us, in whatever quarter they present themselves to

view, they are all from above—primarily and properly from above. And they are so, not merely as being originally from a celestial region, but as coming from a Divine bestower. They are from God Himself—from God alone. Now mark how He, the great Giver, is here described. He is called "the Father of lights"—literally of the lights. The primary, direct reference, apparently, is to the grand luminaries of the firmament—the sun, moon, and stars of heaven. These majestic orbs, before which so many nations in all ages have bowed down to worship, are pre-eminently the lights of the natural world, and they were at first created, as they are still sustained, by Jehovah. As their Maker, Originator, He may be appropriately termed their Father. Light is the brightest, purest, most gladsome of all material elements; and hence it is very often used in Scripture as an emblem of knowledge, holiness, and joy—of all excellence, intellectual, moral, and spiritual—of whatever is most precious and perfect. All the glory of heaven is often represented by the same symbol. Everything which resembles this element, of which it is a fitting figure, is here pointed at in the remarkable designation. The bright orbs above shadow forth a higher, nobler splendour than their own, that which adorns the world of spirits, the kingdom of grace and glory. The whole of this light, shine where it may, proceeds from Him, has Him as its great source and centre. But men are not uniform, undeviating in their spirit and actings. They change, at one time they go in opposition to what they have done at another. The most regular and constant of them are subject to disturbing influences. And is it not so even with the material symbols here introduced by the apostle? But God is not only infinitely clearer and purer, He is also steadier, more constant than the great orbs of heaven. Hence, it is added, "With whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." He has no variableness about Him, no change, alternation, no fluctuation or uncertainty; no, not the least degree of it, not the most distant approach to anything of the kind, for He is without even "the shadow of turning." In these terms there may be, as is generally supposed, an implied contrast between the Father of lights and the lights themselves. All good, then, comes from Him, all kinds and degrees of it, natural and spiritual. Every blessing, great and small, whether for the body or the soul, is of His bestowal. And so nothing but good comes from Him—no evil whatever. He sends trials, troubles, no doubt, but these are often blessings in disguise, and the very best blessings. Night and storm have their beneficial influence in the natural world, and so have frowning providences in the spiritual. II. THE MORE SPECIAL TRUTH THAT GOD IS THE QUICKENER OF ALL THE SAVED. James speak of regeneration. It is evident that "begat" here is to be understood, not in the natural sense, but the spiritual; for he adds that it was effected by "the word of truth." There is no admission to His favour and family, no possibility of being one of His sons and daughters, but by being born again. 1. The origin of this regeneration. It is here attributed to God as its Author. It is effected by Him, and Him alone. We pass in it from the carnal to the spiritual, from the earthly to the heavenly. We are thenceforth actuated by wholly different views, feelings, desires, and motives. But more is here stated. James says, "Of His own will begat He us." When He regenerates, God acts according to His own free, sovereign purpose. It is always a most spontaneous, gracious proceeding. It is wholly self-moved. The new birth is never necessitated or merited by the creature. There is nothing about us to deserve it, to draw down the Divine power and mercy for its accomplishment (Eph. ii. 8, 9; Tit. iii. 5; 1 Pet. i. 3). 2. The instrument of this regeneration. "The word of truth," the word which is truth—truth without mixture of error, truth the purest and highest, truth absolute, Divine. Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy Word is truth." It is the Spirit who is the efficient agent in working this change. It was thus that peace first entered the dark, troubled bosom of Augustine. It was from the old Bible found in the library at Erfurt that Luther learned the way of life, and began not only to walk in it himself, but to guide into it the feet of multitudes. It was as his eyes rested on the precious words, "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin," that one of those noble soldiers of the Cross whom the army of our Queen has furnished, Captain Vicars, was led to that resolution, and entered on that course, which was followed by a career of eminent consistency and devotedness. This word is all pure, and is proved to be so by the influence it exerts, the holiness it produces in all who comes under its power. 3. The design or object of this regeneration. "That we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures." He speaks of the "creatures," and this term, perhaps, goes beyond the redeemed. It points probably to the wider deliverance—that emancipation extending to nature

itself, which is associated with the manifestation of the sons of God hereafter (Rom. viii. 21, 22). (1) We may learn here a lesson of gratitude. Think of our providential bounties, think of our religious privileges—think, above all, of our spiritual and saving mercies, and of what acknowledgments are due to Him from whom they all issue! (2) We may learn also a lesson of humility. We have not the slightest claim to any of these benefits. We have nothing to boast of, no worth, no merit, for our righteousness is no better than filthy rags, and our proper place is the dust of self-abasement. (3) And, finally, we may learn a lesson of holiness. Is God the Giver only of good? Is His begetting us the greatest, best proof that evil cannot proceed from Him, that He stands essentially opposed to all sin at the utmost possible distance from everything of the kind? Then, clearly, if we would act in accordance with the nature and design of our new birth, if we would show ourselves the children of this Father of lights, we must cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, we must ever seek to be sanctified wholly in heart and life, in soul and body. (*John Adam.*) *Divine gifts:*—I. THE CHARACTER OF THE GIVER. 1. The designation employed by the apostle is fitted to elevate our conception of Deity. God is "the Father of lights," the Creator and Governor of sun, moon, and stars. "God is Light." Not only has He kindled the luminaries of space, He is the Lord of all light, both physical, and also intellectual and moral. 2. The description of one of the Divine attributes exhibits the character of God still more clearly and delightfully. With Him there "can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning." There is no fickleness or caprice in the heart, in the actiou of the beneficent Almighty. II. THE QUALITY OF HIS GIFTS. 1. They partake of the nature of their origin. "From above." "What have we that we did not receive?" Yet too many men are like the swine that feast upon the acorns, but look not up to the tree whence the fruit falls. There is a Divine flavour, a Divine fragrance, a Divine beauty, in all the gifts of God. 2. They are good. They have all of them a natural goodness, and they are all a means, if used aright, to moral and spiritual goodness, and thus lead to something better than themselves. 3. They are perfect. (1) Commensurate with the character and resources of the Giver. (2) Adapted to the recipient. (3) Complete, being finished as they are begun. III. THE SPECIAL ILLUSTRATION OF DIVINE GOODNESS. Instead of charging God with tempting us to sin, we are directed to observe, and gratefully to acknowledge, the provision He in His wisdom and love has made for our highest welfare. 1. What it is—the new life. "He begat us," or "brought us forth,"—as it is differently translated. Our thoughts are thus led to the supreme blessing of God's covenant of grace. Has God given us His Son? He has done so that we might have life, eternal life. Has God given us His Spirit? He has done so that by that Spirit we might be born anew. The new, the higher, the spiritual life of humanity is the great fact of revelation, the great fact of the world's history. 2. Its origin in the Divine purpose. This gift came from God—"of His own will." Christians are "born not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." 3. Its means and instrumentality. A moral end must be effected by moral means. 4. Its end. That "we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures," is His aim in all He has done for our salvation. The early Christians were the first-fruits of a spiritual harvest, comprising the Church of Christ in all lands and through every age. Application: 1. Here we have an incentive to gratitude. 2. An inducement to confidence. 3. An encouragement to prayer. 4. An inspiration to hope. (*J. R. Thomson, M.A.*) *Natural and spiritual good:*—Whatever is excellent in the creature, is freely imparted to it by the bounty of the Creator; who is high in glory above all, perfect and unchangeable. I. THE GOOD WHICH WE RECEIVE FROM GOD MAY BE DIVIDED INTO TWO SORTS, NATURAL GOOD AND SPIRITUAL GOOD. 1. Under natural good is comprehended the animal life of our bodies, its health, and all things that contribute to support and render it comfortable. The reason and understanding of man, his power of memory, and faculty of speech, with the knowledge he is enabled to gain by them, and the arts and improvements of life which arise from them, are to be ranked under the same notion. 2. Spiritual good is whatever contributes to purify the soul, to raise it towards heaven, and to prepare it for the presence of God. It bears its blossoms of hope and peace here on earth; but produces a fruit which is to be gathered in eternity. II. LET US NEXT CONSIDER THE RIGHT USE AND IMPROVEMENT OF THIS DOCTRINE. 1. It should teach us gratitude and thanks for the blessings of life. 2. It should teach us a constant and humble dependence on the providence of God, under a sense of our own insufficiency to our welfare. 3. It teaches us submission

to God's blessed will in all things. III. Hitherto we have been describing our duty to God, as He is the Giver of all natural good; let us next consider it, AS HE IS THE AUTHOR OF ALL SPIRITUAL GOOD. 1. And, first, it is a duty which we owe to God and ourselves, when He sets such different objects before us, to weigh and examine their different value, and prefer the best. If what is temporal and worldly is oftentimes permitted to the unthankful and evil, let us desire some other blessing which is a surer token of the favour and loving-kindness of the Giver. 2. And to this we have the greatest encouragement, because He who is the Giver of this heavenly wisdom, hath graciously promised to bestow it on those who ask and seek it of Him. 3. The way, therefore, of asking and seeking so as to obtain, is by prayer, accompanied with a suitable practice. (*T. Townson, D.D.*) *Good things from God:*—1. That all good things are from above; they come to us from God. Mere evil is not from above: "the same fountain doth not yield sweet and bitter waters." God is good, and immutably good, and therefore it cannot be from Him, which was Plato's argument. But for good that floweth clearly from the upper spring, there are indeed some pipes and conveyances, as the Word, and prayer, and the seals; and for ordinary blessings, your industry and care. But your fresh springs are in God; and in all these things we must, as chickens, sip and look upwards. 2. Whatever we have from above, we have it in the way of a gift. There is nothing in us that could oblige God to bestow it; the favours of heaven are not set to sale. 3. Among all the gifts of God, spiritual blessings are the best: these are called here "good and perfect," because these make us good and perfect. 4. That God is the Father of lights. Light being a simple and defecate quality, and, of all those which are bodily, most pure and spiritual, is often put to decipher the essence and glory of God, and also the essences and perfections of creatures as they are from God. The essence of God (1 John i. 5). There light, being a creature simple and unmixed, is put to note the simplicity of the Divine essence. So also the glory of God (1 Tim. vi. 16). So Jesus Christ, in regard as He received His personality and subsistence from the Father, is called in the Nicene Creed, "Light of light, and very God of very God." So also the creatures, as they derive their perfections from God, are also called lights; as the angels (2 Cor. xi. 14); the saints (Luke xvi. 8). Yea, reasonable creatures, as they have wisdom and understanding, are said to be lights; so John i. 9. Well, then, if God be the Father of lights—(1) It presseth you to apply yourselves to God. If you want the light of grace, or knowledge, or comfort, you must shine in His beam and be kindled at His flame. We are dark bodies till the Lord fill us with His own glory. (2) It shows the reason why wicked men hate God (John iii. 19–21). He is the Father of lights; He hath a discerning eye, and a discovering beam. (3) It presses the children of God to walk in all purity and innocency (Eph. v. 8). 5. The Lord is unchangeable in holiness and glory; He is a Sun that shineth always with a like brightness. This is an attribute that, like a silken string through a chain of pearl, runneth through all the rest: His mercy is unchangeable, "His mercy endureth for ever" (Psa. c. 5). So His strength, and therefore He is called "The Rock of Ages" (Isa. xxvi. 4). So His counsel; He may change His sentence, the outward threatening or promise, but not His inward decree; He may will a change, but not change His will. So His love is immutable; His heart is the same to us in the diversity of outward conditions: we are changed in estate and opinion, but God He is not changed; therefore when Job saith (xxx. 21), "Thou art turned to be cruel," he speaketh only according to his own feeling and apprehension. Well, then—(1) The more mutable you are, the less you are like God. Oh! how should you loathe yourselves when you are so fickle in your purposes, so changeable in your resolutions! (2) Go to Him to establish and settle your spirits. (3) Carry yourselves to Him as unto an immutable good; in the greatest change of things see Him always the same: when there is little in the creature, there is as much in God as ever (Psa. cii. 26, 27). (*T. Manton.*) *God's gifts to man, and man's responsibility as inferred therefrom:*—The word "gift" is one of the loveliest in the language. It is a flower-like word, and full of fragrance. It is a most significant and expansive term. Like the firmament, it is inclusive of all bright things visible to man in the doings of God. You might enumerate every act of the Father, from the creation of man to the gift of the Holy Ghost, and all the operations of His mercy since, and group them all together; you may call the roll of all His deeds of love to man, and all His gracious acts to us individually: and above them all, or upon the face of each separately, one might, with the accuracy of entire truthfulness, write "Gift." They have all come to the race, and to each of us, fresh from His hand. There is not a hope I have in which I do not see

my Father's face; and the reflection of the face reveals the mirror's use, and makes it lovely. There is not a love known to your life, to which is any depth or purity, from which come not Divine reflections. Nor is there any sympathy in your heart or mine, friend, or any sweet impulse or prompting, no high aim or noble motive, no, nor any consolation which makes our sorrows like wounds which heal themselves in bleeding, not of God. I bring all these together, and string them like pearls upon one necklace, and lay them in the palm of His benevolence—a kind of tribute; my little gift to the All-giving. You may begin with the very lowest of His gifts to you—those that come through the ordinary channels of nature, and hence seem least connected with supernatural bestowment—even your bodily powers—and you can but see at a glance how perfectly you are equipped for usefulness and happiness upon the earth. In your own body find proof of your Creator's love. What grace, what beauty, what sensitiveness, and subtlety of feeling, has been given to the body! How responsive it is to the mind! how willing its subjection! how free and generous its service! I know that it shall fail, and be not; I know that by-and-by we shall have a better; but for the time being, for the present state of soul-development, how adapted the instrument is to the wishes and wants of the player! But it is not until you contemplate man in respect to his mental and moral faculties; it is not until you look within yourself, and behold the powers of your mind, and the more subtle but incomparably superior attributes of the soul—that you fairly see what God has done for you. What costly, what magnificent furniture is this with which the almighty Architect has fitted up and adorned the temple of the Spirit! Here is Reason—that pale but lovely reflection of God—which draws the line between beast and man: on one side of which is mastery, the powers and pleasures of intelligence and eternal life; on the other, inbred subjection, absence of thought, and existence that hurries to extinction. This is ours—our birthright; given, not bought: bestowed, not acquired—the sign and proof of our sonship, and a bond that binds us as with ties of blood to His eternal Fatherhood. Here, too, is Memory—life's great thesaurus, where we bestow all our jewels; that gallery in which are hung the faces of the loved as no limner could depict them; that chamber swathed thick with tapestry, on which the days, like flying fingers, have wrought grave and bright forms, and retained the otherwise transient joys. Who would give up his memory? who surrender this shield against forgetfulness? No one. And yet memory is one of God's gifts to you. Here, too, is Imagination, the divinest faculty of them all, winged like an eagle, tuneful as a lark. Of all faculties, of all powers given of God, I count this the greatest, the most subtle, the most ethereal, and the most Divine. Are you not rich in gifts? Are you not blessed? What more could He have done for you than He has done? Has He not given as a father who as a God should give—generously, munificently? What, now, let me ask, have you done for Him? Where are your days of labour? where the long account of service? How and when have you cancelled the bond and obligation you are under? When your Father called, have you answered? when He directed, have you gone? when He commanded, have you obeyed? To what use have you put these faculties? Or again: to what use do you put your memories? Its lessons are many. Do you allow them to teach you wisdom? Do you not know that the highest of all attainments is to so live that recollection shall not be painful? Half of heaven will consist of remembrance: the endless song will derive half its pathos and power from retrospection. The day hasteth on, yea, is even nigh unto us, when we must own all these children of the mind, be they white or black; when they will swarm about us, and say to Him who shall then be sitting in judgment, "This is our father and our mother!" And, lastly, imagination—what have you been doing with that? What are you doing with it day by day? Do you fill its hand with tare-seeds, and send it forth over all the field of your future life, compelling its unwilling palms to sow for a dire harvest? or have you even debauched it until its former Divine repugnance to such service is lost, and it delights itself in wickedness? Christ alone can forgive your abuse of reason; He alone can take remorse from recollection, even by washing out the record of the transgression which feeds it; He alone can restore your imagination to its original purity, and make it as familiar with spiritual sights and uses as you have made it with sensual. And so you see that the bestowments of grace are even greater than the bestowments of nature; and that, in this offer to rectify the misadjustment of your faculties, God does more for you than He did even in their endowment. The mercy which forgives and reforms is greater than the goodness that created. (*W. H. Murray, D.D.*) *Different temperaments given by God*:—I. Apart from the re-

ligious view of the subject, no thoughtful person can fail to admire the wisdom and the goodness of Almighty God IN GRANTING TO US HIS CREATURES CONSTITUTIONS AND CHARACTERS SO DIVERSIFIED. By means of that wonderful variety human intercourse has received an interest which could not otherwise have attached to it; human thought has been deepened and diversified, so as to include manifold views of every subject which it contemplates, and the work of the world generally is done in a far more perfect manner. II. We pass from the kingdom of nature to THE KINGDOM OF GRACE. These various temperaments with which God has endowed us, His rational creatures, were given for much higher ends than those which are merely natural. 1. Are you of the choleric temperament? God has need of you and of those gifts which He has bestowed upon you. He requires the earnestness of nature to be consecrated to the service of His grace, and He can raise the lofty aims of this temperament to a height to which nature never could aspire. 2. If we turn to the sanguine, we shall perceive that this has, no less, its own proper work for God. St. Peter was no unimportant element in the body of the apostles. Are not the great mass of men far too slow in receiving impressions of heavenly things? 3. So also the phlegmatic serves an important purpose in the Church of Christ. If we are called upon to a ready obedience to God's holy will, there is another attribute of a faithful service which He no less requires and approves, a steady consistency and stability. 4. And assuredly if all these temperaments are intended by God to be sanctified in the individual and made thereby serviceable also to the Christian community, the same may be said of that which still remains—the melancholic. The temperament of tenderness and of depth could not be removed from the body of Christ without serious loss to every member of it. III. I want you to believe that THERE IS FULL PROVISION IN THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST, AND IN THE DISPENSATION OF THE GRACE OF GOD, FOR THE SANCTIFICATION OF ALL THESE VARIOUS TEMPERAMENTS AND DISPOSITIONS. 1. We have referred to the example of our Lord as a means of sanctification and a proof of the possibility of every temperament being made holy and acceptable for the work of God. And this first view of the subject is not devoid of importance. Jesus Christ is the model man. He is much more; but He is this as well. He shows us in His life what man should be. Now in that life we behold all the four temperaments of which we have been speaking, and we behold them all perfectly sanctified. (1) In Jesus we behold the melancholic temperament—He was "a Man of sorrow and acquainted with grief"; but we behold it sanctified and free from every stain of sin, calm and uncomplaining in the peace and the love of God. (2) If we pass to the phlegmatic, we shall perceive that this was not lacking in the human constitution or in the earthly life of Christ. He had all its calmness, its peace, its silence. (3) In Him, too, we see the excellences of the sanguine temperament; specially we may note its readiness and its trustfulness. (4) And so, moreover, in Him we see the choleric temperament present and sanctified. The hypocritical misleaders of the people are called "whited sepulchres." He calls the scribes and Pharisees "hypocrites," &c. His life displays all the firmness, energy, and decision of this temper. 2. But, again, there is provision for the sanctification of this temperament in the redeeming work of Jesus. On the Cross He offered a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. He there tasted death not for one temperament, for one class, for one nation; but for every man. And as He died for all, so He ever liveth to make intercession for all who come unto Him. 3. There is all provision for the daily sanctification of the life of nature in the words of Jesus. To the choleric He prescribes, by His example and in His words, the spirit of love. To the sanguine He says, that if it would build a tower, it must sit down first and count the cost, &c. To the phlegmatic He says, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself," &c. To the melancholy, longing for sympathy, He says, "Lo, I am with you always"; dreading the difficulties and dangers of an earthly life, He says, "In the world ye shall have tribulation. But be of good cheer," &c. 4. Nor would it be right to overlook another important means which God has provided for correcting our natural faults, and disciplining our powers and faculties; I mean His providential dealings with us. They are far more; they are instruments of a Divine discipline, parts of that training which the good providence of God affords, in conjunction with those other means which are set forth in the gospel, and provided in the ministry and ordinances of the Church. 5. But once more let it be observed that the great agent in the sanctification of the human temperaments and of the human heart is the Holy Spirit of God. It is He who makes every other means efficacious—flowing in every channel as a stream of life. (*W. R. Clark, M.A.*) *All good*

gifts are from God:—God is the fountain of all goodness, the giver of all good gifts, the author of all good things in men, He worketh whatsoever is good in the whole world. Here, hence St. Peter calleth Him the God of all grace (1 Pet. v. 10), because all grace and all good gifts come only from Him, as from a well-head and fountain. All the effects of God's will are only good, and whatsoever virtue, grace, good gifts, it is from God. In this place Almighty God is adorned with three ornaments, wherein His excellent goodness more appeareth. 1. First, He is called the Father of Lights, the Fountain and Well-spring, the Author and Cause from whence all good gifts flow and spring unto men. 2. Secondly, and moreover, it is attributed unto God that He is not variable, mutable, changeable, with whom there is, saith St. James, no variableness. This is added to prevent that which otherwise might have been objected, they might say, God, indeed, is sometimes the cause of good things among men, it followeth not therefore but that He may be sometimes in like manner the cause of evil. God is not variable, there is no changing with Him, He is constant, always alike, ever cause of good, never author of evil: whereof even Balaam the covetous prophet truly prophesied (Numb. xxiii. 19). When God altereth things at His own pleasure, saith Gregory, the things alter, but He remaineth the same, and changeth not. Therefore by His prophet Malachi He crieth, "I am the Lord, I change not; and you sons of Jacob are not consumed." 3. Thirdly, as God changeth not, so there is no shadow of turning with Him. He is not like the sun, the moon, the stars, which appear and shine sometimes, but at other times are covered with darkness, which have their changes and their courses, the day now, within ten, eleven, or twelve hours the night; the sun glorious now in beauty, but anon in an eclipse; the moon now in the full, now in the wan, now new, now a quarter old, and so forth. The planets now in this place of heaven, now in that shining. There is no such turning with God. He is not now good, and now turned to the contrary, for He is always light, and with Him is no darkness at all. For His goodness is always clear, bright, and continually shining. (*R. Turnbull.*) *Every good gift is from God*:—There is no such thing as spontaneous goodness among men. If there be anything good in the universe, enjoyed by men or beasts, or any other thing living in heaven or on earth, visible or invisible, it is the gift of God. If it be a transient good, enjoyed and then gone, so that nothing but the memory of the enjoyment is left, it is the gift of God. If it be the fountain of a stream rolling out pleasure or power to irrigate the world, it is the gift of God. The universe may be searched. If anywhere anything can be found which any intellect can perceive, and any heart can feel to be good, it has come from God. If it be good for any man's body, good for any man's soul, good for any man's spirit, if it be good for any other animal, if it be good for the present or future inhabitants of the earth—find a good thing, and you find a Godsend. (*C. F. Deems, D.D.*) *God's good gifts*:—First, perhaps, to strike the eye amongst the clusters of our Canaan is home—the father's reason made silken by affection; the mother's voice sweeter than any music; the kindly strength of the brother; the fondness of the sister; the comeliness and sparkle of little children. Friendship is a kindred cluster englobing rich wine. Another fruition is philanthropy, delicious as a fruit of paradise plucked from some branch running over the wall. Then the eye longs to drink as well as the lip, and the ear to drink as well as the eye, so art displays creations refreshing as the vineyard's purple wealth; the artist with marble and canvas unsealing fountains of beauty, the musician with pipe and string pouring streams of melody. Science shows the earth a great emerald cup, whose fulness flashes over the jewelled lip. Literature is a polished staff bearing grapes beyond those of Eshcol. Commerce is a whole vine in itself, and we gaze at its embarrassing lavishness with amazed delight. Patriotism is a first-rate grape whose generous blood gives to the spirit that unselfish glow which surpasses all sensual pleasure; and the best wine runs last in that sentiment of humanity which gives the crowning joy to the festival of life. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) "*Again, again, and again!*"—"*Iterum, iterum, iterumque*"—"Again, again, and again." Such was the motto wittily adopted by the English dramatist, Samuel Foote, after he happily became the possessor of a third fortune, when two previous fortunes had been entirely squandered away. "Again, again, and again" he had been favoured; and placed each time in an increasingly responsible position. With each new endowment he had the experience of the past to guide him, and had less excuse to furnish for any misuse of his possessions. Samuel Foote's motto may be adopted by every reader in relation to the mercies he has received. Not once, not twice only, has God blessed us, but "again, again, and again." It

would be an interesting calculation if the reader could survey his past life and tabulate the number of mercies, in the form of meals, he has received; the number in the shape of suits of apparel, and the number in the persons of friends to cheer life's pilgrimage. Suppose you are twenty years of age, then God has placed upon your breakfast-table 7,300 refreshing repasts to fit you for the day's duties. And if you have partaken of four meals a day, then in twenty years the bountiful Giver of every good and perfect gift has provided for you no fewer than 29,200 meals. This is irrespective of the delicious fruits which He has oftentimes showered into your lap between the stated meals. Are all these mercies to be received and employed by us without acknowledgment? (*J. H. Hitchens, D.D.*) *God the Source of gifts*:—In 1808 a grand performance of the "Creation" took place at Vienna. Haydn himself was there, but so old and feeble that he had to be wheeled into the theatre in a chair. His presence roused intense enthusiasm among the audience, which could no longer be suppressed as the chorus and orchestra burst in full power upon the passages, "And there was light." Amid the tumult of the enraptured audience the old composer was seen striving to raise himself. Once on his feet, he mustered up all his strength, and in reply to the applause of the audience, he cried out as loud as he was able, "No, no! *not from me*, but," pointing to heaven, "from thence—from heaven above—comes all!" saying which he fell back in his chair, faint and exhausted, and had to be carried out of the room. **The Father of lights.**—*The Father of lights*:—Among the good things, the best is light, the physical light which makes the things of the outer world visible, the intellectual light which enables any man to see truths and their relations, the spiritual light which enables a man to walk as seeing Him that is invisible and the invisible world by which He is surrounded. God is the "Father of lights," the source of all conceivable modes of illumination, and He pours down upon men all the good things they have. It is not a shower, an occasional gift of things desirable, but it is an unceasing rain of blessings. It is incessant sunshine. As at all hours rays of light are going off in all directions from the sun, and covering all the space of the solar system, so are God's gifts going from Him, descending from Him, ceaselessly, in an unbroken stream of blessing, and an uninterrupted radiation of light. He is the Father of lights, the Producer of the heavenly bodies, the Source of all the light of knowledge, all the light of wisdom, all the light of faith, all the light of hope, all the light of love, all the light of joy. If any man arise in his generation to shine as a star in the hemisphere of human society, God kindled the splendour of his intellect and the benign radiance of his high spiritual character. If any woman arise to brighten a home, or send the kindly light of her sweetness over any cheerless portion of our race, it was God who dwelt in her heart, and smiled through her life. If on the coast of our humanity we, mariners on life's uncertain sea, behold lighthouses so placed along the shore as to enable us to take bearings or shape courses that bring us to our havens of safety, it is God who has erected each such lighthouse and kindled each such pharos. (*C. F. Deems, D.D.*) *The Father of lights*:—God, as the Author of all our spiritual light, receives a faint illustration from the sun, as the source of natural light. The rays from the sun are of three kinds, differing from one another probably only as to the lengths of the waves of which they are composed. 1. Light rays. Nearly all the light we receive comes from the sun. Even the moonlight is but reflected sunlight. Even when we are in the shade, or in the house where we cannot see the sun, the light we receive is sunlight, dispersed from the particles in the air, reflected from all things around us; even the light of our lamps and gas-burners is but sunlight which has been stored up in the earth. So it is that all our spiritual light, from whatever sources it seems to come, is really from God. Our white sunlight is really composed of thousands of colours, shades, and tints, which fill the world with beauty. Such variety is in the pure light from God, reflected from our manifold natures, needs, and circumstances. 2. Heat rays. Nearly all the heat in the world comes directly or indirectly from the sun. The fires that warm us and that are the source of power are from the wood or coal in which the heat of the sun has been stored. Such is God's love to us. 3. Chemical rays, which act upon plants and cause the movements of life. These rays are in a sense the source of life, the instrumentality of life. So God is the Source of our spiritual life. Light, love, and life all come from the Father of lights. (*Christian Age.*) *Prayer for light*:—I suggest to you all the prayer of a Puritan who, during a debate, was observed to be absorbed in writing. His friends thought he was taking notes of his opponent's speech, but when they got hold of his paper,

they found nothing but these words, "More light, Lord! More light, Lord!" Oh, for more light from the great Father of lights! (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Father of lights*:—The sun does not shine for a few trees and flowers, but for the wide world's joy. The lonely pine on the mountain-top waves its sombre boughs and cries, "Thou art my sun"; and the little meadow violet lifts its cup of blue, and whispers with its perfumed breath, "Thou art my sun." And the grain in a thousand fields rustles in the wind and makes answer, "Thou art my sun." So God sits, effulgent in heaven, not for a favoured few, but for the universe of life; and there is no creature so poor or so low that he may not look up with child-like confidence and say, "My Father, Thou art mine." (*H. W. Beecher.*) **With whom is no variableness.**—*The unchangeableness of God*:—I. CONSIDER GOD, AS HE IS UNCHANGEABLE IN HIS OWN NATURE AND PERFECTIONS. This Author of all must be unchangeable. He cannot change for the better, because He hath in Himself all excellences. He cannot change for the worse, because neither can He have a will or a power to hurt Himself, nor can other beings be able to diminish His perfections, since they have no other strength than He gave them, and receive their nature and qualities from Him. Thus reason teacheth us to conclude that God is unchangeable. The Holy Scriptures also teach us the same. II. CONSIDER GOD IN HIS DEALINGS WITH US, AS HE IS OUR RULER, AND SHOW THAT HE IS UNCHANGEABLE IN HIS WILL, HIS PURPOSES, AND DECREES. This is a manifest consequence of what has been said; for, if God is unchangeable in His nature and perfections, whatsoever He decrees and resolves concerning mankind in general, or any of us in particular, He must and infallibly will accomplish. To resolve and not to perform is a certain mark of imperfection. III. CONSIDER THOSE ACTIONS AND THAT PART OF GOD'S CONDUCT TOWARDS MANKIND, WHICH SEEM TO ARGUE IN HIM INCONSTANCY AND CHANGE OF MIND. 1. When God is said to repent, and to be grieved, it is manifest that such popular expressions are to be understood as spoken in condescension to the weakness of our apprehensions. 2. We learn from the Scriptures that God gave the Jews ritual laws, which in themselves and of their own nature were not good, and which He afterwards repealed by His Son. The gospel is the natural and the moral law in full perfection; but, as we are imperfect, and cannot live up to it, it was suitable to perfect goodness and mercy to use some abatement and condescension. Therefore God, in compassion to our infirmities, to exact unsinning obedience, substitutes repentance, which is accepted through the propitiation and mediation of Christ. 3. We find in the Scriptures some promises and threatenings, which are so expressed that they seem to be absolute and irreversible; which yet, as the event showed, were not accomplished; and this seems not to agree with the unchangeable nature of God. The following observations may serve to explain this matter, and to set it in a true light. (1) All the promises and threatenings contained in the New Testament are conditional, and the condition is plainly expressed. Thus our happiness or misery is made to depend upon our own choice and behaviour. In the Old Testament likewise, the far greater part of God's promises and threatenings are of the same kind: they are conditional, and the condition is named expressly. (2) Some of God's decrees concerning societies or particular persons have no dependence upon the moral behaviour of men; and these consequently are absolute and irreversible. (3) These decrees excepted which are prophetic and providential, all other declarations, though they may seem absolute and unchangeable, yet are not so; for God reserves to Himself a power of altering them, or suspending their execution. Application—1. The consideration of God's unchangeable nature compared with our changeable condition, may teach us to entertain humble thoughts, and to know ourselves to be most imperfect creatures in all respects. 2. Since God is set forth in the Scriptures as the bright and perfect original which in all things we should resemble, His unchangeable nature reminds us that we must endeavour, like Him, to be constant in all that is good, in our love of virtue, and in our lawful promises to one another. 3. The unchangeable nature of God suggests very powerful dissuasions from vice. There is a law which declares that impenitent vice shall end in destruction. This law is eternal and unchangeable. (*J. Jortin, D.D.*) *The unchangeableness of God*:—I. EXPLAIN WHAT IS MEANT. By the immutability of God we mean that He always is, and was, and will be, the same; that He undergoes no changes either of His essence and Being, or of His properties and perfections. II. SHOW THAT THIS IS ESSENTIAL TO GOD. 1. From the dictates of natural reason; which tells us that nothing argues greater weakness and imperfection than inconstancy and

change. Now if the Divine nature were subject to change, this would cast an universal cloud upon all the Divine perfections, and obscure all other excellences. And, as mutability in God would darken all His other perfections, so would it take away the foundation and comfort of all religion; the ground of our faith, and hope, and fear, of our love and esteem of God, would be quite taken away. 2. This will yet more clearly appear from the Divine revelation of the Holy Scriptures, which tell us that God is unchangeable in His nature and in His perfections, in all His decrees, and purposes, and promises, in His essence and Being. "I am that I am" (Exod. iii. 14); this is His name, whereby He made known Himself to the comfort of His people, and to the terror of the Egyptians, their oppressors. "From everlasting to everlasting Thou art God" (Psa. xc. 2). "Thou art the same, and Thy years fail not" (Psa. cii. 27). "I am the Lord, and change not" (Mal. iii. 6). Hence it is that the title of "the living God" is so frequently attributed to Him; and He swears by this, as denoting not only His eternity, but His unchangeableness—"As I live, saith the Lord." Hither, likewise, we may refer those texts where He is called the "incorruptible God" (Rom. i. 23), "The immortal King" (1 Tim. i. 17), and is said "only to have immortality" (1 Tim. vi. 16). And He is immutable, likewise, in His perfections; hence it is so often said in the Psalms that "His goodness and His mercy endure for ever"; His righteousness is likewise said to "endure for ever" (Psa. cxi. 3), and to be "like the great mountains" (Psa. xxxvi. 6); not only visible and conspicuous, but firm and immovable; and the same, likewise, is said of His truth and faithfulness, "His truth endureth for ever" (Psa. cxvii. 2), and of His power, "In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength" (Isa. xxvi. 4). And so likewise in His decrees, and purposes, and promises (Psa. xxxiii. 11; Isa. xiv. 24; Num. xxiii. 19; Psa. lxxxix. 33). APPLICATION—1. In regard to sinners and wicked men. (1) The unchangeableness of God is matter of great terror to wicked men. Let but the sinner consider what God is, and the consideration of His unchangeable nature must needs terrify him (Hab. i. 13; Psa. v. 4, 5; Exod. xxxiv. 7; Psa. xc. 11, lxxvi. 7; Rev. xviii. 8). (2) This should be a powerful argument to urge sinners to repentance. 2. In reference to good men, the consideration of God's unchangeableness is matter of great consolation to them; in all the changes and vicissitudes of the world, their main comfort and hope is built upon a rock, it relies upon the unchangeable goodness and faithfulness of God, "all whose promises are yea and amen," truth and certainty. (*Abp. Tillotson.*) *The unchanging God:*—There are two facts for us to look at here; the first fact, that this world and all that is in it are full of change; the second fact, that God who made us, and from whom comes every good gift, is unchanging. The face of the earth and the history of its people are always changing. If we turn from the world of nature and look at ourselves, we shall see change everywhere. Have you ever known what it is to revisit your home after an absence of many years? All changed. The place, once so familiar, looks strange and unnatural now. Yes, the tree lives yet, but the hand that planted it is gone. Seeing these constant changes in the world, in ourselves, in our friends, it becomes a tremendous thought that God is just the same as ever. The same as the God of the new-made universe, the same as the God of Abraham, of Moses; the same who took our flesh and was made man; the same who rose again and ascended into heaven, the Christ of the Gospels, ever the same. One great reason why our lives are so full of change is that we may learn that this is not our rest. That we may look up from changing earth, to a changeless God, and on eternity, where a thousand years are but as yesterday. The gift of faith in believing, the gift of hope, and of life eternal—these things change not; the gifts of the world, the greatness of the world, pass away, God and His gifts alone remain unchanging. 1. First of all, God's justice is unchanging. 2. Again, the lovingkindness of God is unchanging. 3. Again, the tender care of God for us is unchangeable. 4. Lastly, the forgiveness of God is unchangeable. God will forgive us our sins on the same conditions as of old, and on no other. (*H. J. Wilmot Buxton, M.A.*) *No variableness in God:*—Apart from revelation, men in general would not have supposed that God, the Creator of a changeful world, is Himself unchangeable. The heathen nations appear for the most part to have regarded their gods as beings subject to like passions, to the same fickleness of mind and purpose with themselves. Such was the common belief, though here and there one might be found gifted with a deeper insight (Num. xxiii. 19). The laws by which He governs us are as fixed and immutable, though to us as unsearchable, as those by which He directs the vicissitudes of the seasons and the succession of storm and calm, of sunshine and rain. The great event in the

world's history, the Incarnation of Christ, took place so as to seem an after-thought —an interruption in the course of things, occasioned by the sin of man; but what says the Scripture (1 Pet. i. 20; Rom. xvi. 25; Eph. iii. 11)? And this being true of the most wonderful work of His providence and love, we may be sure it holds good of all His dealings with us. His gracious purposes towards us do not vary, they are Yea and Amen. Though His favour may seem to be withdrawn, and His face turned away from us, it is not so even for a moment. God is said here to be "the Father of lights." He is the Source of all illumination. The light of day, the light of earthly happiness, the light of reason, the light of conscience, the light of revelation, all are from Him, and whether they are continued to us or withdrawn, His purpose is the same—to prepare us for a still more marvellous light into which He is bringing us, even the light of His presence. But while He is so constant, so immutable, what are we? How fickle, how moody, how unstable! We build castles in the air, and hovels on the ground; promising much, performing little; doing a thing to-day, wishing it undone to-morrow; full of bravery as to the future, and cowards for the present, changing our opinions at the bidding of our interests; making our way through life, not like the bird of passage, intent upon an unseen home, but like the butterfly, in ancient times chosen as the emblem of the human soul, flitting this way and that, without any certain course in view. Above all, as to the most important concerns of our souls, often we keep not the same resolution for two days, or even two hours together—strongly impressed one hour with their overwhelming importance, aroused, distressed, anxious about them; the next, how glad to get rid of them, to be willingly, wilfully forgetful of them! But the changeableness of our nature has its good as well as its evil side. If you have given yourself up to some bad way, you are not to look upon it as a thing from which there is no escape, a prison from which you cannot get forth. If, indeed, you will not make the effort, you must be as you are; if you will, you may be made free. But in no case is it more true than in yours, that "who would be free themselves must strike the blow." You will be aided, indeed, by God's good Spirit. But you must strive as if all depended on yourself, and then the most inveterate propensity to evil may be overcome, and you may be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so as to know by your own experience what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (*W. G. Humphry, B.D.*) *The changeless Father*:—It is not necessary to press the astronomical figures which St. James employs. It is clear that he means to assert most emphatically two things about God, namely, that with Him there is no *alienation* of goodness and no *obscuration* of goodness. As one says, "God is always in the meridian." (*C. F. Deems, D.D.*) *God's inflexibility*:—He cannot change. He cannot call that no sin which is sin; nor that a small sin which is a great sin; nor that a private sin which is a public sin. His purpose is not the easy, pliable, changeable thing which thine is. He is the God only wise, only righteous, only mighty, and is, therefore, above all such vacillations. O saint, remember that thou hast to do with a holy and unchangeable God! O sinner, think that thou hast also to do with Him, and that this inflexibility is as yet all against thee! He will not alter either His law or His gospel to suit you. You must take them as they are, or perish for ever! *God's unchangeableness*:—An old writer says, "A man travelling upon the road espies some great castle; sometimes it seems to be nigh, another time afar off; now on this hand, anon on that; now before, by and by behind; when all the while it standeth still unmoved. Thus it is with God; sometimes He seemeth to be angry with the sons of men, another time to be well pleased; now to be at hand, anon at a distance; now showing the light of His countenance, by and by hiding His face in displeasure; yet He is not changed at all. It is we, not He, that is changed. *God cannot change to become a tempter*:—There is never a time at which one could say that through momentary diminution in holiness it had become possible for Him to become a tempter. (*A. Plummer, D.D.*) *God unchangeable*:—There are many Christians, like young sailors, who think the shore and the whole land do move, when the ship and they themselves are moved; just so, not a few imagine that God moveth, and faileth, and changeth places, because their souls are subject to alteration; but the foundation of the Lord abideth sure.

Ver. 18. **Of His own will begat He us.**—*Spiritual life: its cause and its grandeur*:—Let us consider—I. THE AUTHOR: II. THE NATURE: III. THE INSTRUMENT: and IV. THE END OF THE GREAT CHANGE. I. WE HAVE GAINED THE SUMMIT OF THE MOUNTAIN OF TRUTH WHEN WE REACH GOD. What wonders, majesties, mysteries, lovelinesses centre in that name! He is the blessed and only Potentate on whom eternity and

creation and redemption repose. How God as a sovereign works the salvation of a soul from the slavery and death of sin, in conformity with the laws of free agency and responsibility, may be incomprehensible to us; but surely there is nothing unreasonable in affirming that infinite perfection works out everything in the highest scale of moral excellence, and in accordance with the designs of Divine wisdom, justice and love, amid a world full of sinful but accountable creatures! II. IN FREE, RICH, AND SOVEREIGN GRACE, THEREFORE, THE LORD BEGETS US. And the outcome means life—spiritual, heavenly, Divine. It is not a mere polishing of the human spirit, or the giving of a right direction to its faculties only. The grandeur of the change is implied in such phrases as, being born of God; passing of death to life; a new creature; quickened with Christ from the death of sin; the washing of regeneration; and the new heart, out of which proceed thoughts, affections, principles, desires, and hopes—all new. The day of its occurrence is called a day of power; a time of refreshing; a springtime of grace. God draws and renews the soul in mercy and truth, and re-traces on it the lines of His own likeness in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. It must not be forgotten that a moral life, however estimable in the sight of men, is not acceptable with God unless it be the offspring of the new birth. By no means can a dead soul please a living God. The tree must be made good by the omnipotent workmanship of God, or the fruit will be apples of Sodom. The necessity of life from God is proved by such varieties of evidence as bespeak the greatness of the gift; and show at the same time the criminal nature and heinous guilt of unbelief. The perfect law of liberty demands a pure heart that loves God with all its strength and mind and soul. From every throne and crown of glory and harp of gold in heaven there flashes the demonstration that a sinful man must be born again before he can enter the gate of the golden city. III. "THE WORD OF TRUTH" IS THE INSTRUMENT OF CONVERSION. Truth is God at work on a human spirit, for its rectification and investiture with His own perfection and beatitude. The gospel derives its power from the image of God which it mirrors forth; from the knowledge of sin and wrath which it communicates; from its professed design to set forth the propitiation and grace of the Lord Jesus, to make men partakers of the Holy Ghost, of God's righteousness, and the sunshine of His favour. More glorious than the law, and revealing life and immortality, it moulds men into saints, and constrains them to love and obedience. The gospel is all grace. Invented by God to communicate this blessedness and glory, its excellency is infinite. It civilises, it moralises, it converts. It is the glory of Jehovah that He gave the gospel; of any people, that they possess it; of a soul, that its unsearchable riches are his own; of heaven, that it is the field where its wealth and its wonders shall be displayed; of eternity, that it alone can contain all its magnificence. IV. THE DESIGN OF GOD IN REGENERATION IS TO MAKE US "A KIND OF FIRSTFRUITS OF HIS CREATURES." The incomparable excellence of the new life is seen in the formation of holy character in the sense of duty, which is power. Believers feel themselves to be the property of the great High Priest who bought them; in everything they are desirous to please Him. Under the imperishable principles of the living Word, they are shaped after the Divine likeness in bliss, purity, and moral greatness. It was a law in Israel that the "first fruits" should be offered to God; and preceded by an oblation for sin, they were accepted by God in worship as a grateful acknowledgment that the riches of the harvest and the beauties of spring and the products of the vegetable and animal kingdom are His. And so it is that ransomed souls in whom the Divine life is, are claimed by God; and, devoted to Him, are, through the expiatory sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, most acceptable in His sight. I have redeemed them, and "they are Mine": I have made a covenant with them, and they are Mine: and they shall be Mine "in the day when I make up My jewels." Furthermore, "the firstfruits," ripened by sun, earth, and air, have the beauty of maturity in their fulness and bloom, and were thus an appropriate offering to Infinite perfection. In the mode in which they were offered we are taught the duty and the privilege of all living souls to dedicate themselves to God in faith, fear and joy. For there is great dignity and excellence about the righteous man. He has better principles than others; a better heart; better affections; better dispositions; and better prospects. He is a son of God; one with Christ; righteous in the Just One; a peculiar treasure to the Majesty of Heaven; a king divinely born; and oh! wonderful, partaker of the Divine nature by grace, and destined to be filled with the fulness of God! The sons begotten of God are the firstfruits of His creatures. That is, the regenerated of the human family are the promise and the seal of the great and glorious change that awaits

creation. (*W. Magill, D.D.*) *Regeneration*:—1. That which engaged God to the work of regeneration was merely His own will and good pleasure (Rom. ix. 18). God's will is the reason of all His actions; you will find the highest cause to be will, love, and mercy. God can have no higher motive, nothing without Himself, no foresight of faith and works; He was merely inclined by His own pleasure (John xv. 16). This is applicable divers ways. (1) To stir us up to admire the mercy of God, that nothing should dispose His heart but His own will; the same will that begat us, passed by others: whom He will He saveth, and whom He will He hardeneth. (2) It informeth us the reason why, in the work of regeneration, God acteth with such liberty: God acteth according to His pleasure; the Holy One of Israel must not be limited and confined to our thoughts (John iii. 8). 2. The calling of a soul to God is, as it were, a new begetting and regeneration. This is useful—(1) To show us the horrible depravity of our nature; repairing would not serve the turn, but God must new make and new create us, and beget us again. (2) To show us that we are merely passive in our conversion: it is a begetting, and we contribute nothing to our own forming (Psa. c. 4). (3) It showeth us two properties of conversion. (*a*) There will be life. A man cannot have interest in Christ, but he will receive life from Him. (*b*) There will be a change. At the first God bringeth in the holy frame, all the seeds of grace; and therefore there will be a change: of profane, carnal, careless hearts, they are made spiritual, heavenly, holy (Eph. v. 8). 3. It is the proper work of God to beget us: "He begat." It is sometimes ascribed to God the Father, as here, and so, in other places, to God the Son: believers are "His seed" (Isa. liii. 10). Sometimes to the Spirit (John iii. 6). God the Father's will: "Of His own will begat He us." God the Son's merit: through His obedience we have "the adoption of sons" (Gal. iv. 5). God the Spirit's efficacy: by His overshadowing the soul is the new creature hatched and brought forth. It is ascribed to all the three Persons together in one place (Titus iii. 5, 6). It is true, the ministers of the gospel are said to beget, but it is as they are instruments in God's hands. So Paul saith, "I begat you" (1 Cor. iv. 15); and of Onesimus he saith, "Whom I begat in my bonds" (Philemon 10). God loveth to put His own honour many times upon the instruments. Well, then—(1) Remove false causes. You cannot beget yourselves, that were monstrous; you must look up above self, and above means, to God, who must form you after His own image. (2) It showeth what an honourable relation we are invested with by the new birth. He begat us. God is our Father; that engageth His love, and care, and everything that can be dear and refreshing to the creature. 4. The ordinary means whereby God begetteth us is the gospel (1 Cor. iv. 15; 1 Pet. i. 23). The influences of the heavens make fruitful seasons, but yet ploughing is necessary. It is one of the sophisms of this age to urge the Spirit's efficacy as a plea for the neglect of the means. 5. The gospel is a word of truth; so it is called, not only in this, but in divers other places (2 Cor. vi. 7; Eph. i. 12; Col. i. 5; 2 Tim. ii. 15). You may constantly observe that in matters evangelical the Scriptures speak with the greatest certainty; the comfort of them is so rich, and the way of them is so wonderful, that there we are apt to doubt most, and therefore there do the Scriptures give us the more solemn assurance (1 Tim. i. 15). (*T. Manton.*) *The new birth: its nature, means, and object*:—I. THE NEW CREATION. By necessity of birth the state of every infant is guilty, and, therefore, subject to condemnation. Original sin rests on its head, and subjects it to the penalties of death; so that in law it stands as a criminal convicted, and, therefore, incapable of heavenly privileges. But by the laver of baptism made a recipient of heavenly prerogatives, and thus far innocent in the sight of God, it is capable of receiving those spiritual privileges, which are Divinely ordered to flow from this source. It becomes incorporated into the Church, and, consequently, a member of Christ; whence proceeds its adoption as a son, and its title to an inheritance in the kingdom of heaven. And not only so, but a principle of new life is infused into him. His very nature is changed. In understanding, will, affections, and conscience, he is altogether different. II. THE ORIGINAL CAUSE OF REGENERATION. Creation is a prerogative solely vested in God. No finite being possesses it. Man is incapable of changing his own state and nature; as incapable of effecting his own regeneration as of bringing himself originally into being. St. John speaks of the regenerated as "born of God"; St. Paul as "partakers of the Divine nature"; and again, as being "His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works." III. THE IMPULSIVE OR MOVING CAUSE OF REGENERATION — the will of God. The original expression signifies, not "will" merely, but "good will"; that is, a decree of the

mind caused by His grace in behalf of fallen men. Man's regeneration could not proceed from any advantages accruing to God; for the salvation of a thousand worlds could not add to His happiness, nor their destruction detract from His felicity. IV. THE INSTRUMENTAL CAUSE OF REGENERATION. As God in His providence always works His pleasure by instruments, so it is in the kingdom of grace; and that which there effects His purposes is the gospel or "Word of truth." By a single expression of His will He might convert the millions that are on earth; but He prefers treating them as reasonable beings with a moral agency, and using means to make them workers together with Him in their own regeneration. And the means He adopts is "truth," Divine truth, as expressed in the gospel of His Son, and as set forth in the means of grace flowing through His Church. How these effect their purpose, the mode of their operation, is a mystery hidden in the secrets of God. He has drawn a veil as much over His mode of re-creation, as over the philosophy of His own essence, and the original principle of things animate or inanimate. But thus much we do know—that, though He can beget without the Word, the Word cannot beget without Him. It is as seed, which the dew and sun of heaven must act upon, or it will never yield a grain to the will of the sower. V. THE FINAL CAUSE OF REGENERATION—dedication to God. Christians are "a kind of first-fruits of His creatures," the spiritual antitypes, whereof the law-type of the first-fruits was a figure. 1. For, first, they have been redeemed from a bondage worse than that of Egypt. They have been "bought with a price," and hence are no longer "their own, but His who redeemed them." They answer, then, the character of first-fruits in the object of the oblation, being God's by right of purchase and possession. 2. Hence, also, like the first-fruits, they are separated from the rest of their kind. They differ from the unchristian world in nature, in maxims and principles, in spirit and temper, in company and conduct. (*John Budgen, M.A.*) *Regeneration the gift of God*:—Here is a splendid specimen of God's good gifts, in that He has given us eternal life through His Son Jesus. This life is the climax of Divine goodness, as death, the child of sin, is the climax of human badness. It was free. It came by no law, it was produced by no necessity, it was the product of no natural evolution, it arose from His own goodness and lovingness. He emphasises "us" in addressing Hebrew Christians. They were originally chosen by His Divine goodness to be the repository of the oracles of God, the ark, so to speak, which should bear the truth of God down the stream of the centuries. When the fulness of time had come, and Jesus inaugurated the ripened plans for the world's salvation, those Israelites who earliest became Christians had the distinction of being a kind of first-fruits of all God's creatures. Christianity had completed to them the revelation that under God the highest beings are men, that humanity is to take the lead of the universe, that men are superior to angels, and men are to live for ever, and are to lead and govern and teach the intelligences of the universe, that those individuals of humanity who are to do this are those who receive eternal life through Jesus Christ, and that the first, as the first-fruits of an abundant harvest, are those Jews who were early in Christ, having been begotten by the Word of truth. (*C. F. Deems, D.D.*) *The second birth*:—Every real Christian upon earth has been twice begotten—twice born. First, he was born naturally, and he became a man; then he was born spiritually, and he became a new man. His first birth is to be calculated by his age—his second birth by the length of time that he has been living unto God. This second birth is, on various accounts, a far more excellent one than the first, and is attended with privileges of an infinitely higher order and degree. I. First, our text points out the AUTHOR of this second birth. "He begat us," it says—and of whom does it speak thus? He, then, and He alone, is the Author of the second birth—the Father of the spiritual life of the regenerated soul. II. HIS MOTIVE. None of those men to whom He hath given a new birth could be said to deserve to be new born. What, then, determined God to make them new creatures? "Of His own will begat He us." And so say a multitude of other texts (Eph. i. 5; Rom. ix. 18; 2 Tim. i. 9; Tit. iii. 5). III. THE MEANS WHICH HE EMPLOYED. We have seen why His people were begotten. Let us now see how—"How," at least, in reference to the outward instrument made use of. For who can tell how the process is carried on within? We do, however, know the outward instrument and means which it pleases God to make use of. It is "the Word of truth." And what is this "Word of truth"? The blessed gospel, either as it is written or preached. This, says St. James, is the instrument of man's conversion. IV. THE END WHICH HE PROPOSED. "That we should be," says he, "a kind of first-fruits of

His creatures." (*A. Roberts, M.A.*) *Regeneration more than self-improvement*:—Malan asked a joiner, who said he wished to render himself worthy of the grace of God, whether he had ever succeeded by careful polishing, in turning a piece of common wood into ebony. (*J. F. B. Tinling, B.A.*) *Necessity of the new birth*:—A man has bought a farm, and he finds on that farm an old pump. He goes to the pump and begins to pump. And a person comes to him and says, "Look here, my friend, you do not want to use that water. The man that lived here before, he used that water, and it poisoned him and his wife and his children—the water did." "Is that so?" says the man. "Well, I will soon make that right. I will find a remedy." And he goes and gets some paint, and he paints up the pump, putties up all the holes, and fills up the cracks in it, and has got a fine-looking pump. And he says, "Now I am sure it is all right." You would say, "What a fool, to go and paint the pump when the water is bad!" But that is what sinners are up to. They are trying to paint up the old pump when the water is bad. It was a new well he wanted. When he dug a new well it was all right. Make the fountain good, and the stream will be good. Instead of painting the pump and making new resolutions, my friend, stop it, and ask God to give you a new heart. (*D. L. Moody.*) **With the Word of truth.**—*The Word the instrument of regeneration*:—Of His own will; by His mere motion, induced by no cause but the goodness in His own breast. 1. To distinguish it from the generation of the Son, which is natural, this voluntary. 2. Not by a necessity of nature, but by an arbitrariness of grace. 3. Not by any obligation from the creature; the will of God is opposed to the merit of man. "Begat us," or brought us forth; for the same word (ver. 15) is translated "brings forth." "By the Word of truth," a title given to the gospel both in the Old and New Testament. And it is called truth by way of excellency, as paramount to all other truth. 1. Either, by an Hebraism, the word of truth; that is, the true word. 2. Or rather, by way of eminency, as containing a higher truth, more excellent in itself, more advantageous for the creature, than any other Divine truth; wherein the highest glory of God, the sure and everlasting happiness of the creature, is set forth; a word which He hath "magnified above all His name" (Psa. cxxxviii. 2). And called the Word of truth. 1. In regard of the Author, truth itself; and the Publisher, He who was "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." 2. In opposition to all false doctrines, which can never be the instruments of conversion; for error to convert to truth is the same thing as for darkness to diffuse light, or water to kindle fire. 3. In opposition to the windy and fleshy conceits of men, which can no more be instrumental in the begetting a Christian than mere wind can beget a man. 4. In opposition to the legal shadows, the gospel declares the truth of these types. The law was the word of truth, but referred to the gospel as the great end of it. This contains the whole and ultimate purpose of God, for saving men by Jesus Christ, and in Him enriching them with all spiritual blessings, and not by the works of the law; and thus the Spirit, which enlightens and seals instruction upon our souls, is called "the Spirit of truth" (John xiv. 17). I. FOR EXPLICATION, TAKE SOME PROPOSITIONS. 1. It is not the law that is this instrument. It is true, the law considered in itself is preparatory to cast men down; but the law without the gospel never brought any man to Christ. 2. The gospel is this instrument. It is an instrument to strike off the fetters, and draw out the soul to a glorious liberty. (1) It is not a natural instrument, to work by any natural efficacy, as food doth nourish, the sun shines, or the air and water cools, or as a sharp knife cuts if it be applied to fit matter. If it were thus natural, it would not be of grace. (2) It is the only instrument appointed by God to this end in an ordinary way. (3) It is, therefore, a necessary instrument. In regard of the reasonable creature there must be some declaration. God doth not ordinarily work but by means, and doth not produce anything without them which may be done with them. It is necessary the revelation of this gospel we have should be made. No man can see that which is not visible, or hear that which has no sound, or know that which is not declared. This necessity will further appear, if we consider that it always was so. Adam and Eve were the first after the Fall wherein God did constitute His Church, whose regeneration and conversion were wrought by that promise of the seed of the woman made to them in Paradise (Gen. iii. 21). It seems to be the standing instrument of it to the end of the world (Psa. lxviii. 18, compared with Eph. iv. 8, 9). It is necessary, by God's appointment, for all the degrees of the new birth, and all the appendixes to it. As God created the world by the Word of His power, and by the Word of His providence bid the creatures increase and multiply, so by the Word of the gospel He lays the foundation, and rears the building of His spiritual house. As it is not a natural in-

strument, but the only instrument appointed by God, and therefore, upon these and other accounts, a necessary instrument, so it is an instrument which makes mightily for God's glory. The meaner the appearance of the instrument, the more evident the power and skill of the workman. Consider, as it is an instrument, so *but* an instrument. God begets by the Word; the chief operation depends upon the Spirit of God. No sword can cut without a hand to manage it; no engine batter without a force to drive it. II. How doth the Word work? 1. Objectively, as it is a declaration of God's will, as it doth propose to the understanding what it is to be known, in order to salvation. The Spirit gave us an eye to see, and the Word is the light which discovers the object to the eye. The two chief parts of the Word are—(1) The discovery of our misery by nature. (2) A second discovery is of the necessity and existence of another bottom. It discovers our misery by nature, and our remedy by Christ. 2. The Word seems to have an active force upon the will, though the manner of it be very hard to conceive. It is operative in the hand of God for sanctification. III. The use. 1. How admirable, then, is the power of the gospel! It is a quickening Word, not a dead; a powerful Word, not a weak (Heb. iv. 12). (1) It is above the power of all moral philosophy. How excellent is that gospel which hath done that for the renewing of millions of souls, which all the wit and wisdom of the choicest philosophers could never effect upon one heart! (2) Above the power of the law. The natural law makes us serve God by reason, the Mosaical by fear, and the gospel by love. (3) Its power appears in the subjects it hath been instrumental to change. Souls bemired in the filthiest lusts have been made miraculously clean; it hath changed the hands of rapine into instruments of charity, hearts full of filth into vessels of purity; it hath brought down proud reason to the obedience of faith, and made active lusts to die at the foot of the Cross. (4) The power of it is seen in the suddenness of its operation. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, like the change at the last resurrection (1 Cor. xv. 51, 52). (5) And this hath been done many times by one part, one particle of the Word. One word of the gospel, a single sentence, hath erected a heavenly trophy in a soul, which all the volumes of the choicest mere reason could never erect; one plain Scripture hath turned a face to heaven that never looked that way before, and made a man fix his eye there against his carnal interest. (6) And this power appears in the simplicity of it. The gospel is, then, certainly of Divine authority. It shows us the reason why the gospel is so much opposed by Satan in the world. It begets those for heaven whom he had begotten for hell. We see, then, how injurious they are to God, who would obstruct the progress of the gospel in the world, that would hinder the reading and the preaching of the Word. It informs us that the gospel shall then endure in the world, as long as God hath any to beget. Men may puff at it, but they cannot extinguish it; it is a Word of truth, and truth is mighty, and will prevail. It is a sign, then, God hath some to beget, when He brings His gospel to any place. He hath a pleasure to accomplish, and it shall not return unto Him void. It informs us what an excellent thing is new birth! The end is more desirable than the means; this is the chief end of all the ordinances of God in the world. What a lamentable thing is it that so few should be now begotten by the Word of truth! Hereby you may examine whether you are new begotten. It instructs ministers how to preach. The opening the Word is the life of it, and the true means of regeneration. Highly glorify God for the Word of truth, which is so great an instrument. How thankful should we be for an invention, to secure our estates from consuming, houses from burning, bodies from dying! The gospel, the Word of truth, doth much more than this. Bless God in your hearts—1. That ever you had the Word of truth made known to you. 2. Much more that it has been successful to any of you. Glorify God in your lives. As you feel the power of it in your hearts, let others see the brightness and efficacy of it in your actions. Prize the Word of truth, which works such great effects in the soul. Value that as long as you live, which is the cord whereby God hath drawn any of you out of the dungeon of death. Pray and endeavour for the preservation and success of the Word of truth. Were there a medicine that could preserve life, how chary should we be in preserving that? The gospel is the tree whose leaves cure the nations (Rev. xxii. 2). Wait upon God in the Word. Where there is a revelation on God's part, there must be a hearing on ours. Sit down, therefore, at the feet of God, and receive of His words (Deut. xxxiii. 3). (*S. Charnock, B.D.*) *The work of grace*:—I. Consider the work of God's grace among men in its origin. This is ascribed to the absolute will of God. Has He not a right to do what He will with His own? and are not all things His own? Is He not absolute, uncontrolled, and

sovereign, upholding all things at every moment, managing all creatures infallibly, from the hosts of angels that surround His throne down to the smallest particle of inanimate matter? Men talk of "the laws of nature," and if it be rightly understood, we need not object to that phrase. But let it be rightly understood. There can be no laws without a law-maker; there can be no administration of laws without a constant, living executive. Uniform, indeed, they are, but that arises from His perfection. The first time that God did anything He did it in the best way: He would not do it worse, and He could not do it better; therefore He always does it in the best way. These agencies are, then, to be depended on as regards uniformity. But they are not less the agencies of a living, present, acting Being. So it is also in the affairs of men. Men are as thoroughly under His power as matter, though not in the same way. It were to limit His power to say that He can only manage matter and must leave mind to itself. He manages mind in all its liberty as infallibly as He does matter in all its inertness. And so is it, too, in the smaller matters of private life. Health, sickness, wealth, poverty, happy homes or bitter afflictions, these are all under the sovereign arrangement of God, and according to "His own will." So, again, in the matter referred to in the text—the changing of the minds and hearts of fallen men—one is taken, and another left, according to God's will. "Many are called, and few are chosen": "of His own free Will." Is there danger in this high truth? Undoubtedly. There is danger to fallen man in every truth, arising not from the truth itself, but from the perverseness with which it is treated. Man, living to himself, either neglects or abuses truth, so that it becomes "a savour or death unto death." To say, then, that there is danger in truth, is to say nothing against the truth. Is there difficulty connected with the truth of which I have been speaking? Undoubtedly there is. Why should there not be? Does it reveal anything of God? Then it inevitably involves a difficulty. With a finite understanding either there must be absolute ignorance of God, or difficulty must be involved where the understanding fails. The slightest glimpse of God involves man in a horizon of knowledge. The extent of the horizon may vary a little between man and man; but to the highest created intellect there must still be a horizon, and in the horizon difficulty; and if that which presents the difficulty now were cleared away by some greater truth being exhibited at a greater distance, that new revelation would but occupy the place of the present one, and still leave a horizon to created intellect to all eternity. We do not pretend, then, to divest the truth of difficulty, in asking man to submit his intellect, as well as his will, to the majesty of God. Is there practical perplexity in the truth before us? Yes, there is, through the perverseness of man, who is ready to take advantage of any imaginary excuse for himself, and to throw the blame of his own sin upon God's sovereignty. But "let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." There is the pedigree of everlasting death, which man is charged with bringing upon himself. But does it follow, that as man is the author of this evil, he may originate good? "Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of His own will begat He us." It is thus, then, that the apostle treats this subject. He declares, but explains not. II. Consider THE NATURE OF IT. "Begat He us." The phrase is figurative, and the figure is very expressive. It describes a great moral change; a change as complete as that which takes place physically in the state of an infant between the period before and the period after its birth. All things have become new. The element in which it lives is new; the mode in which life is communicated is new. There is a direct exercise of God's power upon the man's spirit, an immediate agency of the Holy Ghost operating on his mind. Therefore it is that we say "you must be born again." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Man propagates his likeness, but man born again is brought into the likeness of God. It is not the effect of moral suasion or education, or of outward circumstances; it is not produced by the fear of consequences, or by the love of approbation amongst men, or by any of the thousand motives which actuate men in society, but it is wrought by the immediate agency of God upon the spirit of man, without which no man of the race of Adam can be pure or happy. We are all so thoroughly estranged from Him, so thoroughly taken up with creatures to the practical neglect of Him, and when we are compelled to think of Him we think of Him so unworthily and so selfishly, that without this change

no man living can have worthy notions of God, or be happy even if admitted into His presence. Now how simply this accounts for the facts of the case as discovered when you look around you in the world! The unconverted men of this world are, as touching God and the things of God, like a man in a deep sleep as touching the things of the world around him. Imagine a man in a deep sleep; dreaming, possibly speaking in his dream; attentive to the visions of the mind on his bed, but quite unconscious of all that is going on around him. His house takes fire, but he knows nothing of it; he is asleep. The fire gains upon a part of the house which is distant from him; some of his children, perhaps, are burnt; but he knows nothing of it, he is still asleep. The fire approaches his own chamber; his wife, lying by his side, convulsed with terror, expires from suffocation; still he is asleep. The fire, however, at length reaches his own person. Now the spell is broken! he starts into sudden consciousness of what has been taking place. But it is too late: the house, the room, the bed, all are gone, and he sinks amid the ruin. Here is a history, in very few words, of the mass of mankind, as touching the things of God. They are dreaming busily of the affairs of this world; money, pleasure, ambition—these are the visions of their minds, and in the affairs of God they feel no more concern than the sleeping man in the state of his house. The hand of God is stretched out. Some of their enjoyments are cut off; some of their friends taken from them: their children are, it may be, snatched away and laid in an early grave, or a wife removed from their sight. Still the unconverted man dreams on, and he continues dreaming, until the Word of God touches himself. Then it is too late, and he sinks into a ruined eternity. Now this sounds very sad, but it is common, and in the course of the world there is nothing peculiar about it. It is, in a few words, I repeat, the history of the mass of mankind, the mass of the community around. I could not add truly the majority of yourselves; yet I cannot doubt that there are many in this congregation who are still in that position, and to whom God is saying, "Arise, ye that sleep; awake, and Christ shall give you light." You must be born again, or else be ruined. I know that it is of God's sovereign will that the new birth is brought about; but He constantly uses means, and I am now using the means which He has appointed for this end, namely, the Word of truth. III. THE INSTRUMENT BY WHICH THIS GREAT CHANGE IS PRODUCED IN MAN. It is wrought, not by any charm, but by the secret power of God, using a suitable instrument for the purpose. "The Word of truth" is God's instrument. "Hear," says the prophet, "and your souls shall live." "Faith," says the apostle, "cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." The work, in virtue of which this change takes place—the work of Christ—is done. All that was necessary has been done; the Word of God proclaims it as done. And the Word of God further addresses itself to man as requiring this finished work. It addresses itself to him in the condition in which he is found as a fallen creature. It comes to him with light for his understanding, and with love for his affections. These are precisely what he requires; light in his understanding to rescue him from false estimates of things, love in his heart to deliver him from idolatry—the idolatry of creatures. Thus we discover the suitability of the instrument provided by God. Man's understanding is so darkened that he is constantly making false estimates. One grand item is constantly left out of his calculations; and you know that if any item be improperly left out of a calculation, the result must inevitably be erroneous. The grand item which is omitted in all the calculations of man is eternity. He makes calculations in which are included the things of this world only. I do not say that he takes into account only the brief space during which he himself will be in the world. Many worldly men have a posthumous ambition, and desire to benefit society, present and future. Still their views are confined to this world, and the things of this world, either in the present generation or in the persons of children and children's children. Improvement in political and social institutions, advances in civilisation, and the amelioration of the condition of the various classes of society, occupy man's attention; and his calculations, so far as these things are concerned, are often most accurate and valuable. Still the grand item is omitted. When society shall be reaping the benefit of such designs, in the persons of children and children's children, the fathers and the grandfathers, where are they? Eternity was not in their plans. They planned for the advantage of posterity, and posterity have obtained the benefit. But they planned nothing for their own salvation; and where are they? What did they value most? Let their history speak. IV. After having stated the origin, nature and instrument of this work in the Church of God, the apostle adds a few words descriptive of THE PRESENT POSITION OF THE CHURCH RELATIVELY TO THE REST OF THE

WORLD: "That we should be," he says, "a kind of first-fruits of His creatures." The creation is described in Scripture as in a groaning state. Man himself is described as "waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God." It is for the resurrection of the Church that the world is waiting and must wait. No scheme of man can regenerate, because no scheme of man can get rid of sin; no superstructure can stand which has sin at the foundation. The present state of things was intended to take people out of mankind—"a kind of first-fruits." Why is it said, "a *kind* of first-fruits?" Because the parallel is not exact. Christ is the first-fruits of the Church. The Church, as the first objects of His care, are to be brought to see what He is. "We shall be like Him when we see Him as He is." As the harvest is like the first sheaf, so shall the Church be like Christ. (*H. McNeile, D.D.*) *The regenerating Word:*—I. To come to THE EXCELLENCY OF THE WORD, WHICH IS THE MEANS OF OUR REGENERATION, the apostle setteth down the other causes thereof also, so that in ver. 18 there are three causes of our regeneration the most apparent testimony of the goodness of God towards man. 1. The efficient. 2. The instrument. 3. The final cause. 1. The good will of God, the gracious favour and free purpose of God, is the first and efficient cause of salvation and regeneration in men. 2. The instrumental cause and means whereby we are regenerate is the Word of God, which St. James expresseth in this place. (1) In respect of God, the Word and gospel is the Word of truth, because it is God's Word and gospel, who cannot lie, therefore His Word is, then, the Word of truth. (2) As in respect of God, the Author thereof, the gospel may rightly be called the Word of truth, so in respect of Christ, who is the Matter, the very Subject whereof the gospel entreateth, it is the Word of truth, for it entreateth of Christ, and Christ is Truth itself, therefore is the gospel the Word of truth. (3) Moreover, this Word is inspired from the Spirit. (4) In respect that every particular thing in the gospel contained is true, therefore it is also the Word of truth. Whatsoever is there mentioned is most true. This is the seed of the new birth, from hence our new birth and regeneration ariseth. Whereof St. Paul speaking, testifieth to the Corinthians that he had begotten them through the gospel. If the gospel of Christ be the Word of truth, why do we not believe it? If it be the instrument of our regeneration, why do we not honourably embrace it? If thereby God hath begotten us again, why are we in any wise so careless of it; we come not to the hearing of this Word of truth? But either we talk out at table, or walk out abroad, or sleep out at home, or play out with company, or spend out in vain exercise, or contrive out with dalliance, or pass out by evil means, that time which is appointed for the preaching and hearing of the Word. 3. The final cause of our regeneration is that we should be the first-fruits of His creatures; that is, that out of the whole mass of mankind and kindreds of the earth, we might be select, culled and chosen out, to be a peculiar people unto Him, whose portion and lot, whose inheritance and peculiar people the saints are. II. The Word of God being then so excellent, THE APOSTLE REMOVETH SUCH THINGS AS HINDER THE ATTENDING THEREUNTO; and the things which greatly hinder the Word are two: 1. Babbling and talking when we should hear with attentive and deep silence 2. Anger, when we are taught and reformed by the Word. Thus by the affections and perturbations of our minds, we oftentimes make the Word of God fruitless in us, and so to lose, not only the blessed effect it would work in us, but also, in a manner, the credit which it should have among men whereunto (were we the servants and true disciples of Christ) we would yield all attentive audience. (*R. Turnbull.*) *The gospel the Word of truth:*—The glory of a religion lieth in three things—the excellency of rewards, the purity of precepts, and the sureness of principles of trust. Now examine the gospel by these things, and see if it can be matched elsewhere. 1. The excellency of rewards. 2. Purity of precepts. That God's children are His first-fruits. The Word hinteth two things. 1. It noteth the dignity of the people of God in two regards—(1) One is, they are "the Lord's portion," His "peculiar people" (Titus ii. 14), the treasure people, the people God looked after. The world are His goods, but you His treasure. (2) That they are the considerable part of the world. The first-fruits were offered for the blessing of all the rest (Prov. iii. 10). 2. It hinteth duty; as—(1) Thankfulness in all their lives. First-fruits were dedicated to God in token of thankfulness. You, that are the first-fruits of God, should, in a sense of His mercy, live the life of love and praise. (2) It noteth holiness. The first-fruits were holy unto the Lord. God's portion must be holy. God can brook no unclean thing. Sins in you are far more irksome and grievous to His Spirit than in others. (3) It noteth consecration. You are dedicated things, and they must not be alienated; your time, parts, strength, and

concernments, all is the Lord's; you cannot dispose of them as you please, but as it may make for the Lord's glory; you are not first-fruits when you "seek your own things." (*T. Manton.*) **First-fruits of His creatures.**—*First-fruits of His creatures*:—According to the Levitical ceremonial, the first sheaf of the new crop, accompanied with sacrifice, was presented in the temple on the day after the Passover Sabbath. No part of the harvest was permitted to be used for food until after this acknowledgment that all had come from God. A similar law applied to the first-born of men and of cattle. Both were regarded as in a special sense consecrated to and belonging to God. Now, in the New Testament, both these ideas of "the first-born" and "the first-fruits," are transferred to Jesus Christ. In His case the ideas attached to the expression are not only that of consecration, but that of being the first of a series, which owes its existence to Him. That which Jesus Christ is, primarily and originally, all those who love Him and trust Him are secondarily and by derivation from Himself. I. GOD'S PURPOSE FOR CHRISTIANS IS THAT THEY SHOULD BE CONSECRATED TO HIM. Man's natural tendency is to make himself his own centre, to live for self and by self. And the whole purpose of the gospel is to decentralise him and to give him a new centre, even God, for whom, and by whom, and with whom, and in whom the Christian man is destined, by his very calling, to live. Now, how can an inward devotion and consecration of myself be possible? Only by one way, and that is by the way of love that delights to give. Consecration means self-surrender; and the fortress of self is in the will, and the way of self-surrender is the flowery path of love. To take the metaphor of Scripture, the consecration which we owe to God, and which is His design in all His dealings with us in the gospel, will be like that of a priestly offering of sacrifice, and the sacrifice is ourselves. So much for the inward; what about the outward? All capacities, opportunities, possessions, are to be yielded up to Him as utterly as Christ has yielded Himself to us. We are to live for Him and work for Him; and set, as our prime object, conspicuously and constantly before us, and to be reached towards through all the trivialities of daily duty, and the common-places of recurring tasks, the one thing, to glorify God and to please Him. Now, remember, such consecration is salvation. For the opposite thing, the living to self, is damnation and hell and destruction. And whosoever is thus consecrated to God is in process of being saved. That consecration is blessedness. There is no joy of which a human spirit is capable that is as lofty, as rare and exquisite, as sweet and lasting, as the joy of giving itself away to Him that has given Himself for us. Such consecration, which is the root of all blessedness, and the true way of entering into the possession of all possessions, is only possible in the degree in which we subject ourselves to the influence of these mighty acts which God has done in order to secure it. "He gave Himself for us that He might purchase for Himself a people for His possession." My surrender is but the echo of the thunder of His; my surrender is but the flash on the polished mirror which gives back the sunbeam that smites it. We yield ourselves to God, when we realise that Christ has given Himself for us. II. GOD'S PURPOSE FOR CHRISTIANS IS THAT THEY SHOULD BE SPECIMENS AND BEGINNINGS OF A GREAT HARVEST. The sheaf that was carried into the temple showed what sun and rain and the sweet skyey influences had been able to do on a foot or two of ground, and it prophesied of the acres of golden grain that would one day be garnered in the barns. And so, Christian men and women to-day, and even more eminently at that time when this letter was written, are meant to be the first small example of a great harvest that is to follow. If Christianity has been able to take one man, pick him out of the mud and the mire of sense and self, and turn him into a partially and increasingly consecrated servant of God, it can do that for anybody. "We have all of us one human heart." Whatever may be man's idiosyncrasies or diversities of culture, of character, of condition, of climate, of chronology, they have all the same deep primary wants, and the deepest of them all is concord and fellowship with God. And the path to that is by faith in His dear Son, who has given Himself for us. What a harvest is dimly hinted at in these words of my text; the "first-fruits of His creatures." That goes even wider than humanity, and stretches away out into the dim distances, concerning which we can speak with but bated breath; but at least it seems to suggest to us that, in accordance with other teaching of the New Testament, "the whole creation" which "groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now," will, somehow or other, be brought into the liberty and the glory of the children of God, and, as humble waiters and attenders upon the kings who are the priests of the Most High, will participate in the power of the redemption. At all events, there gleam dimly through

such words as my text, the great prospects of a redeemed humanity, of a renewed earth, of a sinless universe, in which God in Christ shall be all in all. III. GOD'S PURPOSE FOR CHRISTIANS IS THAT THEY SHOULD HELP THE HARVEST. That does not lie in the Levitical ceremonial of the sheaf of the first-fruits, of course. Though even there, I may remind you, that the thing presented on the altar carried in itself the possibilities of future growth, and that the wheaten ear has not only "bread for the eater, but seed for the sower," and is the parent of another harvest. But the idea that the first-fruits are not merely first in a series, but that they originate the series of which they are the first, lies in the transference of the terms and the ideas to Jesus Christ; for when He is called "the first-fruits of them that slept," it is implied that He, by His power, will wake the whole multitude of the sleepers; and when it speaks of Him as "the first-born among many brethren," it is implied that He, by the communication of His life, will give life, and a fraternal life, to the many brethren who will follow Him. And so, in like manner, God's purpose in making us "a kind of first-fruits of His creatures," is not merely our consecration and the exhibition of a specimen of His power, and the pledge and prophecy of the harvest, but it is that from us there shall come influences which shall realise the harvest of which our own Christianity is the pledge and prophecy. What do you get Christ for? To feed upon Him? Yes! But to carry the bread to all the hungry as well. Do not say you cannot. You can talk about anything that interests you. And are your lips to be always closed about Him who have given Himself for you? Do not say that you need special gifts for it. Any man and any woman that has Christ in his or her heart can go to another and say, "We have found the Messiah"; and that is the best thing to say. You ought to preach Him. To have anything in this world of needy men who are all knit together in the solidarity of one family—to have anything implies that you impart it. The corn laid up in storehouses gets gnawed by rats, and marred by weevils. If you want it to be healthy, and you own possession of it to increase, put it into your seed-basket; and "in the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand," and it will come back to thee, "seed for the sower and bread for the eater." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Vers. 19–21. **Swift to hear, slow to speak.**—*Divine legislation for man in a world of evil:*—I. LEGISLATION FOR THE EAR. "Be swift to hear." 1. The duty here enjoined is a readiness to listen to the pure, the generous, the true. 2. Teachableness is the state of mind required. This includes—(1) Freedom from prejudice. (2) Eagerness to learn. II. LEGISLATION FOR THE TONGUE. "Slow to speak." 1. Evidently he does not mean—(1) Unsocial taciturnity. (2) A drawling utterance. 2. The slowness of speech he enjoins is that of cautiousness. Because we are in danger of speaking—(1) The wrong thing. (2) At the wrong time. Jesus often manifested a Divine reserve. III. LEGISLATION FOR THE TEMPER. "Slow to wrath." 1. Men in this world of evil are in danger of being provoked to wrath. 2. Wrath in no case tends to excellence of character. IV. LEGISLATION FOR THE LIFE. "Lay apart all filthiness," &c. The summing up of all. It insists upon—1. Renunciation of all evil. 2. Appropriation of good. (1) The thing received. "Ingrafted word." (*a*) Essential vitality of gospel. (*b*) Its fitness to human nature. (2) The manner of receiving it. (3) The reason for receiving it. (*U. R. Thomas.*) *The judicial temper:*—This is one of the wisest and most difficult sayings in Holy Scripture. In one line we are bidden to be both swift and slow. It concerns all, and affects the usefulness and happiness of each. We may be helped in our perception of its importance, and also in our power to observe it, if we bear in mind the words which come before. St. James there tells us that all good and perfect gifts come down from the Father of Lights. But, chief among those gifts, he would say, is that "new life," which he and his beloved brethren had received by means of the Word of truth. Thus he calls Christians the "first-fruits" of God's creatures. This is a very high title. The hearer is addressed as one not merely invested with great responsibility, but as holding a powerful post. The ground on which the apostle pleads with him is that he is in union with the Father of Spirits, the Most High God. Here we have not only an interesting historical notice, but a great encouragement to us in our present efforts to conduct ourselves aright. Some, indeed, might think that a man in close union with God is freed from much that others have to consider, that he is an exalted personage, above control, or at least has some of the supposed liberty of high place allowed to him. But it is not so. Because the Christian stands in the front rank of God's creatures, he is not, there-

fore, to carry himself confidently as if he were superior to the lessons which others need, and to be excused from showing that respectful reticence or caution which is idly assumed to become such as are in a lower position. As his spirit has been kindled from on high, the Christian, above all men, carries himself circumspectly. In so far as he is brought spiritually nearer to God, he is swift to hear. As he is closest to the throne, he is, above all, slow to speak. He, near of kin to the Spirit of Divine justice, is, above all, slow to wrath. He should know, better than any, that the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. This teaching of St. James is grand; towards its better realisation let us look at two or three of the chief ways in which we are called to its observance. One is seen in the formation of opinions, especially in regard to religion and the spiritual condition of our neighbour. The other appears in the regulation or economy of our ordinary life. I suppose it may be admitted that a common fault of religious people is impatience of instruction, and a readiness to pass judgment upon others. We are tempted to reverse the order of the Divine precept, and to become slow to hear and swift to wrath. But, in truth, as we are near to God, so we realise our ignorance and His tolerance. Thus, instead of being eager to deliver our verdicts, and to define His will, we hold back, lest our meddling interference and shortsighted decisions should mar the working of the Divine will, if not in larger ways, yet at least in our small circle and surroundings. We check our indignation in the presence of the great tide or stream of justice which is ever fulfilling itself. Perhaps our course in this respect ought to be most obvious and easy as we contemplate the great matters which concern the conduct and state of the Church at large. These are furthest removed from our personal influence. We might be expected to leave them most readily in the hands of God, content with the discharge of those duties which lie immediately around us. In fact, however, the things of the kingdom of heaven are often the most gaily and hastily disposed of by some. We settle doctrines and define the unseen. We give sentence on eternity. We print and publish the mind of God. Take the most ignorant talker you know, and he is ready to tell you all. Go to the wisest, and he will teach you most just in so far as he induces you to share his sense of ignorance. But there is another side to this. The perception that we deal with large things may not lead us into rash conjectures. The greatness of God's procedure may not have the effect of making us gaily confident, and ready to give sentence. Being gifted with inquisitive if not inquiring minds, we may be provoked at the largeness of our field of vision, and so provoked as to profess our inability to apprehend it with petulance and contempt of religion. There is, however, too much made in these days of man's intellectual defects, as if they need make him despair, or as if a limited apprehension of God's will took away the charm and joy of faith. The Christian's God tells him but little at a time. If we are beset with perplexities we can often do nothing but put them into the hands of Him with whom we are at one through the Christ. We are content for God to rule His own kingdom, and take the helm of His own ship. We are quick to hear, but slow to speak and slow to wrath, believing that He will justify Himself. Thus may we take the advice of St. James in respect to the greater matters of the kingdom of heaven. There is, however, an application of it in small things about which I would say a few words. "The sundry and manifold changes of the world" appear to most of us, not in national or cosmopolitan disorder, not in the conflict of religious opinions, but in the little demands, crosses, and accidents of ordinary life. We are often disturbed and upset by what we call "trifles." But the grace of God is intended to be used in small things as well as great. So it is in what we call nature. The law of gravitation affects the apple which drops from the tree and the spheres which move on in their courses. The glory of God clothes the lily in the valley and the sun in the sky. Divine force is used equally in the construction of the mountain and the molehill. And so each of us has daily need and opportunity for the application of the great power which rules the world. We are ever called and enabled to exercise Divine grace in the smallest human round of life. Remember that St. James bases his precept upon the fact that we are the first-fruits of "God's" creatures. And as we use Divine communion so we are really helped to keep the apostle's rule in our discharge of the homeliest duties. So, indeed, we find it to be. There are few, tempted to irritability, who have not sometimes found themselves checked in it by the employment of the highest motives. Many a man is occasionally enabled to rule his spirit by prayer, and by a very sacred resolve to command his temper and his tongue. True Christianity, as it can be practically exercised by most of us, is seen not in spasms of exceptional piety, or vehement strivings after great ends, but

in bearing and forbearing amongst those with whom we most intimately live; in being swift to hear when our sympathy is needed, and slow to wrath when the skin of our feelings is pricked. Sometimes provocations become impotent as they are simply and sturdily ignored. They do so most readily as we realise our high place in God's kingdom, and our union with the Father of lights from whom every good gift descends, including the power to overcome vexation. Our sense of this union, too, is the secret of much success in work. Here is the Divine economy of strength. Accept the Almighty powers. Ally yourselves with them. Be in league with time and growth. Thus, taking the Divine lines of progress, the work will be God's, not yours. And this reticence, this abiding, this committing of self to Him that judgeth righteously, all the while with a strenuous reserve of force under control, will raise us above the sundry and manifold changes of the world. We shall not be indifferent to them, as a man on the eve of leaving a mean house for a better one glances with an unconcerned eye at the narrowness which once vexed him; but we shall have a mastery over them, a power of looking down on them with a sense that we are in union with the source of change, growth, and power, all working together in orderly sequence. (*H. Jones, M.A.*) *Features of God's family:*—The ear, the tongue, and the heart have all much to do with the life or practical conduct of the man of God, whose life-business, according to the law of the text, consists in "working the righteousness of God." The ear for learning, or acquiring what is to be gathered in instruction; the tongue for teaching, or giving forth what we have thus acquired in a testimony of our own; the heart for the ordering of the affections or passions which sway the man, and give their own tone to his character, and all for the advancement of the work of righteousness. In reference to that everything that concerns the man is viewed and weighed. In the light of that, as the consummation to be wished for and attained, is the whole character placed, and every element that enters into its composition assigned its due proportion. I. Every child of the Father of lights, being "swift to hear," is to be one who feels that he is a learner or listener, rather than a teacher, who "has not yet attained, neither is already perfect" in the knowledge of the truth to which he is "begotten"—who has more to get than he has to give. This is the pith and point of the contrast and antithesis between "swift to hear" and "slow to speak." 1. They have a revengeful and fervent love of the truth wherever it is to be found, and freedom from prejudice, prepossession, and narrow foreclosure of any kind. They are the children of light. The Father of lights is their Father, and, as His genuine children, they like and long above all things to come to His light, to walk in His light, to see more and more, and still more, of His light every day, as long as they live in His world. They have a taste for the truth, an appetite for the truth, whose cravings must be satisfied; a hunger and thirst after the truth which makes them long to see it, or with all saints comprehend it in its length and breadth, and depth and height, as men who are in darkness long for the morning light. 2. These children of the light are meek and lowly in heart, like so many babes; they are conscious of their own ignorance, and know that the truth is a well, or flows from a fountain, too deep for them to sound or fathom with their puny line. Its length and breadth and depth and height, who can tell but the Father of lights? From Him, therefore, they ask instruction. To Him, and the means which He has graciously appointed for the purpose, they come for illumination. What a discipline is required to form this babe-like spirit, and prepare the soil of the heart and understanding for the reception of the good seed that is to be sown, our Saviour explains in many parts of His discourses and parables, and the history of Israel testifies (Deut. viii. 2, 3). 3. In this babe-like spirit, thirsting after the truth, the children of light are so teachable, so credulous, if you will, and full of holy curiosity, that they have an open ear, "an ear to hear," as our Saviour so often expresses it, wherever there is anything to be heard, an eye to see if there be a ray of light visible in the horizon revealing God the Father of lights. A great man, and a great teacher of the truth, once said that the difference between himself and others to whom he was preferred was but this, that he was willing to learn from every one, and that there was no one from whom he did not learn something. He was, indeed, a great man, if this was his character; for there is nothing in which one man is more distinguished from another. A man who knows himself, and is not proud and hard, but "swift to hear," makes himself a scholar, a learner, a listener, wherever he goes. Men and things have to him a meaning beyond what they have to others. Poverty and riches, health and sickness, life and death, prosperity and adversity, all come to him charged with a special message. In all, and in each, he hears his Father's voice (Psa. cvii. 43). Each in its way, and after

its kind, is God's minister for good, for "all work together for good." 4. For the truth itself contained in the Word of God they have a special longing and liking, because it is the word and wisdom of God, by which they have been begotten, or made God's children, and by which they are supported in their spirits, as by their daily bread, and carried forward from the feebleness of babes to the strength and stature of the new Man, the Son of God, who is their Model and the spiritual Sun of their firmament. II. Every child of the Father of lights who acts in character, as one begotten with the Word of truth and by the will of God to newness of life, is one who does not run to seed, or exhaust himself, by talking all he knows, or has, of religion, or allowing his life and light to expire and spend itself in words. We should have this day far more religion in our land, and a far higher style and standard of religion in the Church, as God's witness to the truth—1. If every man were, as here commanded, slow to speak dogmatically and controversially about knotty or disputed points of doctrine or discipline. 2. We should not have less religion, nor a lower form of Christianity, and less perfect testimony for God, if Christians were slow to speak critically, in a way of judgment on others, or slow to speak of evil, and things that do not concern themselves, in any way. 3. Every man should be slow to speak boastfully of himself, or of himself at all, directly or indirectly, who wishes to be a child and witness of the Father of lights. III. Slowness to wrath is another seal of the children of light begotten of the Father's own will by the Word of truth to be His witnesses in the new creation. 1. Proneness to wrath is a great and heinous sin, and fertile root of innumerable sins. In itself, in all its varieties of form, it is nothing less than murder, the spirit of murder, if it takes the shape of hatred or ill-will to the party who provokes it, or proceeds, as it most frequenty does, from offended self-love. A part it is of that carnal mind which is enmity against both God and man, and is not, and refuses to be, subject to the law of God. Its emblem in the Word of God is some wild and furious beast, such as the bear, the wolf, the dog, the lion, the serpent. 2. This proneness to wrath is a besetting sin against which the man of God must be on his guard at every moment, and throughout his entire life. In the family, in the Church, in social and political life, in the transactions of business, and in hours of leisure and pleasnre, slowness to wrath is the highest law of eternal life. None is so often forgotten. Of none is the breach followed by surer, or swifter, or more fearful penalties even in the present life, to say nothing of that beyond the grave. 3. It is by ceasing from wrath because it is sin against God, and being slow to wrath because this is the righteousness of God, that we become new-born babes or living men. Every victory that we obtain over the temptations or provocations to wrath is a victory over the devil, who is thus removed from us to a greater distance, and leaves our spirits, from which he is thus dispossessed, more open for Christ to come in and take full possession. And He does come in whenever by slowness to wrath, and ceasing from wrath, and striving against wrath, in every form of bad temper, and ill humour, peevishness, fretfulness, rage, uncharitableness, we cease to keep Him out. IV. Every living child of the Father of lights is one whose whole aim in life is to work the righteousness of God, and to promote it in others by every means in his power, as well as to beware of everything to its prejudice. 1. It is not an imputed righteousness, in the sense of the righteousness of another, but real, and actual, and personal righteousness, that is called here "the righteousness of God." 2. This righteousness is righteousness not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 3. This righteousness of God is the work of God's Spirit. 4. This righteousness is the righteousness of faith working by love, and of faith and love united in a life of God. (*R. Paisley.*) *Simple duties:*—1. From that "wherefore." It is a great encouragement to wait upon the ordinances, when we consider the benefits God doth dispense by them. 2. Again, from the illative particle "wherefore." Experience of the success of ordinances engageth us to a further attendance upon them. He hath begotten you by the Word of truth, "wherefore, be swift to hear." Who would baulk a way in which he hath found good, and discontinue duty when he hath found the benefit of it? 3. From that "let every one." This is a duty that is universal, and bindeth all men. None are exempt from hearing and patient learning. Those that know most may learn more. Junius was converted by discourse with a ploughman. 4. From that "be swift," that is, ready. The commendation of duties is the ready discharge of them. Swiftness noteth two things—(1) Freeness of spirit; do it without reluctancy when you do it. (2) Swiftness noteth diligence in taking the next occasion; they will not decline an opportunity, and say, Another day. Delay is a sign of unwillingness. 5. From that "be swift

to hear"; that is, the Word of God, for otherwise it were good to be slow in hearing. Divers things are implied in this precept. I shall endeavour to draw out the sense of it in these particulars. (1) It showeth how we should value hearing: be glad of an opportunity; the ear is the sense of learning, and so it is of grace; it is that sense that is consecrated to receive the most spiritual dispensations (Rom. x. 14). Reading doth good in its place; but to slight hearing, out of a pretence that you can read better sermons at home, is a sin. Duties mistimed lose their nature; the blood is the continent of life when it is in the proper vessels; but when it is out, it is hurtful, and breedeth diseases. (2) It showeth how ready we should be to take all occasions to hear the Word. If ministers must preach "in season and out of season," a people are bound to hear. Heretofore lectures were frequented when they were more scarce. The wheat of heaven was despised when it fell every day (Amos viii. 12). (3) It noteth readiness to hear the sense and mind of others upon the Word. We should not be so puffed up with our own knowledge, but we should be swift to hear what others can say. You do not know what may be revealed to another; no man is above a condition of being instructed. Divide self from thy opinion, and love things not because they suit with thy prejudices, but truth. "Be swift to hear," that is, to consider what may be urged against you. (4) It noteth what we should do in Christain meetings. If we were as patient and swift to hear as we are ready to speak, there would be less of wrath and more of profit in our meetings. I remember when a Manichee contested with Augustine, and with importunate clamour cried, "Hear me, hear me," the father modestly answered, "Neither hear me, nor I thee, but let us both hear the apostle." 6. That there are many cases wherein we must be slow to speak. This clause must also be treated of according to the restriction of the context; slow in speaking of the Word of God, and that in several cases. (1) It teacheth men not to adventure upon the preaching of the Word till they have a good spiritual furniture, or are stored with a sufficiency of gifts. John was thirty years old when he preached first (Luke iii. 1). So was our Lord. Hasty births do not fill the house, but the grave. (2) It showeth that we should not precipitate our judgments concerning doctrines and points of divinity. The sudden conceptions of the mind are not always the best. There should be a due pause ere we receive things, and a serious deliberation ere we defend and profess them. (3) That we be not more forward to teach others, than to learn ourselves. Many are hasty to speak, but backward to do. (4) That we do not vainly and emptily talk of things of God, and put forth ourselves above what is meet: it is good to take every occasion, but many times indiscreet speaking doth more hurt than silence. (5) It teacheth us not to be over-ready to frame objections against the Word. It is good to be dumb at a reproof, though not deaf. 7. Renewed men should be slow to wrath. You must understand this with the same reference that you do the other clauses; and so it implieth that the Word must not be received or delivered with a wrathful heart: it concerneth both hearers and teachers. (1) The teachers. They must be slow to wrath in delivering the Word. (*a*) Let not the Word lacquey upon private anger: spiritual weapons must not be used in your own cause. The Word is not committed to you for the advancing of your esteem and interests, but Christ's. (*b*) Do not easily deliver yourselves up to the sway of your own passions and anger: people will easily distinguish between this mock thunder and Divine threatenings. (2) The people. It teacheth them patience under the Word. 8. It is some cure of passion to delay it. "Be slow to wrath." Anger groweth not by degrees, like other passions, but at her birth she is in her full growth; the heat and fury of it is at first, and therefore the best cure is deliberation (Prov. xix. 11). It is a description of God that He is "slow to wrath"; certainly a hasty spirit is most unlike God. (*T. Manton.*) *Swift to hear, and slow to speak*:—The well-known wisdom of swiftness to hear and slowness to speak has been inculcated by teachers in all ages. On his disciples Pythagoras enjoined five years of preliminary silence. It was supposed that such a long probation in which there should be total abstinence from speech would give the disciples the advantage of hearing much and hearing it attentively; because the mind was not preoccupied with preparing and uttering an answer. There was supposed to be also the other advantage of pondering what was heard; so that it should be well marked and thoroughly digested. Some one has called attention to the fact that a man has two ears and but one tongue, and inferred therefrom that a man ought to hear at least twice as much as he speaks. As touching the matter of which James had been writing to his brethren, namely, their troubles, the temptations likely to arise therefrom, this admonition was most timely. They should be swift to hear. God, who had spoken to Elijah

in the still small voice, was now speaking to them in their great trials. God is talking. He may speak slowly. We must "wait God's leisure." We must be attentive to the voice in the darkness, as little Samuel was to the night-voice in the temple. "God is His own interpreter"; but He never hurries; with Him a thousand years are as a day. And so we must be slow to speak; very slow to make our own interpretation; and slower in making charges against God. If we speak incontinently, we shall not only be indiscreet, but we shall excite ourselves to anger. The tongue kindles. See what folly it is to be angry against God for His providences. Do we know what God is doing? Does not God know all things? Can He not relieve? And will He not relieve at the proper time and in the proper manner? See what a sin it is: that great, black sin of ingratitude. Has not every good gift enjoyed by us come from Him? What led Him to the bestowment of those gifts? Was not the motive wholly in Him? Does He ever change? Is He not the same? Whatsoever, therefore, comes from Him must be good. It is well to regulate our lives by the great precept, "Swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath," because of the injurious effect upon others of a failure to be guided thereby. Our circle of relatives and friends know how quick to advance opinions are those who are either ignorant or half-taught. If they discover that we are impatient of the speech of others, are unwilling to hear what may be said upon the other side, they will perceive in us an unchristian lack of charity for others as well as the absence of that modesty which always accompanies wisdom. If they find that we have an offhand opinion upon all the gravest questions which concern God and man, upon the most mysterious problems of the universe, they will lose respect for our utterances, and our influence over them for good will depart. If we are not slow to anger, it will exhibit such a want of self-control as will deprive us of the power of governing others. (*C. F. Deems, D.D.*) *Advice to talkers:*—The Rev. Mr. Burridge being visited by a very loquacious young lady, who engrossed all the conversation of the interview with small-talk concerning herself, when she arose to retire, he said, "Madam, before you withdraw, I have one piece of advice to give you; and that is, when you go into company again, after you have talked half an hour without intermission, I recommend it to you to stop a while, and see if any other of the company has anything to say." *The hearing of the Word:*—1. "Be swift to hear"—"swift," that is, ready, eager. "To hear"—what? Not everything, assuredly. There is much that is profane, impure, erroneous, frivolous, unprofitable. We cannot be too slow to hear, speaking of this description. The reference here is evidently to "the Word of truth," mentioned immediately before as that by which God had begotten the believers, who are addressed as a kind of first-fruits of His creatures. That James had it in view throughout is clear from the latter part of the 21st verse. All who would know what is required of them as God's children, and would be fitted for the doing of their Heavenly Father's will, must come into close contact with the sacred Scriptures. The secret of getting good from the study of the Word is this swift hearing. But there is a special reference in the expression to the preaching of the gospel by the lips of those entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation. We are to be "swift to hear." That implies very obviously that we are to seize all opportunities of hearing. We are to rejoice when it is said unto us, "Let us go into the house of the Lord." Not less does it imply fixed attention in hearing. We may be where the gospel is preached, there frequently, systematically, and yet have our ears closed against the entrance of truth, so as to profit no more than if we were absent. 2. "Slow to speak." The one is intimately connected with the other. What stands most in the way of many being ready to hear? What but their being so ready to speak. They have little time or taste for receiving instruction—they think themselves so well qualified for giving it. We are not forbidden to speak altogether; indeed, the very opposite is here implied, for what is enjoined is to be slow to do it, not to abstain from doing it entirely. To open our lips is often an imperative duty. We are to reprove evil-doers at fitting seasons, and in a right spirit. We are to instruct the ignorant and the erring as God gives us the opportunity. But even when we are in the path of duty we are to be "slow to speak." We are to weigh the matter well, and proceed calmly, thoughtfully, deliberately. We are to guard against all rash, reckless judgments, and to be very sure of our ground before we pronounce on the characters or the conduct of others. When constrained to break silence we should do it, not under some sudden impulse, or in a random way, but from conviction and with deliberation. 3. "Slow to wrath." While being "swift to hear" is a powerful means of sustaining the Christian life, being "swift to

speak" is fitted to inflame corruption and stir up unholy passions. There is a place for wrath, and that is here intimated, for you observe it is not wholly forbidden. We are only to be slow to it, not speedy, not hasty. This last injunction is enforced by a weighty consideration (ver. 20), "For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." "The wrath of man"—literally wrath of man, any such wrath, whatever the extent to which it goes, or whatever the circumstances in which it appears. By "the righteousness of God" we are to understand that which belongs to and is distinctive of His kingdom, that which He requires in all the subjects of it, and calls them to strive after, both in themselves and others. Such a passionate, angry spirit does not further His cause, it promotes not, it works not out, those holy ends for which the Church exists and souls are brought into its fellowship. It kindles the flame of controversy, and divides the friends of truth instead of subduing its enemies. It thus puts obstacles in the way of God's cause and glory. (*J. Adam.*) *The pure Word in the foul plot:*—The synagogue, not the temple, of the Jews was the model on which the primitive Churches were constructed. And in the synagogue the function of teaching was not confined to any one order or caste. Any intelligent and devout man might be called upon, by the ruler of the synagogue, to address an exhortation to the people. And in the primitive Churches any member who had "a gift" might exercise his gift, whether it were native to him or "miraculous," for the benefit of the congregation. St. James wrote to the Jews of the Dispersion, to men who, though they were Christians, were also Jews; to men, therefore, in whom the habits formed in the synagogue would be familiar and dear. Probably many of them were too eager to hear their own voices, and too reluctant to listen to others. Nor are we so docile, so meek, that we can afford to put aside the exhortation as though it had no warning for us. But the exhortation is introduced by the word "wherefore"—a word which refers us to the previous clause of the letter, or to some phrase in it, for an answer to the question, "What is it that every man is to be swift to hear?" It is "the Word of truth." If we owe, as we do, every access of spiritual energy to a clearer and larger perception of God's will as revealed in His Word, should we not gladly take some pains to enlarge our knowledge of that Word, to lay hold with a firmer grasp of the truths we already know? But if we would be "swift to hear," we must be "slow to speak." Those whose tongues run fast have but dull ears, and are apt to lose the benefit of even the little to which they listen. Of this general fact, that he who would be quick to hear must be in no hurry to speak, St. James makes a particular application which may not at once commend itself to our judgment. For as it is the Word of truth that he would have us eager to hear, so also, I suppose, it is the same Word that he would have us slow to utter. "But is it not our duty to speak the truth by which we ourselves have been renewed?" Well, yes, if we are strong enough and wise enough to speak it wisely, and without injury to ourselves and others. But a man may speak, and yet not be swift or eager to speak. And a wise man will be very sure that he knows before he speaks, and so knows his theme as to be able to teach others. Nor does it follow that, because you utter no audible words in church, that you therefore say nothing. You may sit composed in an attitude of decent or devout attention while the minister of the Church tries to open up some word of truth, and yet all the while you may be saying in your hearts, "How am I to meet that bill?" or "For whom shall I vote? and how will the election go?" or, "I wonder whether I shall meet So-and-so after service?" or, "I wonder how the servants, or the baby, are getting on at home?" So far it is easy to trace the meaning and connection of St. James's words. But when he goes on to add, "slow to wrath," we naturally ask if quick speech is in any way connected with quick anger. And we have hardly asked the question before we see the answer to it. Hasty speech is a sign of a hasty spirit. And surely he is speaking plain good sense when he warns us that "man's wrath worketh not God's righteousness," that our anger can in no way contribute to the formation or the cultivation of a righteous character, whether in ourselves or in our neighbours. While contending for the righteousness of God, we may become unrighteous by giving way to wrath, and cause our brother to lose his righteousness by provoking him to wrath. We do become unloving, and therefore unrighteous, when we contend with one another, even for a good cause, in these evil heats of passion. Such heats of passion in no way contribute to the culture of the soul. They are bad husbandry. They breed only a foul and rank growth which quickly overruns and impoverishes the soil, and amid which no "herb of grace," no plant of righteousness, will thrive. If we are wise husband-

men, if we aim at that perfection of character which the apostle holds to be our chief good, we shall clear the soil of these evil growths; we shall cut them down and burn them up, and so make room for the implantation of that Word of truth which brings forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *The great talker artificially deaf*:—The talking man makes himself artificially deaf, being like a man in the steeple when the bells ring. (*J. Taylor, D.D.*) *Needful to learn silence*:—A very talkative youth came to Socrates to study oratory. The philosopher charged him double price, stating as a reason that he must teach the youth two sciences; how to hold his tongue, and how to speak. *Swift to hear, slow to speak*:—Swift accords high praise to Stella (Mrs. Johnson) for the fact that "she never interrupted any person who spoke." "She listened to all that was said, and had never the least absence or distraction of thought." (*On the Death of Mrs. Johnson.*) *A good listener*:—One of Dean Swift's most appreciative correspondents, Lady Betty Brownlowe, begging leave to be present at his proposed meeting at Cashel with the Archbishop, expresses her certainty "that you would allow me to be a good listener," "for I assure you I have too great a desire to be informed and improved to occasion any interruption in your conversation, except when I find you purposely let yourself down to such capacities as mine, with an intention, as I suppose, to give us the pleasure of babbling." (*Letters, May* 19, 1735.) **The wrath of man.**—*Bad temper*:—It is a common saying that every one has a temper but a fool. Certainly he who sees wrong done without feeling angry must be either a fool or a knave. The capability of anger is one of our most valuable endowments. Anger, to use Locke's words, "is an uneasiness or discomposure of the mind" which springs up when injury has been done to ourselves or to others; and its purpose is to stimulate us to a remedial course. The protective power of this passion is very great. "It is a moral power which tends to repair the inequality of physical power, and to approximate the strong and the weak towards the same level." But, however useful and necessary, the passion of anger becomes very dangerous when it is not criticised and controlled by reason. When we yield without reflection, anger degenerates into bad temper—into what our text calls "the wrath of man." 1. Reflection may show us that we have no right to be angry at all. Wrath is only righteous when applied to moral wrong. St. Chrysostom truly says, "Anger is a sort of sting implanted in us, that we might therewith attack the devil, and not one another." In this matter, as in all others, Christ should be our example. How often must He have been grieved, disappointed, and vexed at the unsympathetic conduct of His disciples. Yet He was never angry with them. His anger was exhibited only against the mischievous cant of the Pharisees and Scribes. 2. Reflection may show that, though we may have cause for anger, yet our anger is excessive. There are persons who are almost always out of temper, who will get in a rage at anything, or even at nothing. They are more enraged at the thwarting of their smallest whim, than at the most flagrant act of injustice inflicted upon any one else. All such excessive manifestations of anger may be cured by thought. For our anger spontaneously subsides, when we become convinced that there is no real ground for it. 3. Reflection may show that though the feeling of anger is unavoidable, and though its manifestation would be legitimate, it will be better for us, under the circumstances, not to show it. The finest illustration of this will be familiar, no doubt, to many of you. It occurs in Victor Hugo's most celebrated novel, and it deserves to be written in letters of gold. You remember how Jean Valjean, who had been known to himself and others for the last nineteen years as No. 5623, and who has at last been dismissed from the galleys on a ticket-of-leave—you remember how he walks wearily along in the dust and heat, how he is turned out of the various inns, repulsed from every door, and even chased from an empty dog-kennel into which he has crawled for shelter. He wanders on again, saying despairingly to himself, "I am not even a dog." By and by he comes to the house of the good old Bishop Myriel. He knocks and enters, and tells his story. The bishop, to the great discomposure of his housekeeper and the utter bewilderment of Valjean, orders a bedroom to be prepared for him, and invites him in the meantime to take a seat at the supper-table. After supper, the bishop conducts him to his room, and the poor man lies down and falls asleep. In the middle of the night he wakes and begins to think; and the result of his thinking is, that he will get up and make off with the silver dishes which he had seen on the table the previous evening. He does so, but is soon captured by the police and brought back. The bishop dismisses the gendarmes, pretending that he had made the man a present of the silver, and asking him why he had not taken

the candlesticks as well. When they were left alone together, he says to the astonished thief, "Jean Valjean, my brother, never forget you have promised to employ this silver which I have given you in becoming an honest man. You belong no more to evil, but to good. I have bought your soul. I reclaim it from black thoughts and the spirit of perdition, and I give it to God." You know the result. From that day Valjean was a changed man. He became one of the noblest characters in the whole range of the world's fiction. Fiction? Yes; but fiction that is true to fact. Cases will sometimes arise when, by restraining an anger perfectly legitimate and withholding a punishment perfectly merited, we may save a soul from death. 4. Reflection may show us that though the feeling of anger was legitimate, and though it was right and desirable to manifest it, yet the feeling has lasted long enough and may now be dismissed. "Anger resteth," says the author of Ecclesiastes, "in the bosom of fools." It arises in the bosom of wise men, but it remains only in the bosom of fools. If we treat men according to the first promptings of anger, we shall almost always do them wrong. It is most important that we should pause and reflect, whenever we have it in our power to inflict punishment. Plato on one occasion, being highly incensed against a servant, asked a friend to chastise him, excusing himself from doing it on the ground that he was in anger. Carillus, a Lacedemonian, said to a slave who had been insolent to him, "If I were not in a great rage I would cause thee to be put to death." We may then lay it down as a general rule that the more eager we are to inflict immediate punishment, the more necessary it is for us, if we would avoid sin, to pause and reflect. So far I have been endeavouring to show that bad temper—*i.e.*, the thoughtless yielding to the first promptings of anger—is wrong. Now let me point out that it is also impolitic. It is our interest, as a rule, apart altogether from moral considerations, to keep our anger under the control of our reason. An exhibition of bad temper is the very last thing in the world by which to get one's self better treated. Everybody is pleased to meet, and glad to serve, the good-tempered man; but as for the bad-tempered man, people are perfectly satisfied if they can only manage to keep out of his way. The bad policy of ill temper was very neatly pointed out by Queen Elizabeth. There was a certain hot-tempered courtier on whom her Majesty had not yet bestowed the promotion which she had promised. Meeting him one day, she asked him, "What does a man think of when he thinks of nothing?" "He thinks, madam, of a woman's promise," was the reply. "Well," said the queen, walking away, "I must not confute you. Anger makes men witty, but it keeps them poor." But once more, bad temper is exceedingly unbecoming. In this respect it may be distinguished from anger. As I pointed out before, legitimate manifestations of anger are impressive and awe-inspiring—so much so, that they frequently enable the weak to offer a successful resistance to the injuries with which they are threatened by the strong. But the person who is, as we say, "in a temper"—that is, in a bad temper—always appears ridiculous. Jeremy Taylor says—"It makes the voice horrid, the eyes cruel, the face pale or fiery, the gait fierce, the speech clamorous and loud, and the whole body monstrous, deformed, and contemptible." I am sure that those who are at all particular about their personal appearance, might be cured for ever of their bad temper, if only they could be induced, during some violent paroxysm, to gaze into a looking-glass. They would receive a shock that would make them changed characters for the rest of their lives. But permit me to add one warning. I have spoken strongly. I believe that there is nothing more contemptible, and few things more mischievous, than bad temper. But though I would have you very strict and inexorable in judging yourselves, I would have you very gentle and lenient in judging others. Take care lest you mistake for bad temper what is only the involuntary manifestation of physical pain. An invalid once told me that her nearest approach to comfort consisted in being only a little uncomfortable. Now this chronic presence of pain should cover a multitude of seeming sins. If, then, you are uncertain whether any one's hastiness of speech and manner be ill temper or not, whether it be the expression of a bad state of the heart or only a bad state of health, give them the benefit of the doubt—deal very gently with them, I beseech you, for Christ's sake. (*A. W. Momerie, M.A.*) *The anger of man*:—1. From the context. The worst thing that we can bring to a religious controversy is anger. The context speaketh of anger occasioned by differences about the word. Usually no affections are so outrageous as those which are engaged in the quarrel of religion, for then that which should bridle the passion is made the fuel of it, and that which should restrain undue heats and excesses engageth them. However,

this should not be. Christianity, of all religions, is the meekest and most humble. 2. "Worketh not the righteousness." Anger is not to be trusted; it is not so just and righteous as it seems to be. Anger, like a cloud, blinds the mind, and then tyrannises over it. When you are under the power of a passion, you have just cause to suspect all your apprehensions; you are apt to mistake others, and to mistake your own spirits. Passion is blind, and cannot judge; it is furious, and hath no leisure to debate and consider. 3. From that "anger of man" and "righteousness of God." Note the opposition, for there is an emphasis in those two words "man" and "God." The point is, that a wrathful spirit is a spirit most unsuitable to God. God being the God of peace, requireth a quiet and composed spirit. Wrathful men are most unfit either to act grace or to receive grace. 4. The last note is more general, from the whole verse: that man's anger is usually evil and unrighteous. I shall therefore endeavour two things briefly—1. Show you what anger is sinful. 2. How sinful, and how great an evil it is. First, to state the matter, that it is necessary, for all anger is not sinful; one sort of it falleth under a concession, another under a command, another under the just reproofs of the Word. (1) There are some indeliberable motions, which Jerome calleth propassions, sudden and irresistible alterations, which are the infelicities of nature, not the sins; tolerable in themselves, if rightly stinted (Eph. iv. 26). He alloweth what is natural, forbiddeth what is sinful. (2) There is a necessary holy anger, which is the whetstone of fortitude and zeal (2 Pet. ii. 7; Mark iii. 5; Exod. xi. 8). (*a*) The principle must be right. God's interests and ours are often twisted, and many times self interposeth the more plausibly because it is varnished with a show of religion; and we are more apt to storm at indignities and affronts offered to ourselves rather than to God. (*b*) It must have a right object: the heat of indignation must be against the crime, rather than against the person: good anger is always accompanied with grief; it prompteth us to pity and pray for the party offending. (*c*) The manner must be right. See that you be not tempted to any indecency and unhandsomeness of expression. (3) There is a sinful anger when it is either—(*a*) Hasty and indeliberate. Rash and sudden motions are never without sin. (*b*) Immoderate, when it exceedeth the merits of the cause, as being too much, or kept too long. (*c*) Causeless, without a sufficient ground (Matt. v. 22). (*d*) Such as is without a good end. The end of all anger must be the correction of offences, not the execution of our own malice. Secondly, how sinful it is. 1. Nothing more makes room for Satan (Eph. iv. 26, 27). 2. It much wounds your own peace. 3. It disparages Christianity. (*T. Manton.*) *The secret of calmness*:—It is said of the Rev. Mr. Clarke, of Chesham Bois, that when one observed to him "there was a good deal in a person's natural disposition," he made this answer: "Natural disposition! Why, I am naturally as irritable as any; but when I find anger, or passion, or any other evil temper arise in my mind, immediately I go to my Redeemer, and, confessing my sins, I give myself up to be managed by Him. This is the way that I have taken to get the mastery of my passions." (*K. Arvine.*) *Specifics against wrath*:—Let us see what alleviations and remedies go to the healing of this Satan's vice of anger. The masters in the spiritual life give us recommendations like these: First, do not listen to tale-bearers. Tale-bearers go about with a lighted torch, not to set our houses on fire, but our hearts. Our hearts are weak, and easily misled; and the story of a tale-bearer is like dropping a hot coal on it. Then he goes away to the next door, but he leaves us in gloom; and, if we are wise men, we will say to him the next time he comes, "You put me in a passion by your last visit. I have since sprung out at my friend, my minister, my church. I have been a fool, and I have repented of my folly all these days." It is better to throw a firebrand into a man's house than into his heart. If anything makes you angry, truth, and goodness, and love are lost. Another specific for the angry man is this: Have a low opinion of yourself. If you have a true opinion of yourself, you will not easily be made angry at what is said about you. Think how unworthy you are, how few talents you have; and so, when any one tells you you have no talents, no ability, no wisdom, you will say to him, "Man, I have said that on my knees this morning; that is nothing new." It is the proud man, the self-conceited man, who is easily made angry; so cultivate a low opinion of yourself, if you would avoid this sin. Thirdly, have a picture before your mind's eye of a meek, and peaceful, and loving soul. Dante made Mary appear as the pattern of some sweet grace in every cornice on the sanctifying mount. Give Mary her place in your panorama of meekness, but have her Son always first. He it was who endured such contradiction of sinners, and it is

contradiction that rouses us. Have these sweet, inspiring visions ever before you to raise your hearts. Drink in the sweet visions of peace and the Peacemaker. Lastly, use some means of mortifying your anger daily. So says Jeremy Taylor, from whom I have borrowed nearly all my sermon. If a man does not do this, his heart will every day be a misery, and his house a den of wild beasts. (*A. Whyte, D.D.*) **For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.**—*Wrath works not the righteousness of God*:—It must be quite clear to any one who examines into the gospel of Christ as a cause or principle of action, that a meek and quiet spirit should be at once the distinguishing ornament and characteristic of believers. St. James lays down as principles that the unchanging God is the Giver of every good gift; and that it is by an exercise of His omnipotent will that He has begotten His spiritual children with the Word of truth. This appears to me, I say, an irrefutable argument! If we admit the premisses—that we are God's children, begotten again in Jesus Christ to a lively hope by the Word of His grace; and that, as children partake of the same nature with their parent, so we are made partakers of the Divine nature, which is holiness, then we are bound to admit the conclusion that it is our leading duty to seek to work out the righteousness of God! And, farther, that if the wrath of man worketh not that righteousness, we are bound to eschew it, and then to cultivate that meek and quiet spirit which is according to the mind of Christ. And now consider with me the great object of our vocation propounded in the text. That object is "to work out the righteousness of God." How holy a privilege is here held up for the exercise of Christians! How worthy an object for the greatest efforts of the greatest mind! I am desirous now to lead your minds to consider the reverse of the apostle's negative assertion, and to point out to you that if wrath does not work out the righteousness of God, what it is that does. Hear what St. John says upon this point, "Let no man deceive you: He that doth righteousness is righteous, even as He (*i.e.*, God) is righteous"; "Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother"; this exactly accords with the doctrine of St. James, "Be ye doers of the Word and not hearers only." Whence it appears that an identity of will between God and man produces an identity of effect. An identity, that is, not in the perfectness of the righteousness, nor of the amount of it, but in the general tone of mind and action, so that the converted man seeks no longer as his main object the fulfilment of selfishness and carnal desires, but rather the righteousness of God. If you have felt your spirits stirred within you, and yourselves deeply moved—1. In the reception of God's revelation; 2. In feeling that revelation as a reality, not merely believing it as a theory; and—3. In acting upon it as an unfailing rule of life; then I conceive that you may without presumption apply the comforting promises of the gospel to your own souls, and trust in humility that God's Spirit within you is working God's righteousness by you. (*Bp. Mackenzie.*) *The effect of man's wrath in the agitation of religious controversies*:—I. YOU ARE ALL AWARE OF THERE BEING MUCH WRATHFUL CONTROVERSY ON THE PART OF MEN RELATIVE TO THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST, wherein the righteousness of God is said by the apostle to be revealed from faith to faith. Is there no danger, we ask, amid the acerbities of such a thickening warfare, that men should lose sight of the mildness and the mercy that lay in that embassy of peace by which it had been stirred? Surely the noise that arises from the wars and the wranglings of earth, falls differently upon the hearing to that sweetest music which descended from the canopy that is over our heads, and which accompanied the declaration of good-will to us in heaven. And so, altogether, that theology which shines immediate from his Bible on the heart of the unlettered peasant, may come with altered expression and effect on the mind of the scholastic, after it has been transmuted into the theology of the portly and polemic folio. The Sun of Righteousness may shed a mild and beauteous lustre upon the one, which to the eye of the other is obscured in the turbulence of rolling vapours, in the lurid clouds of an angry and unsettled sky. When God beseeches us to be reconciled to Him in Christ Jesus, there is placed before the mind one object of contemplation. When man steps forward, and, in the pride or intolerance of orthodoxy, denounces the fury of an incensed God on all who put not faith in the merits and the mediation of His Son, there is placed before the mind another and a distinct object of contemplation. And just in proportion to the varieties of dogmatism or debate will the mind shift and fluctuate from one contemplation to another. It is thus that the native character of Heaven's embassy may at length be shrouded in subtle but most effectual disguise from the souls of men; and the whole spirit and design of

its munificent Sovereign be wholly misconceived by His sinful yet much-loved children. We interpret the Deity by the hard and imperious scowl which sits on the countenance of angry theologians; and in the strife and clamour of their fierce animosities, we forget the aspect of Him who is upon the throne, the bland and benignant aspect of that God who waiteth to be gracious. And, though not strictly under our present head of discourse, there is one observation more which we feel it of importance to make ere we pass on to the next division of our subject. Apart from the transforming effect of human wrath to give another hue as it were to the complexion of the Godhead, and another expression than that of its own native kindness to the message which has proceeded from Him, there is a distinct operation in the mind of an inquirer after religious truth which is altogether worthy of being adverted to. When the controversialist makes an angry demand upon us for our belief in some one of his positions, why, that position may be the offered and the gratuitous mercy of God in heaven, and yet the whole charm of such a proposal may be dissipated, just through that tone and temper of intolerance in which it is expounded to us upon earth. We are aware, all the time, that the truth, as it is in Jesus, must be sustained by argument—that this is one of the offices of the Church militant upon earth, whose part it is to silence gainsayers; and not only to contend, but to contend earnestly, for the faith which was delivered unto the saints. Yet it is not in the clangour of arms, or in the shouts of victory, or in the heat and hurry even of most successful gladiatorship—it is not thus that this overture of peace and pardon from heaven falls with efficacy upon the sinner's ear. It is not so much in the act of intellectually proving the truth of the doctrine, as in the act of proceeding upon its truth, when we affectionately urge the sinner to make it the stepping-stone of his return unto God—it is then most generally that it becomes manifest unto his conscience, and that he receives in love that which in the spirit of love and kindness has been offered to him. II. I shall NOW CONSIDER THE EFFECT OF MAN'S WRATH, WHEN INTERPOSED BETWEEN A RIGHT AND A WRONG DENOMINATION OF CHRISTIANITY. It can require no very deep insight into our nature to perceive, that when there is proud or angry intolerance on the side of truth, it must call forth the reaction of a sullen and determined obstinacy on the side of error. Men will submit to be reasoned out of an opinion, and more especially when treated with respect and kindness. But they will not submit to be cavalierly driven out of it. There is a revolt in the human spirit against contempt and contumely, insomuch that the soundest cause is sure to suffer from the help of such auxiliaries. Nevertheless, it is the part of man, both to adopt and to advocate the truth, lifting his zealous testimony in its favour. Yet there is surely a way of doing this in the spirit of charity; and while strenuous, while even uncompromising in the argument, it is possible surely to observe all the amenities of gentleness and good-will in these battles of the faith. For example, it is not wrong to feel either the strength or the importance of our cause, when we plead the Godhead of the Saviour. Yet with all these reasons for holding ourselves to be intellectually right upon this question, there is not one reason why the wrath of man should be permitted to mingle in the controversy. This, whenever it is admitted, operates not as an ingredient of strength, but as an ingredient of weakness. Let Truth be shrined in argument—for this is its appropriate glory. And it is a sore disparagement inflicted upon it by the hand of vindictive theologians, when, instead of this, it is shrined in anathema, or brandished as a weapon of dread and of destruction over the heads of all who are compelled to do it homage. Truth will be indebted for her best victories, not to the overthrow of Heresy discomfited on the field of argument, but to the surrender of Heresy disarmed of that in which her strength and her stability lie—of her passionate, because provoked, wilfulness. Charity will do what reason cannot do. It will take that which letteth out of the way—even that wrath of man, which worketh neither the truth nor the righteousness of God. (*T. Chalmers, D.D.*) *The equable temper*:—Let not external circumstances regulate your demeanour. But let them be governed by your strong will acting under a sense of what is right. Your temper will then be equable as it should be. Just look at the plants. One of their most mysterious properties is that of regulating their temperature. The twigs of the tree are not frozen through in winter, neither does their temperature mount up in summer in proportion to the external heat. Their vitality protects them equally from both extremes. And when you are yielding too much to mere external influences just think of this. (*Scientific Illustrations and Symbols.*)

Vers. 21, 22. **Lay aside all filthiness . . . and receive with meekness.**—*Of preaching, hearing, and practising the Word of God:*—I. THAT TO LAY APART ALL THE FILTHINESS AND SUPERFLUITY OF NAUGHTINESS HERE MENTIONED IS NECESSARY FOR EVERY ONE WHO INTENDS TO BE A TRUE CHRISTIAN. Plain as this may seem to be, it is fit to be taken notice of. 1. Because there are some who, though they maintain no such principles in speculation, yet in their practice seem to compromise matters between their vicious inclinations and the Divine laws; and are by no means so holy, so free from all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, as the religion of Jesus requires them to be. 2. Because there are others professing Christianity who, even by their doctrines, would reconcile some sorts of impurity with it. II. THAT THERE IS A PARTICULAR CONNECTION BETWEEN OUR CLEANSING OURSELVES FROM SUCH POLLUTIONS, AND OUR PROFITABLY HEARING THE WORD OF GOD. It is self-evident that the better disposed the mind is, the more likely it must be to receive and retain the heavenly instructions. As a vessel which is empty, clean, and sound, is best fitted to receive and retain pure water, or any such liquor poured into it. Whereas, on the contrary, the foul exhalations of lust will be apt to exclude the Word. III. THAT MEEKNESS, OR A FREEDOM FROM PASSION AND PREJUDICE, AND WHATEVER ELSE IS IMPLIED IN THAT WORD, IS MORE ESPECIALLY REQUISITE IN ORDER TO SUCH PROFITABLE HEARING. "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby." Receive it with the mature understandings of men, but with the unprejudiced wills of children; with the sweetness, innocence, and simplicity of infants. IV. THAT THE WORD OF GOD HAS A MOST POWERFUL, NAY, A NEVER-FAILING EFFICACY TO SAVE OUR SOULS (see 2 Tim. ii. 15). V. THAT IT IS A VAIN THING TO HEAR IT UNLESS WE PRACTISE IT; AND THAT WE DO BUT DECEIVE OURSELVES IF WE EXPECT ANY BENEFIT FROM THE FORMER WITHOUT THE LATTER. (*Joseph Trapp, D.D.*) *Reception of the gospel with meekness:*—I. THE OBJECT. By the ingrafted Word we are to understand the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, which began to be engrafted or planted in the hearts of men when our Lord and His apostles entered on the ministry. II. THE PROPERTY ascribed to it. III. THE QUALIFICATION, how it must be received. 1. Meekness is such a good disposition of mind as prepares men for the reception of the gospel. It is also such a disposition as may be under the influence of grace, acquired by prudential motives and considerations, such as the notions of God's infinite power, justice, and truth; the presages of conscience that rewards and punishments must be distributed equally some time or other. 2. And as this good disposition may be acquired by these and the like considerations, for this reason we ought to distinguish it from some things that are thought to bear a resemblance to it. (1) It ought to be distinguished from nature, which, being defiled by the first transgression, is the greatest obstacle of a ready obedience to God's commands. (2) This good disposition of spirit ought to be distinguished from what we call good nature, because this has a regard chiefly to civil conversation betwixt man and man, and discovers itself either by doing or receiving good offices, and that with a desire to please and oblige others. (3) This good disposition ought to be more especially distinguished from a contemptible, abject spirit, which is a character profane men are wont to affix upon this excellent qualification. (4) This tractable, meek spirit ought to be distinguished also from that mean, abject spirit that takes shelter in an implicit faith. 3. I proceed to show how necessary this qualification of meekness is to us in the state we are in, and that with reference only to the mysteries of faith. Which way soever the controversy turns, the mysteries of it continue still, and must continue till time shall be no more. In this case whatever assistance we crave from reason, reason rightly informed will tell us, first, that this is not a matter that lies properly within her verge and jurisdiction. (*S. Estwick, B.D.*) *How we may hear the Word with profit:*—I. By "THE WORD" I understand the Word of God; which Word of God may be considered either as it is written in the Scripture, or as it is preached by the ministers of Christ. II. WE PROFIT by the Word when we get that good and spiritual advantage from it for which it was designed by God. Now, God hath appointed His Word—1. For learning and instruction. 2. For conversion. The Word turns man unto God—(1) As it discovers sin (1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25). (2) As it brings people to the confession of sins (Matt. iii. 6; Acts xix. 18). (3) As it works a kindly mourning and sorrow for sin (Acts ii. 37; Neh. viii. 9; Jer. iii. 21). (4) As it works amendment and reformation (1 Thess. i. 9; Col. i. 5, 6). 2. For the building up of those that are called, converted, and sanctified (Acts xx. 32, xviii. 27; 1 Tim. iv. 6). 4. For consolation (1 Cor. xiv. 31; Acts viii. 5, 8). Now the Word comforts—(1) As it opens God's attributes, such as His mercy, wisdom,

faithfulness, and power. (2) As it discovers Christ, the promises and privileges of the saints. (3) As it discovers and reveals the marks and characters of God's children. (4) As it answers the doubts and fears of saints. III. How WE SHALL PROFIT by hearing the Word. 1. Hear it attentively (Mark iv. 2, 3: Acts xiii. 16; Rev. ii. 7). 2. With meekness. 3. With a good and honest heart. (1) An understanding heart. (2) A believing heart. (3) A loving heart. 4. Keep what you hear of it (Luke viii. 15; 1 Thess. v. 21; 1 Cor. xv. 2). (1) Repeat it in your families. (2) Talk of it as you go from hearing. (3) Pray to the Lord that He would preserve the Word in your heart by His Spirit. (*Thos. Senior, B.D.*) *Ways of treating the Word*:—There are two ways of treating the seed. The botanist splits it up, and discourses on its curious characteristics; the simple husbandman eats and sows, sows and eats. Similarly there are two ways of treating the gospel. A critic dissects it, raises a mountain of debate about the structure of the whole, and relation of its parts; and when he is done with his argument, he is done; to him the letter is dead; he neither lives on it himself, nor spreads it for the good of his neighbours; he neither eats nor sows. The disciple of Jesus, hungering for righteousness, takes the seed whole; it is bread for to-day's hunger, and seed for to-morrow's supply. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *Moral hindrance to the reception of the truth*:—As "filthiness" (which is the literal import of the original word—a word which occurs only here in the New Testament) of the outward person is offensive to the senses of one who is of cleanly and delicate taste and habits, so offensive is sin or moral evil to the spiritual sensibilities of the new man; of him who is "begotten of God," and whose "seed remaineth in him"—the seed of the pure "Word of God." The exhortation will thus correspond very closely with that of another apostle, which is also connected with the representation of believers as belonging to God's family (2 Cor. vii. 1). Then—retaining the same view of the connection—the word rendered "naughtiness" will naturally be taken in its largest and most general acceptation as meaning "evil"—evil, that is, in principle, affection, and conduct. I am inclined, however, without being positive, to understand the connection of the words as more immediate with the preceding two verses; and as referring especially to the outward expression or utterance of that "wrath of man which worketh not the righteousness of God." In this way, I would interpret "filthiness" of the vile abusive language in which that wrath is ever prone to indulge itself; of ribaldry—coarse and foul invective. And this corresponds well with the style of the writer, who dwells afterwards at such lengths on the evils of the tongue. The low abuse of a wrathful and misguided zeal was one description of the "filthy communication" which Paul, too, commands believers to "put off." On the same principle, I take the word rendered here "naughtiness," to have the sense of malice or maliciousness, rather than the more general sense of evil. These things they were to "lay apart" as hindrances to the reception and influence of God's Word, as at variance with the temper of mind necessary to its right reception and its right operation. "Meekness" has here the distinctive sense of an humble, calm, child-like docile disposition. It is a state of mind unreservedly open to the instructions and directions of Divine wisdom and Divine authority; conscious of ignorance and of proneness to err. The Word is denominated "the engrafted Word," or the implanted Word. The more usual figure is that of seed—seed sown in the heart. Hence it is a shoot—a shoot, as it were, from the tree of life—implanted in the same soil by the agency of God's Spirit. It becomes the plant of grace in the heart; and, in the life, "brings forth fruit unto God." And of that "implanted Word" it is here added, "which is able to save your souls." There are two parts of the soul's salvation, for both of which "the Word of the truth of the gospel" is alike adapted and sufficient. It reveals, in the first place, the ground of the pardon of sin, and of justification before God; and by faith in this ground we are pardoned and justified. That ground consists in the atonement and righteousness of the Divine Saviour—His mediatorial "obedience unto death." The Word of the truth of the gospel, when believed, thus "saves the soul" from guilt and condemnation, and brings it into a state of life and acceptance with God. Then, secondly, it becomes the instrument of renewal and progressive sanctification—an equally important element of the soul's salvation. It saves the soul by delivering it from the power and the love of sin. We are "saved by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." And this is by means of the Word. It is then, when brought to the possession of the "inheritance among them that are sanctified," that the soul is fully and for ever "saved." This latter part of the gospel salvation James was anxious to impress, in its indispensable necessity, on the minds of those

to whom he wrote—the practical influence of the truth which he here exhorts them to receive, and to receive, in all its lessons, with meekly submissive docility—the vanity of all professions of having so received the truth if its practical efficacy was not apparent. This is an invariable characteristic of God's Word. The doctrinal and the practical are inseparable. It follows here accordingly: "But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." The great general principle, or truth, in this verse is, that all mere hearing of the Word, and all professed faith of it, are self-delusions, where there is not the experience of its inward holy influence manifested in its outward practical effects—that the hearing and the professing are worthless without the doing, as the required and necessary evidence of our being accepted of God in Christ. The "doing of the Word" is a proof of our being believers of the Word; of our having indeed "received it with meekness," and of its being divinely and savingly implanted in our hearts. (*R. Wardlaw, D.D.*)

The engrafted Word.—*The engrafted Word*:—St. James is, by eminence, the apostle of practical Christianity. The keynote of his Epistle is, that the religion of Jesus is less a thing to talk about than a thing to act upon, that Christianity is nothing if it is not a life-controlling, life-moulding power. I. Observe HOW THIS "WORD" IS HERE QUALIFIED. It is called "the engrafted Word." It is a metaphor drawn from the vegetable world. The sacred metaphors of Scripture teach by pointing out real correspondences between one department of God's works and another. 1. This metaphor implies that it is no part of the intellectual outfit of the human mind. The Divine Word came to the human mind from without, as a graft to be inserted. 2. It shows its assimilative power. There must be, in the vegetable world, a family likeness to start with, an organic affinity between the stock and the graft. There is a great deal in common between the Word of Jesus and the existing aspirations and beliefs of the human soul. Beneath every heathen superstition fragments of truth which have close fellowship with the one true faith lie buried. 3. In this metaphor we see its power of laying the nature into which it is inserted under contribution. The engrafted Word does not say to human nature that nothing can be done with it, and that it is fit only for destruction. It makes the most of it; it perfects and consecrates human nature by the gifts of grace. II. THE MASTER BENEFIT THAT IT CONFERS. "Able to save your souls." The apostle does not say "it will save them," that it is a talisman which will operate irrespectively of your wills: no, you can check, you can refuse it. But it is able to save. III. WE ARE TO RECEIVE THE WORD OF CHRIST IN A PARTICULAR MORAL TEMPER AND ATTITUDE—"with meekness." It is not meant to add fuel to your controversies, it is meant to govern your lives. IV. THE DUTY INCUMBENT UPON EVERY CHRISTIAN PARENT OF TEACHING HIS CHILD THE FAITH OF CHRIST. Beyond a certain age the stock takes a graft only with difficulty. When all else has been parted with in later life, the early lessons of piety will rise before the soul as from the very grave and thrill it with a new and awful power. (*Canon Liddon.*) *The reception of the Divine Word*:—1. "Lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness." The evil to be got rid of is represented as a foul garment or sore encumbrance. It is to be entirely laid apart. We are to deal thus with all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness. None of it is to be spared. The least of it is vastly too much, and may not be tolerated. The whole of this Amalek is doomed, and woe to him who acts Saul's part, and makes any exception when carrying on the work of destruction. 2. "And receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save your souls." This is the end to which the other is only the means. We are to "receive the Word," that is, admit it into our souls, which we do by believing. Faith accepts it, appropriates it, makes it our own, lodges it within us as a real and abiding possession. This grace has not only a perceptive, but also a receptive power. This is to be done "with meekness," gentleness, mildness—with a disposition the opposite of an angry, malicious spirit. No other can be suited to receiving the Word, which, in its very nature, is humbling to our pride, and, being all impregnated with love, cannot dwell where enmity continues to retain its seat. The one must make way for the other. And mark how he describes the Word which is to be thus received. Often is it spoken of under the emblem of seed sown, here it is the kindred one of a shoot planted or "engrafted." The Word had already been lodged within the persons here directly addressed. They had been begotten by it, and hence, in their case, it was engrafted. It had been inserted into the old and wild stock of nature by the Spirit, and thus had changed the whole character of the tree and its productions. What they were now to do was to receive it more fully. We need ever to be appropriating afresh Divine truth, using it as the aliment of the spiritual life,

drawing from it the motives to, and the materials for, holy living. "Which is able to save your souls." "Your souls," that is your whole persons, which are here designated by their principal part, that in which corruption chiefly dwells, and on which destruction chiefly falls. This is the Word's highest excellence, its crowning distinction. It can do what is here ascribed to it, not efficiently, but only instrumentally. It reveals and offers salvation, spreads out the blessings of it, and commends them to our acceptance. (*John Adam.*) *Before sermon, at sermon, and after sermon:*—It is a good thing to be under the sound of the Word of God. Even if the very lowest motive should induce persons to come to hear the gospel, it is nevertheless a good thing that they should come. He that comes near to its fire, even with the intent to quench it, may find himself overcome by its heat. Master Hugh Latimer, in his quaint manner, when exhorting people to go to church, tells of a woman who could not sleep for many nights, notwithstanding that drugs had been given to her; but she said that if they would take her to her parish church she could sleep there, for she had often enjoyed a quiet slumber under the sermon; and he goes the length of saying that if people even come to the sermon to sleep, it is better than not to come at all; for, he adds, in his fine old Saxon, "they may be caught napping." Yet it will strike you at once that though it be well to come to the hearing of the Word in any case, yet it is better to come in a better way. We should endeavour to gather the most we can from the means of grace, and not pluck at them at random. Let us not lose a grain of the blessing through our own fault. The Word of the Lord is precious in these days; let us not trifle with it. I. Let us consider the fit and proper preparation for listening to the gospel, or what is to be done BEFORE HEARING. There should be no stumbling into the place of worship half-asleep, no roaming thither as if it were no more than going to a play-house. We cannot expect to profit much if we bring with us a swarm of idle thoughts and a heart crammed with vanity. If we are full of folly, we may shut out the truth of God from our minds. We should make ready to receive what God is so ready to bestow. When I think of our engagements throughout the week, who of us can feel fit to come into the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High? I mean not into these tabernacles made with hands, but into the inner spiritual temple of communion with God. How shall we come unto God until we are washed? After travelling so miry a road as that which runs through this foul world, can we come unto God without shaking the dust from off our feet? There is a common consent among mankind that there should be some preparedness for worship. In making this preparation our text tells us that there are some things to be laid aside. "All filthiness." Now sin of every kind is filthiness. By faith in the precious blood of Jesus it must be washed out, for we cannot come before God with acceptance while iniquity is indulged. Filth, you know, is a debasing thing, meet only for beggars and thieves; and such is sin. Filth is offensive to all cleanly persons. However poor a man is he might be clean; and when he is not, he becomes a common nuisance to those who speak with him, or sit near him. If bodily filthiness is horrible to us, what must the filthiness of sin be to the pure and holy God? Moreover, sin is not only offensive, but it is dangerous. He who harbours filth is making a hot-bed for the germs of disease, and thus he is the enemy of his family and of his neighbourhood. The filthy man is a public poisoner, a suicide, and a murderer. Sin is the greatest conceivable danger to a man's own soul: it makes a man to be dead while he lives, yea, corrupt before he is dead. There are three sins at least that are intended here, and one is covetousness. Hence the desire of unholy gain is called filthy lucre, because it leads men to do dirty deeds which else they would not think of. If the lust of wealth enters into the heart, it rots it to the core. Then, with peculiar correctness, lustfulness may be spoken of as filthiness. How should the thrice holy Spirit come and dwell in that heart which is a den of unclean desires? But in the connection of my text the filthiness meant is especially anger. How can you accept the Word of peace while you are at enmity with your brother? How can you hope to find forgiveness under the hearing of the Word when you forgive not those that have trespassed against you? The wrath of man is so filthy a thing, that it cannot work the righteousness of God; nor is it likely that the righteousness of God will be wrought in the heart that is hot like an oven with passion and malice. But it is added, "and superfluity of naughtiness." The phrase here used differs not in meaning from the first epithet of the text: it gives another view of the same thing. You have seen a rose-tree which, perhaps was bearing very few roses, and you half wondered why. It was a good rose, and planted in good soil, but its flowers were scanty. You looked around it, and by and by you perceived that suckers were grow-

ing up from its root. Now, these suckers come from the old, original briar, on which the rose had been grafted, and this rose had a superfluity of strength which it used in these suckers. These superfluities, or overflows, took away from the rose the life which it required, so that it could not produce the full amount of flowers which you expected from it. These superfluities of naughtiness that were coming up here and there were to the injury of the tree. Children of God, you cannot serve the Lord if you are giving your strength to any form of wrong; your naughtinesses are springing from the briar stock of your old nature, and the best thing to do is to cut off those suckers and stop them as much as possible, so that all the strength may return into the rose, and the lovely flowers of grace may abound. Oh, that God's people, when they come up here on the Sabbath-day, may first have undergone that Divine pruning which shall take away the superfluity of naughtiness, for there cannot be grafting without a measure of pruning. The gardener takes off from a certain part of the tree a shoot of the old stock, and then he inserts the graft. There must be a removal of superfluities in order that we may receive with meekness "the engrafted Word," which is able to save our souls. Why is this? Why is a man as he comes to hear the gospel to see to this? I take it because all these evil things preoccupy the mind. If we come here with this filthiness about us, how can we expect that the pure and incorruptible Word shall be sweet to us? Moreover, sin prejudices against the gospel. A man says, "I do not enjoy the sermon." How can you? What have you been enjoying during the week? What flavour did last night leave in your mouth? II. Secondly, I will talk a little about DURING HEARING. How shall we act while listening to the Word? "Receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save your souls." The first thing, then, is receive. That word "receive" is a very instructive gospel word; it is the door through which God's grace enters to us. We are not saved by working, but by receiving; not by what we give to God, but by what God gives to us, and we receive from Him. The preaching of the Word is as a shower from heaven; but what happens to the soil if the raindrops fall, but none are absorbed into the soil? Of what avail is the shower if none is drunk in by the thirsty furrows? A medicine may have great healing power, but if it is not received, then it does not purge the inward parts of the body. There must be a receiving of any good thing before the goodness of it can be ours. Then it is added, "receive with meekness." We stand at the bar to be tried by God's Word, and searched; but woe unto us if, rejecting every pretence of meekness, we ascend the tribunal, and summon God Himself before us. The spirit of critics ill becomes sinners when they seek mercy of the Lord. His message must be received with teachableness of mind. When you know it is God's Word, it may upbraid you, but you must receive it with meekness. It may startle you with its denunciations: but receive it with meekness. It may be, there is something about the truth which at the first blush does not commend itself to your understanding; it is perhaps too high, too terrible, too deep; receive it with meekness. What is this which is to be received? "Receive with meekness the engrafted Word." We are not bidden to receive with meekness men's words, for they are many, and there is little in them; but receive with meekness God's Word, for it is one, and there is power in each Word which proceedeth out of His mouth. It is called "the engrafted Word." Engrafting implies that the heart is wounded and opened, and then the living Word is laid in and received with meekness into the bleeding, wounded soul of the man. There is the gash, and there is the space opened thereby. Here comes the graft: the gardener must establish a union between the tree and the graft. This new life, this new branch, is inserted into the old stem, and they are to be livingly joined together. At first they are bound together by the gardener, and clay is placed about the points of junction; but soon they begin to grow into one another, and then only is the grafting effectual. This new cutting grows into the old, and it begins to suck up the life of the old, and change it so that it makes new fruit. That bough, though it be in the grafted tree, is altogether of another sort. Now we want the Word of God to be brought to us after a similar fashion: our heart must be cut and opened, and then the Word must be laid into the gash till the two adhere, and the heart begins to hold to the Word, to believe in it, to hope in it, to love it, to grow to it, to grow into it, and to bear fruit accordingly. Once more you are to receive it by faith, for you are to regard the Word as being able. Believe in the power of God's Word, receive it as being fully able to save your souls from beginning to end. Two ways it does this: by putting away your sin as you accept the blood and righteousness of Christ, and by changing your nature as you accept the Lord Jesus to be your Master and your

Lord, your life and your all. III. Lastly, let us think of AFTER SERMON. "Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." First, the command is positive—"Be ye doers of the Word." Sirs, ye have heard about repentance and the putting away of filthiness: repent, then, and let your filthiness be put away. May God the Holy Ghost lead you to do so—not to hear about it, but do it. Ye have heard us preach continually concerning faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you know all about believing; but have you believed? We are to admonish you concerning all those blessed duties which spring out of that living faith which works by love; but it is nothing to hear about these virtues unless you possess them. Doing far surpasses hearing. I believe that with a very little knowledge and great doing of what we know, we may attain to a far higher degree of grace than with great knowledge and little doing of what we know. Observe that the command is put negatively: the text says, "not hearers only." Those who are hearers only are wasters of the Word. What poor creatures hearers are, for they have long ears and no hands! Ye have heard of him who one day was discoursing eloquently of philosophy to a crowd, who greatly applauded him. He thought he had made many disciples, but suddenly the market-bell rang, and not a single person remained. Gain was to be made, and in their opinion no philosophy could be compared to personal profit. They were hearers till the market-bell rang, and then, as they had been hearers only, they quitted the hearing also. I fear it is so with our preachings: if the devil rings the bell for sin, for pleasure, for worldly amusement, or evil gain, our admirers quit us right speedily. The voice of the world drowns the voice of the Word. Those who are only hearers, are hearers but for a time. Remember, if any man will be lost, he will most surely be lost who heard the gospel and refused it. Over the cell of such a man write, "He knew his duty, but he did it not"; and that cell will be found to be built in the very centre of Gehenna; it is the innermost prison of hell. Wilful rejection of Christ ensures woful rejection from Christ. The text closes with this solemn word: "Deceiving your own selves." Whereupon says Bishop Brownrig, "To deceive is bad, to deceive yourselves is worse, to deceive yourselves about your souls is worst of all." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The engrafted Word*:—I. THE GIFT TO BE BESTOWED. 1. The nature of the gift. The application of truths to the soul in practical activity. The will of God as imparted by revelation. The guidance of God. 2. The benefit of the gift. "Able to save the soul." Preservation from sorrow, ruin, death. II. THE METHOD BY WHICH IT IS TO BE IMPARTED. 1. No meritorious deserving. 2. No heavy price. III. THE WAY IN WHICH IT IS TO BE RECEIVED. 1. With thoroughness. 2. With meekness. 3. With docility. IV. THE EFFECT IT WILL PRODUCE. 1. Transform the entire nature. 2. Enlighten the life. 3. Bestow salvation. (*Homilist.*) *The engrafted Word*:—Various images are given to us to set forth the manifold value of the Word of truth. It is compared to "gold and silver" (Psa. cxix. 72). By St. James in this passage it is called "the engrafted Word," or "the implanted Word" (R.V.). It is as the graft put into the tree, which, when it takes and grows, changes its whole character and produce. So, when God's truth enters the soul, it becomes as the germ and origin of a new and holy life. Or, the expression used by St. James may lead us to another view. It is like seed planted in the earth, as in the parable of the sower (Luke viii. 11). And, as seed, the Word has a mighty power and operation. We are told that in Mexico you come upon vast masses of masonry, once forming part of their heathen temples, but now utterly overthrown and broken up. But how has this been accomplished? It is by seeds carried by birds of the air, and lodged in the crevices, and these, by and by, have grown and grown until they have split into fragments walls and buildings which once seemed likely to abide for centuries. Thus, too, is there a power in the Word of God to cast down the strongholds of sin, superstition, error, and idolatry, and, whether in countries or in human hearts, utterly to destroy that which dishonours the Lord. We are reminded by St. James in this passage that this Word is "able to save your souls." 1. It is God's instrument for convincing men of the evil of their doings. It shows to them the peril of living in unpardoned sin. It leads them to seek the way of life, and, like the multitude on the day of Pentecost, to ask, "What must we do?" 2. The Word is "able to save the soul," because it ever points to Him who is able to save, even to the uttermost. 3. The Word is able to save because it points out the path of true "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." It gives us the holy law of God in all its breadth and fulness. It calls us to the loftiest standard of self-denial and consecration to God's service. But to learn these lessons and obtain these benefits, the Word of God must be received

into the heart. It may fall upon the ear, or be read by the eye, and yet fail to impart any true blessing. Hence we need to look for the aid of God's Holy Spirit. Pray much that you may rightly understand what is revealed, and, above all, that you may love the truth and follow it. If you would receive the Word aright, there must be hearty renunciation of all past evil. Cast aside old habits of sloth, self-indulgence, worldliness, evil speaking, and all else that belongs to sin and the flesh. I know full well you cannot do this in your own strength. St. James adds another particular as to the reception of the Word. It must be received "with meekness" and humility. All pride, prejudice, and self-wisdom must be cast to the winds. You must come to the Word to learn what God would teach you, and you must come in the spirit of a little child. Perhaps we can find no better example of the spirit in which we should hear or read than that of Mary, sitting at the feet of Jesus and hearing His Word (Luke x. 39). Was there ever a better student in Divine knowledge? (*G. Everard, M.A.*) *The Bible and human souls*:—I. THE BIBLE. 1. It is the Word. Pure. Loving. Faithful. Conquering. 2. It is the engrafted Word. An incorruptible seed. 3. It is the Word to save from spiritual ignorance, prejudice, thraldom, selfishness, sensuality, guilt, &c. II. THE HUMAN SOUL. 1. Its amazing capability. 2. Its moral obligations. Receive the Word in a humble, reverent, docile spirit. (*Homilist.*) *Receiving the Word*:—1. Before we come to the Word, there must be preparation. Many come to hear, but they do not consider the weight and importance of the duty. Christ saith (Luke viii. 18). (1) By way of caution. (*a*) Do not exclude God out of your preparations. Usually men mistake in this matter, and hope by their own care to work themselves into a fitness of spirit. (*b*) Though you cannot get your hearts into such a frame as you do desire, trust God, and that help which is absent to sense and feeling may be present to faith. (2) By way of direction. I cannot go out into all the severals of preparations, how the heart must be purged, faith exercised, repentance renewed, wants and weaknesses reviewed, God's glory considered, the nature, grounds, and ends of the ordinances weighed in our thoughts. Only, in the general, so much preparation there must be as will make the heart reverent. God will be served with a joy mixed with trembling (Gen. xxviii. 17). And again, such preparation as will settle the bent of the spirit heavenward. It is said somewhere, "They set themselves to seek the Lord" (Psa. lvii. 7). 2. Christian preparation consists most in laying aside and dispossessing evil frames. Weeds must be rooted out before the ground is fit to receive the seed (Jer. iv. 3). There is an unsuitableness between a filthy spirit and the pure holy Word. 3. Put it off, as a rotten and filthy garment. Sin must be left with an utter detestation (Isa. xxx. 22). 4. We must not lay aside sin in part only, but all sin (1 Pet. ii. 1; Psa. cxix. 104). The least sins may undo you. 5. Sin is filthiness; it sullies the glory and beauty of the soul, defaces the image of God (2 Cor. vii. 1; Job xiv. 4, xv. 14). 6. From that "superfluity of wickedness." That there is abundance of wickedness to be purged out of the heart of man. "All the imaginations of the heart are evil, only evil, and that continually"; it runneth out into every thought, into every desire, into every purpose. As there is saltness in every drop of the sea, and bitterness in every branch of wormwood, so sin in everything that is framed within the soul. Whatever an unclean person touched, though it were holy flesh, it was unclean; so all our actions are poisoned with it. 7. Our duty in hearing the Word is to receive it. In receiving there is an act of the understanding, in apprehending the truth and musing upon it (Luke ix. 44). And there is an act of faith, the crediting and believing faculty is stirred up to entertain it (Heb. iv. 2). And there is an act of the will and affections to embrace and lodge it in the soul, which is called "a receiving the truth in love," when we make room for it, that carnal affections and prejudices may not vomit and throw it up again. 8. The Word must be received with all meekness. First, this excludes—(1) A wrathful fierceness, by which men rise in a rage against the Word (Jer. vi. 10). (2) A proud stubbornness, when men are resolved to hold their own (Jer. ii. 25). (3) A contentious wrangling, which is found in men of an unsober wit, that scorn to captivate the pride of reason, and therefore stick to every shift (Psa. xxv. 8, 9). Secondly, it includes—(1) Humility and brokenness of spirit. There must be insection before insition, meekness before ingrafting. (2) Teachableness and tractableness of spirit (Jas. iii. 17). The servants of God come with a mind to obey; they do but wait for the discovery of their duty (Acts x. 33). Disputing against the Word, it is a judging yourselves; it is as if, in effect, you should say, "I care not for God, nor all the tenders of grace and glory that He maketh to me." 9. The Word must not only be apprehended

by us, but planted in us. It is God's promise (Jer. xxxi. 33). 10. The Word in God's hand is an instrument to save our souls. 11. That the main care of a Christian should be to save his soul. This is propounded as an argument why we should hear the Word; it will save your souls. Usually our greatest care is to gratify the body. (*T. Manton.*) *The gospel:*—I. ITS CHARACTER. 1. The distinctness of its existence. It is a "graft" taken from the tree of eternal thought. Christ brought it to the earth, and grafted it upon human souls. 2. The affinity of its nature. 3. The appropriateness of its force. The gospel, when it enters the human soul, lays under contribution all its reasoning, creative, and susceptible powers. II. ITS CAPABILITY. As the buds of a fruitful tree engrafted on some barren plant make the worthless valuable, the unfertile fruitful, so the gospel saves all the soul's faculties, turns them all to a right use. III. ITS RECEPTION. 1. Not with—(1) Thoughtlessness. (2) Servility. 2. With the meekness of—(1) Docility. (2) Devotion. (*Homilist.*) *The ingrafted Word:*—The man who supposes that all that is necessary is that he run over a passage of Scripture before leaving his bed-chamber, and another at family prayer, and give respectful attention to his clergyman in church, is greatly mistaken. He must work out in life what he reads and hears, as the sap of a tree works out fruit on the stem which is grafted thereon. It is the failure to do this which has so greatly retarded our religious life. Men have heard the Word with their outward ears, and have gone out of the church thinking that the sermon was done, whereas it had not begun in their practice, not even in their hearts. No; the moment I have learned anything from the Word, I must make a strenuous effort to reproduce it in my life. Then the next thing learned, then the rest; and so on, until my life be an incarnation of the Bible. If each hearer did this, how powerful our holy faith would be among men! Compared with this, what is success in controversy, although I could silence every theological opponent? What Biblical learning, although I could repeat every verse of the Bible in every tongue ever spoken among men? Neither of these would save me; but the truth, animated into fruitage by my spiritual vitality, would make me a tree worth a place in God's orchard. (*C. F. Deems, D.D.*) *Preparation of heart:*—That the Word of God may have full power over us, there must be a preparation of heart for its reception. We must cease to do evil before we can learn to do well. We must lay aside everything which is offensive to the purity of God. By the term "filthiness" James seems to wish to arouse a sense of the loathsomeness of all sin. He does not simply mean that we shall lay aside those particular sins which are disgusting to us; but rather to impress us that all sin has in it that which makes it disgusting to God. He may here be supposed to be thinking of sins of the flesh, the visible violations of the moral law. Then we are to lay aside all "superfluity of naughtiness." The word occurs in Rom. v. 15 and 2 Cor. viii. 2; it indicates that which goes out to others. Here it means the outflowing of malice. By the one phrase James may be supposed to refer to sins of the flesh, and by the other sins of the spirit. While indulging ourselves either in sins which others cannot see, or sins which show themselves in displays of evil temper, we cannot profit by the Word of God. Meekness, as well as purity, is essential to the proper hearing of the Word of God. One cannot in private approach the study of the Word in the pride of opinion or of scholarship, nor can one resort to the Word for the purpose of sustaining one's own dogma, and while in that spirit find the Word profitable. You know that this is sometimes done. A man may take down the Bible to find proof passages, just as a lawyer may search the Reports of the Supreme Court to find only that which will sustain his theory of the case which he is to try. In such search he throws aside whatever does not make for his side. He is not learning laws, he is hunting helps. If the Bible be so studied, it will be unprofitable. We must approach it with the docility of little children (Matt. xviii. 23). We must simply wish to learn what is the mind of the Spirit in the Word of God. (*Ibid.*) *The engrafted Word:*—It is only in the apprehension of what we really are that the Word begins to be engrafted. We may have correct theories about the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the mischief that it works; but it is when we see ourselves in the mirror, and discern what sin has done for us, that God's view of sin begins to be ours, and we shrink from it and long to be saved from it, as if it really were what "the Word" represents it as being—a terrible and fatal disease, a very plague-spot in the soul. You shall see two persons going out of the same church, after having listened to the same sermon. They are both, we will say, sinners, and unforgiven sinners; but the one is full of admiration of all that he has heard. "What a magnificent sermon! I never heard

anything more scathing than his denunciation of sin. How he did show it up! I really think he is the most impressive preacher I ever listened to." And the other slips away in silence like one ashamed; his whole life rises up in witness against him. The preacher's voice has seemed to thunder in his ear, "Thou art the man!" His self-complacency is rent to shreds; he feels, like the publican, as though he could not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven. He retreats into the solitude of his own chamber, and casts himself upon his knees with a cry of anguish, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" What is it that makes the two to differ? In the one case the Word has been heard, and only heard; and in the other case it has been implanted. In both cases the mirror has been presented; but in the one case the man has been content with a glance, and then straightway has forgotten what manner of man he was; while the other has looked boldly and resolutely into the glass, until his inmost conscience has been roused and his very heart appalled by what he has seen there. The image still haunts him; he cannot escape from it. His self-esteem is levelled in the dust; he has seen his natural face in the glass, and he has really discovered what manner of man he is. (*W. H. M. H. Aitken, M.A.*)

Vers. 22–25. **Doers of the Word, and not hearers only.**—*Doers, not hearers only*:—I. THE EXHORTATION. The doers of the Word are those who are ruled by it, who practically comply with its requirements, who not only read, understand, and believe it, but submit to its authority, regulate their tempers and lives by its precepts. The term, too, is expressive of continuance, permanence. We must live and move in this element, we must find our occupation here the chief delight of our existence. It is only such doing that constitutes a doer of the Word. "And not hearers only." This is what the apostle is anxious to guard against. Mark what it really is which he condemns. It is not being hearers—very far from that. It is the stopping short here, resting in it which he condemns. He finds no fault with those who are hearers, it is with those who are hearers simply and "not doers." He adds, "Deceiving your own selves." Whatever the foundation on which they build, whatever the process by which they reach the conclusion in their own favour—all who think well of themselves, who believe that they are God's people, and on the way to heaven, while they are hearers only and not doers—all such must, and do delude themselves. They are helped to this result. The father of lies tries to persuade them that they are all right as to their spiritual character. He labours to hide from us the truth, and to draw us into the meshes of soul-ruining error. II. THE ILLUSTRATION. 1. A picture of the mere hearer. "He is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass"—literally, "the face of his birth," the countenance with which he was born—marking out the external, material sphere within which the figure lies, and suggesting all the more vividly the spiritual counterpart, the moral visage which belongs to us as the posterity of Adam, the sin-marred lineaments of the soul. He sees it with all its peculiarities, more or less pleasing, reflected in the glass before which he stands, there confronting him so that he cannot but note its features. The hearer of the gospel does something remarkably similar. In his case the glass, that into which he looks, is the Divine Word. It unfolds the corruption which has put its foul impress on every part of our being, the dark lusts and passions that hold sway within us, the features and workings of our carnal, enmity-possessed minds. It is the great business of the preacher to raise aloft the glass of Divine truth, to set forth faithfully alike the law and the gospel. The hearer does not thrust it away from him, and he turns not aside from it as do many. He does not withdraw to a distance, or push the mirror toward his neighbour. He looks into it more or less closely. The likeness varies greatly as to distinctness of outline and depth of impression. Self is in some measure presented to view and is recognised. The apostle proceeds with the comparison. The man having beheld himself, "goeth his way," is off to his business or his pleasure, to meet his friends, or pursue his journey. He is soon engaged with other matters. In a few moments the appearance he presented is forgotten. The beholding in this case corresponds to the hearing and its effects in the other. As the looker turns away from the glass, so does the mere hearer from the Word. The latter leaves the sanctuary, and the bodily departure is connected with a mental one far greater. The attention is relaxed, or rather drawn off, and directed toward an entirely different class of subjects. The mind goes back to its pursuit of lying vanities; and thus comes the deep and sad forgetfulness. Convictions fade away, feelings cool down, and the old security returns. 2. A picture of the real doer (ver. 25). Here

the comparison begins to be dropped. The figure and the thing represented, symbol and substance, blend together; no longer kept separate, they pass into each other. Observe what this man looks into. It is "the perfect law of liberty." He calls it "perfect." It is so in itself as the transcript of God's perfect character, and as leading all who apprehend and use it aright forward to man's perfect stature. It is this alike in its nature and its effect. And it is "the perfect law of liberty." It is a law of bondage to those who look into it in its covenant form, and strive to earn heaven by their own merits. But in regeneration it is written on the heart, and the new creature is in harmony with it, delights in it, so that conformity to it is no longer a forced but a spontaneous thing. Thus he is free, not by being released from law, but by having it wrought into his being, made the moving, regulating power of his new existence. Notice, now, how this man deals with the mirror thus described. "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty." We have here a different word from that which expresses the beholding in the former instance. It signifies to stoop down and come close to an object so as to see it clearly and fully. It points to a near, minute, searching inspection. And, in this case, it is not a temporary exercise. The eyes are not soon averted and directed to other objects. For it is added, "and continueth therein"—continueth still looking into the perfect law, meditating on its requirements, seeking to undertand their nature and feel their power. He is arrested, and cannot turn his steps or his eyes towards other objects. This is characteristic of every one truly subdued by the inspired Word. He continues and the effect appears. Such a man is "not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work." He remembers the truth apprehended, and strives to reduce it to practice. It sets all his powers of mind and body in motion. He is a "doer of the work," or literally of work, pointing not to this or that act of obedience, but to a constant, thorough, loving, free course of service. In all things he aims at doing the will of God, and he so far succeeds. "This man"—emphatically, not the other, not any other—this man, he, he alone—"shall be blessed in his deed" or his doing. He shall be blessed, not only after or through his doing, not merely on account of it or by means of it, but in his doing. Obedience is its own reward. It yields an exquisite satisfaction, and, while it leads on in a heavenward progress, draws down large foretastes of the fulness of joy, the rivers of pleasure, which are at God's right hand for evermore. (*John Adam.*) *Two sorts of hearers*:—James has no speculations. He is not satisfied with the buds of hearing, he wants the fruits of obedience. We need more of his practical spirit in this age. Preachers must preach as for eternity, and look for fruit; and hearers must carry out what they hear, or otherwise the sacred ordinance of preaching will cease to be the channel of blessing. I. THE UNBLEST CLASS. 1. They are hearers, but they are described as hearers who are not doers. They have heard a sermon on repentance, but they have not repented. They have heard the gospel cry, "Believe!" but they have not believed. They know that he who believes purges himself from his old sins, yet they have had no purging, but abide as they were. Now, if I address such, let me say to them—it is clear that you are and must be unblest. Hearing of a feast will not fill you; hearing of a brook will not quench your thirst. The knowledge that there is a shelter from the storm will not save the ship from the tempest. The information that there is a cure for a disease will not make the sick man whole. No: boons must be grasped and made use of if they are to be of any value to us. 2. Next, these hearers are described as deceiving themselves. You would very soon quit my door, and call me inhospitable, if I gave you music instead of meat; and yet you deceive yourselves with the notion that merely hearing about Jesus and His great salvation has made you better men. Or, perhaps, the deceit runs in another line: you foster the idea that the stern truths which your hear do not apply to you. 3. And then, again, according to our text, these people are superficial hearers. They are said to be like to a man who sees his natural face in a glass. When a glass is first exhibited to some fresh discovered negro tribe, the chieftain as he sees himself is perfectly astonished. He looks, and looks again, and cannot make it out. So is it in the preaching of the Word; the man says, "Why, those are my words; that is my way of feeling." To see yourself as God would have you see yourself in the glass of Scripture is something, but you must afterwards go to Christ for washing or your looking is very superficial work. 4. The text accuses these persons of being hasty hearers—"he beholdeth himself and goeth his way." They never give the Word time to operate, they are back to business, back to idle chit-chat, the moment the service ends. 5. One other thing is said about them, namely, that they are very forgetful hearers—they forget what manner of men they are. They have

heard the discourse, and there is an end of it. That travelling dealer did well who, while listening to Mr. William Dawson, when he was speaking about dishonesty, stood up in the midst of the congregation and broke a certain yard measure with which he had been in the habit of cheating his customers. That woman did well who said that she forgot what the preacher talked about, but she remembered to burn her bushel when she got home, for that too had been short in measure. You may forget the words in which the truth was couched, if you will, but let it purify your life. It reminds me of the gracious woman who used to earn her living by washing wool. When her minister called upon her and asked her about his sermon, and she confessed she had forgotten the text, he said, "What good could it have done you?" She took him into her back place where she was carrying on her trade. She put the wool into a sieve, and then pumped on it. "There, sir," she said, "your sermon is like that water. It runs through my mind, sir, just as the water runs through the sieve; but then the water washes the wool, sir, and so the good word washes my soul." Thus I have described certain hearers, and I fear we have many such in all congregations; admiring hearers, but all the while unblest hearers, because they are not doers of the work. One thing they lack—they have no faith in Christ. It does surprise me how some of you can be so favourable to everything that has to do with Divine things, and yet have no personal share in the good treasure. What would you say of a cook who prepared dinners for other people and yet died of starvation? Foolish cook, say you. Foolish hearer, say I. Are you going to be like Solomon's friends the Tyrians, who helped to build the temple and yet went on worshipping their idols? II. BLESSED HEARERS—those who get the blessing. 1. Now, notice that this hearer who is blest is, first of all, an earnest, eager, humble hearer. He does not look upon the law of liberty and go his way, but he looketh into it. He hears of the gospel, and he says, "I will look into this. There is a something here worth attention." He stoops and becomes a little child that he may learn. He searches as men do who are looking after diamonds or gold. That is the right kind of hearer—an earnest listener whose senses are all aroused to receive all that can be learned. 2. It is implied, too, that he is a thoughtful, studious, searching hearer—he looks into the perfect law. He is sacredly curious. He inquires; he pries. He asks all those who should know. He likes to get with old Christians to hear their experience. He loves to compare spiritual things with spiritual, to dissect a text and see how it stands in relation to another, and to its own parts, for he is in earnest when he hears the Word. 3. Looking so steadily he discovers that the gospel is a law of liberty: and indeed it is so. There is no joy like the joy of pardon, there is no release like release from the slavery of sin, there is no freedom like the liberty of holiness, the liberty to draw near to God. 4. But it is added that he continues therein. If you hear the gospel and it does not bless you, hear it again. If you have read the Word of God and it has not saved you, read it again. It *is* able to save your soul. 5. Lastly, it is added that this man is not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the Word, and he shall be blessed in his deed. Is he bidden to pray? He prays as best he can. Is he bidden to repent? He asks God to enable him to repent. He turns everything that he hears into practice. I remember reading of a certain person who heard of giving a tenth of our substance to God. "Well," said he, "that is right, and I will do it": and he kept his promise. He heard that Daniel drew near to God three times a day in prayer. He said, "That is right; I will do it"; and he practised a threefold approach to the throne of grace each day. He made it a rule every time he heard of something that was excellent to practise it at once. Thus he formed holy habits and a noble character, and became a blessed hearer of the Word. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Word of words*:—I. The Word AS MERELY HEARD. 1. It is only superficially known. 2. It leaves men in self-ignorance. II. THE WORD RIGHTLY PRACTISED. 1. It is thoroughly investigated. 2. It confers the highest blessing. (1) Imparts complete liberty. (2) Ensures constant happiness. (*U. R. Thomas.*) *Hearing and doing*:—I. THE IMPORTANCE OF HEARING THE WORD. 1. The Word tells us whence we are. 2. The Word tells us what we are. 3. The Word tells us how to get rid of sin. 4. The Word helps us to form character for heaven. II. THE GREATER IMPORTANCE OF DOING THE WORD. 1. Hearing is but the preliminary of doing. 2. Hearing can never shake off the load of sin; while doing lays the burden upon Christ. 3. In the all-important work of cultivating character, mere hearing hardens and distorts; while doing the will of God is the way to become like Him. 4. Doing the will of God is the only adequate test of love, which is the essence both of religion and salvation. (*J. T. Whitley.*) *The danger of mistaking knowledge for*

obedience:—1. Knowledge without obedience ends in nothing. This is the folly which our Lord rebukes in the parable of the man that built his house upon the sand. 2. It inflicts a deep and lasting injury upon the powers of our spiritual nature. In childhood, boyhood, manhood, the same sounds of warning, and promise, and persuasion, the same hopes and fears, have fallen on a heedless ear, and a still more heedless heart: they have lost their power over the man; he has acquired a settled habit of hearing without doing. The whole force of habit—that strange mockery of nature—has reinforced his original reluctance to obey. 3. It is an arch-deceiver of mankind. It deceives the man into the belief that he really is what he so clearly knows he ought to be. Again, there are men who can never speak of religious truth without emotion; and yet, though their knowledge has so much of fervour as to make them weep, it has not power enough to make them deny a lust. 4. This knowing and disobeying, it is that makes so awful the responsibilities of Christians. Knowledge is a great and awful gift: it makes a man partaker of the mind of God; it communes with him of the eternal will, and reveals to him the royal law of God's kingdom. To hold this knowledge in unrighteousness, to imprison it in the stifling hold of an impure, a proud, or a rebellious heart, is a most appalling insult against the majesty of the God of truth. (*Archdeacon Manning.*) *Profitless hearing*:—The necessity of good preaching is well understood among men. The importance of good hearing is not so well understood. To render the message effective, it is not enough that the former be furnished. Be it as faultless as was the preaching of the Son of God, a man may sit under it and go from it totally unbenefited. It leaves on his heart the impression, not of the seal upon the plastic wax, but such an impression as the face makes upon the mirror which for a moment reflects its features—transient as the glancing sunbeam. It therefore becomes an imperative duty to keep clearly before the minds of our hearers their liability to the danger of rendering the gospel ministry wholly ineffectual for good to themselves. I. THE VACANT HEARER. God's Word is weighty truth. Its topics are God's nature, acts, the human soul, its condition, responsibilities, destiny. The subjects of its principal concern lie not on the surface of things, to be grasped without an effort. But whether simple or recondite, its teachings will teach him nothing who will not meet that demand of intellectual attention which instruction on any theme necessarily imposes on the learner. There are many such vacant listeners in God's house. With some it is a constitutional mental sluggishness, a mind untaught to reflect. But with many more it is an aversion of heart to religious thought, which arms the will against it. Add also the many who bring the world with them into Jehovah's temple, and there worship Mammon instead of God. II. THE CURIOUS HEARER. This spirit brings the attention to bear upon a subject, but merely to dissect, to criticise. It is an active spirit far removed from the unconcernedness of the vacant hearer, and the sanctuary affords a favourite scene for its exercise. It may employ itself upon the subject of discourse, and enjoy the pleasure of remarking the beauties, the well-timed proprieties of its presentation; or, more commonly, it may busy itself with taking exceptions at the taste, or the judgment, which has guided the selection or treatment of the theme. Or the attention fastens itself upon the manner of the preacher, forgetful from whose court the speaker holds his commission, and what words of life and death hang on his lips. III. THE CAPTIOUS HEARER. Here the attention is excited, only to be turned against the teachings of religion. There are those who occasionally attend upon God's worship, as they sometimes read His Word, for no other end but to cavil, to deny, to oppose. Their business is just what was that of some in former days, in whose hearts Satan reigned; who followed Christ's ministrations for the—shall I say, magnanimous or pitiful—purpose to catch Him in His words! But sometimes, where the mind likes not to confess itself sceptical upon the subject of Christian doctrine, it covers its hostility to this by a very ingenious, not ingenuous transfer of its dislikes to the announcer of this doctrine. IV. THE FASHIONABLE HEARER. The Sabbath is welcomed, as it helps them to show off an equipage more elegant than some rival's; or to display to advantage their personal attractions. Their own proud selves are the centres round which every thought revolves. V. THE SPECULATING HEARER. I use this phrase in its mercantile sense, to indicate those whose selfishness leads them to make a pecuniary gain of godliness. These visit the sanctuary to further their business facilities. It is respectable to attend Divine worship. The influential, the wealthy, the intelligent, are found there, at least once on the Sabbath. And he submits to the irksomeness of a weekly visit to this uncongenial spot as a cheap price for the custom, the patronage of the community. On

the whole, it is to him a fair business transaction. A similar conduct is theirs who sustain the gospel because of the pecuniary value of churches and ministers to any community. These have their secular advantages. Truth and piety should be prized for more spiritual reasons than these. They refuse their choicest blessings to such sordid calculators. VI. THE SELF-FORGETFUL HEARER. Many never listen to a sermon which "reproves, rebukes, exhorts," for their own benefit. They may indeed listen; but it is with a keen sense of their neighbour's defects, not their own. VII. THE PRAYERLESS HEARER. Without prayer, earnest, habitual, personal, God's Spirit will not visit your bosom with life-imparting grace. A prayerless hearer of truth must, therefore, be an unblessed hearer. He turns the ministry of mercy into a ministry of condemnation. VIII. THE UNRESOLVED HEARER. The communications of God to man all relate to action. They direct to duty. They aim not to amuse, to surprise, or to instruct, but to produce a voluntary movement of man's moral powers in the path by them indicated. They bring their unseen influences to bear upon his rational faculties to secure compliance with their demands, and in effecting, by God's grace, this object they secure the salvation of his soul. But this they never do effect except through his deliberate purpose of willing obedience. (*J. T. Tucker.*) *Necessity of adding doing to hearing*:—I. THE CHARACTER OF THOSE WHO MAY BE SAID TO BE HEARERS ONLY. 1. The inattentive hearer (Heb. ii. 1; Deut. xxxii. 46). He who never intends being a doer of what he hears will probably little regard what he hears. 2. The inconsiderate hearer, that never ponders what he hears, nor compares one thing with another. 3. The injudicious hearer, that never makes any judgment upon what he hears, whether it be true or false; all things come alike to him. 4. The unapprehensive hearer, who hears all his days, but is never the wiser (2 Tim. iii. 7). No light comes into him. 5. The stupid, unaffected hearer that is as a rock and a stone under the Word. Nothing enters or gets within. 6. The prejudiced, disaffected hearers, who hear with dislike, especially those things which relate to practice; they cannot endure such things as relate to the heart. 7. The fantastical, voluptuous hearers, that hear only to please their fancy; flashes of wit are what they come to hear. 8. The notional hearers, who only aim merely to please their fancy; they come to learn some kind of novelty. 9. Those talkative persons, who only come to hear that they may furnish themselves with notions for the sake of discourse. 10. The censorious and critical hearers; who come not as doers of the law, but as judges. 11. The malicious hearers that come on purpose to seek an advantage against those they come to hear. 12. The raging, exasperated hearers; such were Stephen's at his last sermon. II. WHAT IT IS TO BE A DOER OF THE WORD. 1. It doth suppose a fixed design that this shall be my course (Psa. cxix. 106, 112). 2. It carries with it a serious applying of our minds to understand what is the mind and will of God which is held forth to us in His Word. 3. It implies the use of our judgment in hearing the Word, in order to distinguish what is human and what is Divine. 4. It requires reverence to be used in hearing: so to hear as that we may be doers requires a reverential attendance upon it. Considering it as a revelation come from heaven. 5. To be a doer of the Word supposes that we believe it; or that our hearing of it is mingled with faith. The Word of God worketh effectually in them that believe (1 Thess. ii. 13; Heb. iv. 2, xi. 1; Rom. i. 16). 6. It requires love. It is said of some that they received not the love of the truth (2 Thess. ii. 10; Psa. cxix. 97, 103; Jer. xv. 16). 7. It requires subjection: a compliance of the heart with it. "Receive with meekness" (verse. 21). The gracious soul is always ready to say, "Good is the Word of the Lord." 8. It requires a previous transformation of the heart by it. The Word can never be done by the hearer, but from a vital principle. 9. It requires also a faithful remembrance of it (vers. 23, 24). 10. There must be an actual application of all such rules in the Word to present cases as they occur (Psa. cxix. 11). III. THE SELF-DECEPTION OF THOSE WHO ARE HEARERS OF THE WORD, AND NOT DOERS OF IT. 1. Wherein they are deceived. (1) They are deceived in their work. They commonly think they have done well; find no fault with themselves that they have been hearers only. (2) As to their reward they are also deceived; their labour is lost. 2. The grossness of this deception. (1) They are deceived in a plain case. It is the plainest thing in the world that the gospel is sent for a practical end. (2) It is a self-deception. They are said to deceive themselves: they impose on themselves. It is soul-deception: "Deceiving your own souls." APPLICATION: 1. In the very hearing of the Word there is danger of self-deception. 2. The whole business of the gospel hath a reference to practice. 3. If ye would be doers of the Word, "Be swift to hear: faith cometh by hearing." 4. It is of the greatest

consequence to add doing to hearing (Matt. vii. 24-27). (*T. Hannam.*) *Hearing and doing*:—You have heard, let me suppose, an eloquent sermon on almsgiving, or on loving one's neighbour as one's self. You have been so moved that you resolve to commence a new habit of life. Well, you begin to give to the poor, and you soon find that it is very hard so to give as not to encourage indolence, vice, dishonesty, very hard to do a little good without doing a great deal of harm. You are brought to a stand, and compelled to reflect. But if the word you heard really laid hold upon you, if you are persuaded that it is the will of God that you should give to the poor and needy, you do not straightway leave off giving to them. You consider how you may give without injuring them, without encouraging either them or their neighbours in habits of laziness and dependence. Again and again you make mistakes. Again and again you have to reconsider your course, and probably to the end of your days you discover no way of giving that is quite satisfactory to you. But while you are thus doing the word, is it possible for you to forget it? It is constantly in your thoughts. You are for ever studying how you may best act on it. So far from forgetting the word, you are always learning more clearly what it means, and how it may be applied beneficially and with discretion. Or suppose you have heard the other sermon on loving one's neighbour, and set yourself to do that word of God. In the home, we may hope, you have no great trouble in doing it, though even there it is not always easy. But when you go to business, and try, in that, to act on the Divine commandment, do you find no difficulty there? Now that is not easy. In many cases it is not easy even to see how the Christian law applies, much less to obey it. If, for instance, you are rich enough, or generous enough, to give your workpeople higher wages than other masters give or can afford to give, you may at once show a great love for one class of your neighbours, and a great want of love for another class. Thus, in many different ways, the very moment you honestly try to love your neighbours all round as you love yourself, you find yourself involved in many perplexities, through which you have carefully to pick your way. You have to consider how the Christian law bears on the complex and manifold relations of social life, how you may do the word wisely and to good effect. But can you forget the commandment while you are thus assiduously seeking both to keep it and how to keep it? It is impossible. The more steadfastly you are the doer of it, the more constantly is it in your mind, the more clearly do you know what it means and how it may be obeyed. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *Hearing and doing*:—Here we reach the main thought of the Epistle—the all-importance of Christian activity and service. The essential thing, without which other things, however good in themselves, become insignificant, or even mischievous, is conduct. Suffering injuries, poverty, and temptations, hearing the Word, teaching the Word, faith, wisdom (chaps. i. 2, 9, 12, 19; ii. 14-26; iii. 13-17), are all of them excellent; but if they are not accompanied by a holy life, a life of prayer and gentle words and good deeds, they are valueless. "Be ye doers of the Word." Both verb and tense are remarkable (γίνεσθε): "*Become* doers of the Word." True Christian practice is a thing of growth; it is a process, and a process which has already begun, and is continually going on. We may compare, "*Become* ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matt. x. 16); "Therefore *become* ye also ready" (Matt. xxiv. 44); and "*Become* not faithless, but believing (John xx. 27). "Become doers of the Word" is more expressive than "Be doers of the Word," and a good deal more expressive than "Do the Word." A "doer of the Word" (ποιητὴς λόγου) is such by profession and practice; the phrase expresses a habit. But one who merely incidentally performs what is prescribed may be said to "do the Word." By the "Word" is meant what just before has been called the "implanted Word" and the "Word of truth" (vers. 18, 21), and what in this passage is also called "the perfect law, the law of liberty" (ver. 25), *i.e.*, the gospel. The parable of the sower illustrates in detail the meaning of becoming an habitual doer of the implanted Word. "And not hearers only." St. James, in the address which he made to the Council of Jerusalem, says, "Moses from generations of old hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath" (chap. xv. 21). The Jews came with great punctiliousness to these weekly gatherings, and listened with much attention to the public reading and exposition of the law; and too many of them thought that with that the chief part of their duty was performed. This, St. James tells them, is miserably insufficient, whether what they hear be the law or the gospel, the law with or without the illumination of the life of Christ. "Being swift to hear" (ver. 19) and to understand is well, but "apart from works it is barren." It is the habitual practice in striving to do what is heard and under-

stood that is of value. "Not a hearer that forgetteth, but a doer that worketh" is blessed, and "blessed in his doing." To suppose that mere hearing brings a blessing is "deluding your own selves." The word here used for deluding (παραλογιζόμενοι) does not necessarily imply that the fallacious reasoning is known to be fallacious by those who employ it. To express that we should rather have the word which is used in 2 Pet. i. 16 to characterise "cunningly devise fables" (σεσοφισμένοι μύθοι). Here we are to understand that the victims of the delusion do not, although they might, see the worthlessness of the reasons upon which their self-contentment is based. It is precisely in this that the danger of their position lies. Self-deceit is the most subtle and fatal deceit. The Jews have a saying that the man who hears without practising is like a husbandman who ploughs and sows, but never reaps. Such an illustration, being taken from natural phenomena, would be quite in harmony with the manner of St. James; but he enforces his meaning by employing a far more striking illustration. He who is a hearer and not a doer "is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a mirror." The spoken or written Word of God is the mirror. When we hear it preached, or study it for ourselves, we can find the reflection of ourselves in it, our temptations and weaknesses, our failings and sins, the influences of God's Spirit upon us, and the impress of His grace. It is here that we notice one marked difference between the inspiration of the sacred writers and the inspiration of the poet and the dramatist. The latter show us other people to the life; Scripture shows us ourselves. Through hearing or reading God's Word our knowledge of our characters is quickened. But does this quickened knowledge last? does it lead to action, or influence our conduct? Too often we leave the church or our study, and the impression produced by the recognition of the features of our own case is obliterated. "We straightway forget what manner of men we are," and the insight which has been granted to us into our own true selves is just one more wasted experience. But this need not be so, and in some cases a very different result may be noticed. Instead of merely looking attentively for a short time, he may stoop down and pore over it. Instead of forthwith going away, he may continue in the study of it. And instead of straightway forgetting, he may prove a mindful doer that worketh. He who does this recognises God's Word as being "the perfect law, the law of liberty." The two things are the same. It is when the law is seen to be perfect that it is found to be the law of liberty. So long as the law is not seen in the beauty of its perfection it is not loved, and men either disobey it or obey it by constraint and unwillingly. It is then a law of bondage. But when its perfection is recognised men long to conform to it; and they obey, not because they must, but because they choose. To be made to work for one whom one fears is slavery and misery; to choose to work for one whom one loves is freedom and happiness. The gospel has not abolished the moral law; it has supplied a new and adequate motive for fulfilling it. "Being not a hearer that forgetteth." Literally, "having become not a hearer of forgetfulness," *i.e.*, having by practice come to be a hearer, who is characterised, not by forgetfulness of what he hears, but by attentive performance of it. "A hearer of forgetfulness" exactly balances, both in form and in thought, "a doer of work"; and this is well brought out by the Revisers, who turn both genitives by a relative clause: "a hearer that forgetteth," and "a doer that worketh." "This man shall be blessed in his doing." Mere knowledge without performance is of little worth: it is in the doing that a blessing can be found. The danger against which St. James warns the Jewish Christians of the Dispersion is as pressing now as it was when he wrote. Never was there a time when interest in the Scriptures was more keen or more widely spread, especially among the educated classes; and never was there a time when greater facilities for gratifying this interest abounded. But it is much to be feared that with many of us the interest in the sacred writings which is thus roused and fostered remains to a very large extent a literary interest. We are much more eager to know all about God's Word than from it to learn His will respecting ourselves, that we may do it; to prove that a book is genuine than to practise what it enjoins. We study lives of Christ, but we do not follow the life of Christ. We pay Him the empty homage of an intellectual interest in His words and works, but we do not the things which He says. (*A. Plummer, D.D.*) *Knowledge and duty*:—It has been said of St. James that his mission was rather that of a Christian Baptist than a Christian apostle. A deep depravity had eaten into the heart of the national character, and this, far more than any outward cause, was hastening on their final doom. The task, therefore, which fell to the lot of that apostle, in whom the Jew and the Christian were inseparably blended, and who stands in the unique position

midway between the old dispensation and the new, was above all things to prolong the echo of that Divine Voice which in the Sermon on the Mount had first asserted the depth and unity of the moral law. In St. James's view the besetting peril of the spiritual life was the divorce of knowledge and duty: "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not," he says, "it is sin." And you see how he enforces this lesson in the text by a fresh and striking illustration of his own. He is contemplating, perhaps experiencing some barbarian who, in days when a mirror was a rare and costly luxury among civilised nations, happened for the first time to see his face reflected in one. What would be the effect upon the mind of the man? First, no doubt amusement at a new discovery, and then recognition of identity in a way undreamed of before. And yet the impression, however sharp and startling, would be but temporary; unless renewed it would soon vanish away. Remove a savage into some centre of culture, and you may indeed quicken his intelligence by the sudden shock of contact with the efforts and appliances of civilised life; but let him return to his old surroundings, and presently no trace will be found in his habits, and little enough in his memory, of the spectacle set before him. Stimulated faculties subside again to the old level; full of amazement and admiration to-day, he sinks to-morrow into his wonted apathy and ignorance. Such, according to St. James, is the moral effect of hearing the Word without acting upon it. The clearest revelation of character photographed upon the soul by the Divine Sun of the spiritual world, and therefore intensely vivid and true at the time, will inevitably vanish unless it is fixed by obedience. The Bible, so rich in illustration of all moral strength and weakness, presents us with a striking example of insight into duty absolutely disconnected with performance of duty; it describes to us a man who had the very clearest intuition of God's will, and yet remained totally untouched by what he knew. Balaam had an open eye, but an itching palm; a taste for heavenly things, but a stronger love for earthly things; he could be rapped out of his lower self to behold the image of the Almighty, and listen to the announcement of His will; but that sublime revelation left not a trace upon his own soul. It is that which may be safely predicted not of rare geniuses alone, but of men of ordinary mould. It is the sure Nemesis wherever the light flashed in is not suffered to guide, wherever there is an eye clear enough to see the better with heart gross enough to choose the worse. But let us come back to the searching language of the apostle. Has there not been in the personal experience of many of us something very like what he here describes —I mean a time when God's Word suddenly became to us what it had never been before—a bright gospel mirror, imaging to us our own likeness with a startling distinctness—showed us to ourselves as God sees us, with every intent of our heart, every recess of our character laid bare? It seemed as if this new knowledge would be itself a safeguard against relapsing into the sins we saw so clearly and deplored so sincerely. Remembering the degraded features of "the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts," the lust of pride, of evil temper, of impurity, covetousness, of unbelief, we could not imagine ourselves capable of being lowered again into fellowship with things so hateful; and turning from this dark picture of self to that other mirrored in the Divine Word by its side in all the spotless beauty of holiness, it seemed as if this alone could satisfy the new-born aspiration of the soul. What has become of the impression of that memorable hour? To know and not to do, to have the heavenly vision without being obedient to it, this is enough to account for the loss of that knowledge which was once so clear and seemed likely to be so lasting. Ah! which of us does not know full well, when he is true to himself, that just in proportion as he has forgotten what God's Word once told him about himself, it is to this he must trace his forgetfulness? One act of carelessness, one act of disobedience after another, one weak compliance after another, has enfeebled discernment and confused memory, and to-day he knows not what he was, or what he is, or what God would have him to be. "Deceiving your own selves," says the apostle. Yes; there is no snare more perilous than that which we lay for ourselves when we stop short at the discovery of our own imperfections and sins. It is so easy to be a hearer, so easy to rest in a taste for religion, to take credit to ourselves for the interest we feel in expositions of truth, to have the notions, theories, doctrines, and ritual of religion, and yet to live on from day to day without prompt obedience, apart from which the closest familiarity with sacred things is worse than useless. "Deceiving your own selves." It is quite possible to have forfeited a power which we imagine to be still ours, and simply because we have failed to use it. Spiritual blindness is the penalty of wasted light; it is the penalty which ever waits upon ineffectual seeing. Such a revelation as God has given,

when His Word mirrors our natural face to us, is no casual opportunity; it is the gift of His grace, and it involves the deepest responsibility on the part of each who receives it. As soon as we neglect it the disposal of it begins to pass out of our hands. God's law is that as soon as you let it be idle you forfeit your title to it, and before you know it, it shall be utterly and irrevocably gone. (*Canon Duckworth.*) *Hearing and doing*:—I. THE FATHER SPEAKS (vers. 18, 21, 24, and 25). We have a clearly-spoken Word, the Word of truth, an implanted Word, a law perfect and liberating. My Father's Word! and it is like Him! A life-giving Word: in it, God, who raiseth the dead, works by His renewing Spirit to summon out of their spiritual graves His innumerable children; "of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth." My Father's Word! and it is like Him! Who by searching can exhaust it? It will stand looking into (ver. 25). Let us be found bending over it, searching into it, meditating on it day and night: delight thyself in the law of the Lord. My Father's Word! and it is like Him! It is the kingly Word of the King of kings—the royal law—the perfect law. Obeyed, this law is perfection, for the law lived out is the life of Christ. And the world under its sway would be a perfect world. My Father's Word! and it is like Him! The law that makes free, the law that is for free souls, the law of love that casts out fear, that binds me to my Father's heart and shows that man is my brother; the law of life and love that lifts me above the slave's cowering service; the full, sweet, comforting Word, freeing me when in Christ from all condemnation, from all fear of men, of death and the future. II. THE CHILD HEARS. Obedience is the proof of the new birth. As the prerogative of the Father is to speak out His will, which is law, so the privilege of the child is to hear His Father's good pleasure. "I will hear what God the Lord will speak." In this filial hearkening are found three marked and distinguishing features. 1. There is, first, the attentive silence of warmest affection (ver. 20). The thoughtful and loving child will be swift to hear, slow to speak. 2. The child will hear with the filial submissiveness of true humility. 3. The child will hear with eager desire and honest efforts to fulfil the Father's law. Sonship and service are proportionate—as the son, so is the service. The perfect Son yielded the perfect service. The truer and higher our childhood, the truer and higher will be our obedience. We are not to hear merely to learn, but learn that we may live. Christianity is both a science and an art: it is exact hearing of exact truth, and the appropriate embodiment of that sublime truth in worthy forms. III. THE OBEDIENT CHILD GROWS GODLIKE. The true hearer becomes a joy to the brokenhearted and strength to the weak (ver. 27). Can it be otherwise when we sit at His feet who is a husband to the widow and a Father to the fatherless? (*J. S. Macintosh, D.D.*) *Hearing and doing*:—1. Hearing is good, but should not be rested in. They that stay in the means are like a foolish workman, that contents himself with the having of tools. 2. The doers of the Word are the best hearers. The hearer's life is the preacher's best commendation. They that praise the man but do not practise the matter are like those that taste wines that they may commend them, not buy them. Others come that they may better their parts and increase their knowledge. Seneca observed of the philosophers, that when they grew more learned they were less moral. And generally we find now a great decay of zeal, with the growth of notion and knowledge, as if the waters of the sanctuary had put out the fire of the sanctuary, and men could not be at the same time learned and holy. Others hear that they may say they have heard; conscience would not be pacified without some worship: "They come as My people use to do" (Ezek. xxxiii. 31); that is, according to the fashion of the age. Duties by many are used as a sleepy sop to allay the rage of conscience. The true use of ordinances is to come that we may profit. Usually men speed according to their aim and expectation (1 Pet. ii. 2; Psa. cxix. 11). The mind, like the ark, should be the chest of the law, that we may know what to do in every case, and that truths may be always present with us, as Christians find it a great advantage to have truths ready and present, to talk with them upon all occasions (Prov. vi. 21, 22). 3. From that *παραλογιζομένοι*. Do not cheat yourselves with a fallacy or false argument. Observe that self-deceit is founded in some false argumentation or reasoning. Conscience supplieth three offices—of a rule, a witness, and a judge; and so accordingly the act of conscience is threefold. There is *συντήρησις*, or a right apprehension of the principles of religion; so conscience is a rule: there is *συνείδησις*, a sense of our actions compared with the rule or known will of God, or a testimony concerning the proportion or disproportion that our actions bear with the Word: then, lastly, there is *κρίσις*, or judgment, by which a man applieth to himself those rules of Christianity which concern his fact or state.

4. That men are easily deceived into a good opinion of themselves by their bare hearing. We are apt to pitch upon the good that is in any action, and not to consider the evil of it: I am a hearer of the Word, and therefore I am in good case. (1) Consider the danger of such a self-deceit: hearing without practice draweth the greater judgment upon you. (2) Consider how far hypocrites may go in this matter. Well, therefore, outward duties with partial reformation will not serve the turn. (3) Consider the easiness of deceit (Jer. xvii. 9). Who can trace the mystery of iniquity that is in the soul? Since we lost our uprightness we have many inventions (Eccles. vii. 29). (*T. Manton.*) *Doers and non-doers*:—I. THE DOER. I. Like every other practical man, he acts with a view to the attainment of some object. He acts intelligently, as a moral and responsible agent. Admitting the veracity and authority of the Word, he sets about thoroughly understanding it for one thing, and then, guided by reason and conscience, he obeys its injunctions for another. 2. He pays strict obedience to the essential elements of active and daily engagements—earnestness, honesty, correctness, steady obedience, and watchfulness with respect to favourable opportunities. 3. There is another thing involved in the character we speak of, namely, the following of the guidance of infinite wisdom, and the being sustained by infinite power. 4. The doer of the Word fulfils his part, too, in the world of which he is an inhabitant. He is no clog on the wheel of Providence—no dead weight on the machinery of energetic and industrious employment. He does not become a fruitless and rotten branch upon the human tree; but his example is like the fresh and balmy air of the mountains, or like the blossom passing into a fuller and riper fruitfulness. But setting aside all figure, the life of such a person is a Divine purpose accomplished. II. THE NON-DOER. 1. One of the chief features of this character is indifference to the great and solemn truths of the Christian religion. 2. Another feature of this character is forgetfulness. 3. Self-deception. (*W. D. Horwood.*) *Hearing without doing*:—I. The apostle speaks in the text of "HEARERS ONLY." When are we so? It is when all the good we get ends with the hearing, and goes no further. This is easy work. It requires no self-denial, no dying to the world, no newness of heart and life. Are we hearers only? 1. We are surely so, if the Word of God which we hear does not separate us from our sin. 2. We are "hearers only" when the Word of God makes no more than a passing impression. 3. Another reason why so few of us who are hearers of the Word are doers of it also, is because faith is wanting—faith to receive it as the Word of God. 4. To faith must be added self-application. Place yourselves honestly in the light of Scripture. Let it bring to your own view the very secrets of your heart. Let your most besetting sin be judged by it. Let us be only brought to feel that we are labouring under a sickness which none but God can heal. Let us be fully persuaded of this, and then the Scriptures will be no longer a source of pain, but a comfort to us. For if they wound, they also have power to cure. II. WHEN THE WORD OF GOD IS THUS APPLIED TO US IN SPIRIT AND IN POWER, THEN WE BECOME "DOERS OF IT, AND NOT HEARERS ONLY." III. BE YE THUS "DOERS OF THE WORD, AND NOT HEARERS ONLY, DECEIVING YOUR OWN SELVES." What has our "hearing," what has our religion done for us? Has it convinced us of our sin? humbled us before God? (*E. Blencowe, M.A.*) *Doing the Word*:—1. The admonition, Be ye doers of the Word, not hearers only. St. James having not in vain learned in the parable of Christ that the seed being cast into the four several grounds, yet fructifieth but in one only, and seeing by daily experience that many men make show of religion, but yet live careless in their conversation, showeth most notably what manner of hearers the gospel requireth, even such as hear not only, but do also. To do the Word is double. 1. To do it absolutely and perfectly, so that both the heart consent and the outward life answer fully to the law of God in perfect measure. To which doing God in the law did promise life (Lev. xviii. 5). This no man can possibly perform; for what man ever could love God with a perfect heart, with all his soul, with his whole affection, strength, and power? What man ever loved his neighbour as himself? Where is he, and who is he, that continueth in all things that are written in the law to do them? The holy men of God, therefore, seeing themselves to come short of the doing of the Word and law in this matter and manner of doing, have, in the humility of their minds, accounted themselves as sinners, and therefore have confessed their transgressions before the Lord. 2. Seeing that no man is able thus to do the Word, there must some other kind of doing the Word be by St. James here required; therefore there is a doing of the Word and law under the gospel, when Christ, for us and our salvation, fulfilled the law in perfect measure, and therefore is called the fulfilling of the law to all that believe the Holy

Ghost, the Spirit of sanctification, that thereby they, after some measure, may truly do His will, earnestly cleave unto His Word, faithfully believe His promises, unfeignedly love Him for His goodness, and fear Him with reverence for His mighty power. This performance of obedience offered to God must shine in the saints, which, as necessary in all professors of God's Word, is joined with the hearing thereof (Matt. vii. 24, xii. 30; Luke viii. 20; Luke xi. 28). To hear or know, then, the Word of God, and not to do His will, prevaileth nothing. This knew theholy prophets, who therefore joined practice of the will and the hearing of the Word and law of God. This the holy angel in the Revelation, weighing and pronouncing them blessed only which join practice with hearing of the Word, breaketh out and crieth (Rev. i. 3). "Be ye doers of the Word, not hearers only." Of which admonition there are two reasons. The first is from detriment and hurt. They that hear only, and do not the Word also, are hurtful to themselves; for they deceive themselves in a vain persuasion, and thereby hurt themselves to their own juster condemnation. The second reason why we must be doers of the Word, not hearers only, is drawn from the use of the Word, which is to reform in us those things that are amiss; this profit and use we lose when we hear the Word only, and do not thereafter. This use of God's law and Word Moses commendeth unto princes and people (Deut. xvii. 18). This use was respected when he willed the Levites to teach the law unto the people (Deut. xxxi. 12). David, disputing the use and end of the law, maketh it the former of our manners, the director of our paths, the line and level of our life, and the guide of our ways to godliness (Psa. cxix. 9). St. Paul affirmeth that all Scripture is inspired from above, and is profitable (2 Tim. iii. 16) to teach such as are ignorant, to convince such as are repugnant, to correct such as err and wander in conversation, to instruct in righteousness —wherefore? to what end? to what use? to what purpose? Even that thereby the man of God may be absolute and perfect to every good work. (*R. Turnbull.*) *The due receiving of God's Word*:—The text is a severe caveat for the due receiving the Word of God. And it is framed in that manner as is like to be most effectual; and that is, by forewarning us of a great mischief that will befall us if we fail in the duty. I. First, come we to THE DUTY PRESCRIBED. The duty presupposed. That we must be hearers. And because there are many things that will crave our audience, and the ear lies open to every voice (Eccles. i. 8), therefore, in point of faith and religion, the apostle limits our hearing to the only and proper object, and that is the Word of God. 1. All our religious hearing must be conversant about this one thing, the Word of God. The text places us, like Mary, at Christ's feet, commends unto us that one thing necessary. (1) It is proper to the blessed Word to enlighten us and to acquaint us with the mind of God. This Word made David wiser than than his elders, for all their experience; it made him wiser than his teachers, for all their craft (Psa. cxix. 98–100). (2) It is proper to this good Word of God to regenerate, to sanctify, and reform us (ver. 18). (3) Salvation—it is proper to this Word of God (John v. 39). Some sober truths may be in other words; but saving truth is only to be found in the Word of God. 2. Our attention and hearing of this blessed Word—it is enjoined us. It is no indifferent, arbitrary thing left to our own liking—come to it at your leisure, or stay at home at your pleasure—but imposed upon us by a strong obligation. (1) It is enjoined us as a duty. It is the preface which God premises to His law, "Hear, O Israel." Necessity is laid upon us, and woe be to us if we do not. So St. James (ver. 19): "Let every man be swift to hear." Swift, ready, quick, diligent, suffer not a word to fall to the ground. (2) It is a weighty duty, not slightly to be esteemed. It is a great part of our religion. In it we make a real protestation of our allegiance and humble subjection, which we owe to our God. (3) It is a fundamental duty, the prime, original duty of our religion, the mother and nurse of all other duties which we owe to God. Hearing and receiving the Word, it is the inlet and entrance of all piety. (4) It is a duty exceeding beneficial to us. Many rich and precious promises are made to the due receiving of the Word of God. See two main ones in the context: It is an engrafted Word, able to alter and change our nature; of a wild crab-stock, it will make it a kindly plant. It sanctifies our nature, and makes it fructify. It is able to save our soul. "Hear, and your soul shall live" (Isa. lv). There is in it a Divine power to free us from perdition, to give us entrance and admission into heaven. (5) It is not only a duty and means to beget grace at first, but of perpetual use to increase and continue it. It is not only incorruptible seed to beget us (1 Pet. i. 23), but milk to nourish us (1 Pet. ii. 2), not only milk, but strong meat to strengthen us (Heb. v.). II. THE MISTAKE WE MUST

BEWARE OF IN PERFORMING THIS DUTY. Hear we must, but we must not only hear. There are more duties than only hearing which we owe to this Word of God. Take it in these particulars: 1. Hearing is not the whole sum and body of religion; it is but a part only. The body of religion is like the natural body of a man; it consists of many members and parts. So religion consists of several services—hearing, praying, practising, doing holily, suffering patiently—it puts all graces to their due exercise. He cannot be accounted a man who is destitute of any vital or substantial part; nor can he go for a good Christian who wilfully fails in any of those holy duties that are required of him. 2. Hearing, as it is but one part of piety, so it is but the first part and step of piety. Now as he who only tastes meat and goes no further is far off from nourishment, because he stays at the beginning: or as he who travels must not only set out, but hold on, or he will not finish his journey, so in piety hearing is but the first step—a progress must be made in all other duties. 3. Hearing is a religious duty; but not prescribed for itself, but in reference and subordination to other duties. Like those arts that are called instrumental arts, and are only to fit us for other and higher performances, their use is only for preparation. 4. In comparison with the substantial parts of piety, bare hearing is but an easy duty. Indeed, to hear as we should do, attentively, reverently, devoutly, is a task of some pains, but yet of a great deal easier discharge than other duties are. Thus we see that only hearing of God's Word falls short of our main duty, makes us no good Christians. It may be, we will grant, that the bare, outward bodily hearing of the Word may be justly reprovable; but yet we think if our hearing be attended with some commendable conditions, which we hope will be accepted and stand us in some stead. As—(1) If it be a diligent hearing, constant, and assiduous upon all occasions. St. Paul tells of some that are always learning, and so would be taken for devout Christians, and yet he passeth an hard censure upon them. (2) What if it be hearing with some proficieucy, when we so hear as that we understand and grow in knowledge, and our mind is edified, such as do as Christ bids them do (Matt. xv. 10; Mark xiii. 14); such an hearing, we trust, will serve the turn. Even this great progress in knowledge, if thou stoppest there, will stand thee in no stead. Hell is full of such auditors; beware of it. Even this hearing, with proficiency in knowledge, if thou go no further, will fail thee at last. (3) But what if our hearing go another step further, and so it be an affectionate hearing, that we hear the Word with great warmth of affection, sure then we are past danger. But a reverend hearing will not suffice if it stops there and comes short of practising. What if we bring with us another commendable affection in our hearing—the affection of joy, and gladness, and delight in hearing? As for those who are listless in this duty, who find no sweetness in the Word of God, we condemn them for unworthy auditors. Nay, not only such, but thou mayest hear the Word of God with joy, and yet if thou failest in point and obedience, thy religion is vain. But what if this hearing of the Word of God doth so much affect us that it begets many good motions in us, and we find ourselves inwardly wrougbt upon; then we conclude that we are right good auditors, and have heard to purpose. Ye may have sudden flashes, good moods, passionate wishes, nay, purposes and good intendments, at the hearing of God's Word, and yet ye may miscarry. It is not purposes, but performances, that will bring us to heaven. III. BE DOERS OF THE WORD. And here comes in the conjunction of both duties—hearing and doing. These put together make up a good Christian. And great reason there is for this conjunction, to know and to perform. Not to hear nor know breeds a blind religion; we would be doing, but we know not what. To know and not to do breeds a lame religion; we see our way, but we walk not in it. Both are requisite to true religion (Prov. xix. 2). And if it hath knowledge without practice, it is never a whit the better. For as the bare knowledge of evil, if we do not practise it, makes us never the worse, so the knowing of good, if we do not practise it, makes us not the better. 1. The nature of religion requires it. What is religion? It is not a matter of contemplation, but of action. It is an operative, practical virtue. It is an art of holy living. It begets not a speculative knowledge swimming in the brain, but works devotion and obedience in the heart and life. 2. The Author of religion is represented in Scripture not as a Teacher or Doctor only, but as a Commander and Law-giver. 3. The subject of religion, wherein it is placed, is not so much the knowing part of our soul as the active part, the will and affections, which are the spring of practice. Religion is never rightly seated till it be settled in the heart, and from that flow the issues of life. 4. That religion is an holy art of life and practice, the summary description of religion in Scripture shows us (1 Tim. vi. 3; iii. 16; 2 Tim. i. 13; Acts xxiv. 16). Now,

practical truths are best learned by practice; their goodness is best known by use and performance. As a rich and costly garment appears, then, most comely and beautiful, not when the workman hath made it, but when it is worn and put upon our body, so, saith Chrysostom, the Scripture appears glorious when it is by the preacher expounded; but far more glorious when by the people it is obeyed and performed. Without this doing what we hear, all our hearing is but in vain. As eating of meat, except by the heat of the stomach it be digested and conveyed into all the parts of the body, will never support life, so it is not receiving the Word into our ears, but the transmitting of it into our lives that makes it profitable. Nay, hearing and knowing makes us much the worse if it ends not in doing, as meat taken into the stomach, if not well digested, will breed diseases. IV. THE DANGER IF WE FAIL IN THIS DUTY. We deceive our own selves; that's the mischief. 1. They are deceived who place all their religion in bare hearing, let go all practice. They suffer a deceit in their opinion, run into a gross error. And that is a misery, were there no more but that in it. Man, naturally, is a knowing creature, abhors to be mistaken. As St. Augustine saith, he hath known many that love to deceive others; but to be deceived themselves, he never knew any. Now, they who think hearing of the Word is sufficient, without doing and practising, they show they utterly mistake the very nature and purpose of God's Word, the use and benefit whereof is all in practice. The Word of God is called a Law. "Give ear, O Israel, to My law." When the king proclaims a law to be observed, shall we think him a good subject who listens to it, or reads it over, or copies it out, or talks of it, but never thinks or cares to observe and obey it? The Word of God is called Seed. Were it not a gross error for an husbandman to buy seed-corn and store it up, and then let it lie, and never go about to sow his land with it? The Word is called Meat and Nourishment. Is not he foully deceived who, when he comes to a feast, will look upon what is set before him, commend it, or taste it only, and then spit it out, and never feed of it? Is this to feast it, only to look upon it, and never feed on it? St. James calls the Word a Looking-glass. A looking-glass is to show our spots, and what is amiss in us. Is not he deceived who thinketh it is only to gaze into, and never takes notice of any uncomeliness to amend and rectify it? The Word is the Physic of the Soul, the Balm of Gilead. Is not he deceived that shall take the prescript of a physician, and think all is well if he reads it and lays it up by him, or puts it in his pocket, and makes no other use of it? The Word is called the Counsel of God. What a vanity is it to listen to good counsel, and never to follow it? And this miscarriage, that they run into error and are foully mistaken, is a just punishment, pertinent unto them who will be only hearers and knowers of religion only. They are punished. They aim only at knowledge and rest in that, it is just they should be punished in that which they so much affected; that they should fail in that which they only aimed at. Instead of knowledge, they are fallen into error. These hearers pride themselves in knowledge; they boast of their skill in the law; they are the only knowing Christians, none but they. As their forefathers the Pharisees spake (John ix. 40). They are justly gulled and mistaken. These hypocritical hearers aim at deceiving of others. It is just that deceivers should be deceived. Impostors in religion should themselves be mistakers. 2. As they are deceived in their opinion, so they are deceived in their expectation. These Christians that are all ears and no hands, they promise great matters to themselves—God's favour, and heaven itself—and hope to do as well as the most laborious practisers. Vain men! how will they be deceived and disappointed of their hopes? That is the first evil consequence—they are deceived. They are self-deceived; that is a second mischief, and that is worse. It is ill to be deceived; but to be authors of our own errors and disappointments, to deceive ourselves, that's a double misery. (1) They think to deceive God, to beguile Him with their empty shows of devotion. Thou wouldst hear Him, but not obey Him; He will hear thee too, but He will not answer thee. (2) They think to deceive the minister, put him off with a bare hearing. As Gehazi thought to carry it cunningly, and to delude Elisha; but it will be found that they will cozen themselves. (3) They think to deceive their neighbours, and by their seeming forwardness to delude them. Well, that imposture holds not always. There is never a counterfeit cripple but is sometimes seen walking without his crutches. The hypocrite's vizor will sometime or other fall from his face, and then he will appear in his true colours. There is some excuse to be over-reached by others; it makes the sin or error more pardonable. But who will pity him that cozens himself? Nay, such self-deceivers, they act a double part in sinning, and so shall undergo a double portion in punish-

ment. The misleaders and misled shall both fall into the ditch. 3. They deceive themselves in a matter of the greatest moment and consequence; and that is worst of all. And such a deceit as this hath these three aggravations:—It is a most shameful cozenage. Slight oversights are more excusable; but to miss in the greatest business, that is most ridiculous. This is the man who is cunning in trifles, but grossly deceiving himself in soul business. How shameful is that! The greatest loss—the loss of salvation—that is an estimable loss. It is an irrecoverable deceit. Other mistakes may be rectified; but he who cheats himself of his own soul and his heavenly inheritance is undone for ever. To have all our thoughts to perish, all our imaginations and hopes of going to heaven to be a mere delusion; not to be mistaken in some particulars, but in the end to be a fool! (*Bp. Brownrig.*) *Self-deceit of those who are hearers but not doers of the Word:*—I. By "the Word" we are to understand that which was delivered to mankind by the inspired messengers of God, and is transmitted to us in the books of the Old and New Testaments. In this it hath pleased the Most High God to declare His mind, and to reveal to us both Himself and His will. How men deceive themselves by being not doers of the Word, but hearers only. 1. They deceive themselves in supposing that what they do is acceptable to God, and conducive to the honour of His name. Wherefore do you hear the Word of God but that you may become acquainted with His will? And what is His will, but that you may become "doers of His Word, and not hearers only"? And if you neglect to do it, are you not acting in direct opposition to His will? and is not this directly contradictory to the very purpose for which you hear? And if you can persuade yourselves to think otherwise, are you not "deceiving yourselves," and mocking and affronting, instead of serving and honouring, God? 2. If you do no good, be assured that you can receive no good from such hearing as this. Is a man at all the better for hearing of an advantageous bargain unless he makes it? Is a man at all nearer his journey's end for knowing the way thither unless he proceeds in it? 3. But the evil rests not here. For they, who are "hearers only, and not doers of the Word," are so far from being placed by their knowledge in a better condition, that they are indeed placed in a worse. To have heard the will of God is a high aggravation of their crime in not doing it. It is to rebel against the light. (*Bp. Mant.*) *Self-deception of hearers:*—No self-deception is so universal as that which arises from hearing for the mere sake of hearing, without ever thinking of acting out in the life what is heard with the ear. On the lowest calculation of the number of places of worship in this country, there must be at least one hundred thousand sermons preached every Sunday. All these sermons are preached from texts taken from the Word of God, any one of which, if followed up with any care or faithfulness, would lead the person so following it up abreast of all the truths of the Christian religion, and yet how extremely small is the practical impression. (*M. F. Sadler, M.A.*) *Living the preaching:*—An expressive eulogy was pronounced by Martin Luther upon a pastor at Zwickau, in 1522, named Nicholas Haussmann. "What we preach," said the great reformer, "he lives." *Duty of hearers:*—At one time, when I was preaching for Father Taylor, he rose at the conclusion of the sermon, and said, "If some things have been said that you do not understand, much has been said that you do understand: follow that." (*Joseph Marsh.*) *Hearing without mending:*—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. *Hearing with the conscience:*—Charles the First used to say of the preaching of one of his chaplains, afterwards Bishop Sanderson, "I carry my ears to hear other peachers, but I carry my conscience to hear Mr. Sanderson and to act accordingly." (*Izaac Walton.*) **A man beholding his natural face in a glass.**—*Self-realization:*—There is a very strange and suggestive contrast between the two senses in which it may be said that a man "forgets himself." On the one hand the phrase is sometimes used to mark that high grace of sympathy or love whereby the desire and energy of the heart is transferred from the gratification of a man's own tastes to the pure service of his fellow-men: that true conversion, whereby the will is rescued from its original sin of selfishness and wholly set upon the glory of God and the good of those for whom His Son was crucified. But it is, surely, an inaccurate use of words

to say of such an one that he forgets himself. For he only forgets his own wishes and pleasures and comfort, he forgets those things which other men gather round them and delight in until they seem essential to their very life; but all the while his true self is vividly and actively present in the labour which proceedeth of love; it goes freely out in unreserved devotion, only to come again with joy, enriched and strengthened both by the exercise of its affection and the answering love which it has won. So it has been well said that in the life of love we die to self; but the death is one not of annihilation but of transmigration. It is in the other sense of the common phrase that men do more truly forget themselves: when they so surrender their will to some blind impulse, some irrational custom, some animal craving, that for a while they seem driven as autumn leaves before the changing gusts, they know not how or whither. A man can live for days, and months, and years, without ever giving any reality or force to the knowledge that he is himself an immortal soul; without ever really feeling his essential separation from things visible, his independence of them, his distinct existence in himself, his power of acting for himself in this way or in that, his personal responsibility for his every choice and action. As he wakes in the morning, as he is regaining from the blind life of sleep the wonder of self-consciousness, at once the countless interests which await him in the coming day rush in upon him; there, in his own room, during the one half-hour, perhaps, when he can be alone in all his waking-time, the distractions of the outer world are already around him. And so he goes forth to his work and to his labour until the evening; and all day long he is looking only at the things about him, he is committing the guidance and control of his ways to that blind and alien life which wavers and struggles around him, and of which he should rather be himself the critic and guide. We can never cancel the act whereby man became a living soul; we can never cease to be ourselves. But we can so turn away from self-knowledge, we can so forget ourselves and our responsibility, that this first and deepest truth of our being will no longer have its proper power in our lives. Such blurring of our own self-consciousness will always obscure and invalidate for us the evidences of Christianity, always hinder and imperil our progress in the life of faith. Let me try briefly to show the certainty and manner of this result by speaking of three chief points in the Christian revelation which essentially presume, and require for the very understanding of their terms, that we should know ourselves as personal and spiritual beings. I. First, then, in the very front of Christianity, in the very name of Him whom the Church preaches and adores, is set the thought of our salvation from our sins. The fact of sin is to Christianity what crime is to law, what sickness is to medicine; if sin, it has been truly said, were not an integral feature of human life, Christianity would long ago have perished. Hence the consciousness, the appreciation of sin, is essential to any sufficient estimate of the claim which Christ's message has upon our attention and obedience; even as it is necessary for the interpretation of almost every page throughout the Bible, and presupposed in psalms, and histories, and prophecies, and types. In the recognition of the enfeebled and perverted will, of the early promise unfulfilled, of early hopes obscured or cast away; in the presence of hateful memories; in the sense of conflict with desires which we can neither satisfy nor crush, and pleasures which at once detain and disappoint us; above all, in a certain fearful looking for of judgment, we begin to enter into that great longing, which, through all the centuries of history, has gone before the face of the Lord to prepare His way; and we learn to rise and welcome the witness of Him who cries that our warfare is accomplished and our iniquity is pardoned. II. And secondly, in proportion as the consciousness of our personal and separate being grows clear and strong within us, we shall be able to enter more readily and more deeply into the Christian doctrine of our immortality; we shall be better judges of the evidence for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come: for it is as personal spirits that we shall rise again with our bodies and give account for our own works. It must be hard for us to give reality to this stupendous and all-transforming truth, so long as our thoughts and faculties are dissipated among things which know no resurrection, and interests which really shall for ever die. The message and the evidences of Christianity presuppose in us the clear sense of our own personality when they speak to us of sin, and when they point us to a life beyond the grave; and we are fit critics of their claim in proportion as we can realise this, our deep and separate existence. It is when we recall ourselves from the scattered activity of our daily life; it is either when we have courage to go apart and stand alone and hear what the Lord God will say concerning us, or else when sickness or age has

forced us into the solitude which we have always shunned: it is then that we know ourselves, and our need of a sufficient object in which the life of the soul may find its rest for ever. (*Prof. F. Paget.*) *The looking-glass*:—I. First, here is LOOKING INTO A GLASS. Looking into a glass is a trivial business. Is not this a hint at the light in which many regard the hearing of the gospel? Truly the burden of our lives is a pastime to some of you. Sirs, this reminds me of the fable of the frogs. When the boys stoned them, the poor creatures said, "It may be sport to you, but it is death to us." You may hear me this day with the idlest curiosity, and judge my message with the coldest criticism; but if you do not receive the blessings of the gospel, it strikes a chill at my heart. 1. Upon my first head of looking into a glass let me say, that to every hearer the true Word of God is as a mirror. The thoughts of God, and not our own thoughts, are to be set before our hearers' minds; and these discover a man to himself. The Word of the Lord is a revealer of secrets: it shows a man his life, his thoughts, his heart, his inmost self. A large proportion of hearers only look upon the surface of the gospel, and upon their minds the surface alone is operative. Yet even that surface is sufficiently effectual to reflect the natural face which looks upon it, and this may be of lasting service if rightly followed up. The reflection of self in the Word is very like life. You have, perhaps, seen a dog so astonished at his image in the glass that he has barked fiercely at himself. A parrot will mistake its reflection for a rival. Well may the creature wonder, since every one of its movements is so accurately copied; it thinks itself to be mocked. Under a true preacher men are often so thoroughly unearthed and laid bare that even the details of their lives are reported. Not only is the portrait drawn to the life, but it is an actually living portrait which is given in the mirror of the Word. There is little need to point with the finger, and say, "Thou art the man," for the hearer perceives of his own accord that he is spoken of. As the image in the glass moves, and alters its countenance, and changes its appearance, so doth the Word of the Lord set forth man in his many phases, and moods, and conditions. The Scripture of truth knows all about him, and it tells him what it knows. The glass of the Word is not like our ordinary looking-glass, which merely shows us our external features; but, according to the Greek of our text, the man sees in it "the face of his birth"; that is, the face of his nature. He that reads and hears the Word may see not only his actions there, but his motives, his desires, his inward condition. 2. Many a hearer does see himself in the mirror of the Word. He is thoughtful during the discourse, he spies out the application of the truth to himself, and marks his own spots and blemishes. Oftentimes he sees himself so plainly that he grows astonished at what he sees. You have seen yourselves so unmistakably that you have been unable to escape from the truth, but have been filled with wonder at it. But what is the use of this, if it goes no further? Why should I show you your blots if you do not seek to the Lord Jesus to have them removed? Many of our hearers go somewhat further, for they are driven to make solemn resolves after looking at themselves. Yes, they will break off their sins by righteousness; they will repent; they will believe on the Lord Jesus; and yet their fine resolves are blown away like smoke, and come to nothing. Let us not resolve and re-resolve, and yet die in our sins! But what follows? Observe, "He beholdeth himself, and goeth his way." 3. Many hearers go away from what they have seen in the Word. To-morrow morning he will be over head and ears in business; the shutters will be down from his shop-windows, but they will be put up to the windows of his soul. His office needs him, and therefore his prayer-closet cannot have him; his ledger falls like an avalanche over his Bible. The man has no time to seek the true riches; passing trifles monopolise his mind. Others have no particular business to engross them, but having seen themselves in the glass of the Word with some degree of interest, they go their way to their amusements. Alas! there are some who go their way to sin. I do not wonder that no good comes of such hearing as this. When a man seeth his face in the glass, and then goeth his way to defile that face more and more, of what use is the glass to him? 4. This going away is followed by forgetting all they have seen. The truth passes by them unappropriated, unpractised, and all because they take no earnest heed to make it their own by personal obedience to it. They are mere players with the Lord's message, and never come to honest dealing with it. Forgetfulness of the Word leads to self-satisfaction. Looking in the glass the man felt a little startled that he was such an ugly fellow, but he went his way and mingled with the crowd, and forgot what manner of man he was, and therefore he felt quite easy again. What can be more fatal than this? One may as well not know, as

only learn and straightway forget. This forgetfulness leads to a growing carelessness. A man who has once looked in the glass, and afterwards has not washed, is very apt to go and look in the glass again, and continue in his filthiness. He who thinks his conscience has cried "wolf" in mere sport, will think the same till he takes no heed when it cries in earnest. When men get to play with the Word of God they are near to destruction. II. May I have your further attention while I speak upon the true and blessed hearer? He does not look into the glass, but he is represented as LOOKING INTO THE LAW. The picture I have in my mind's eye at this moment is that of the cherubim upon the mercy-seat; these are models for us. Their standing is upon the golden mercy-seat, and our standing-place is the propitiation of our Lord; there is the resting-place of our feet, and, like the cherubs, we are joined thereto, and therefore continue therein. They stand with their eyes looking downward upon the mercy-seat, as if they desired to look into the perfect law of God which was treasured within the ark; even so do we look through the atonement of our Lord Jesus, which is to us as pure gold like unto transparent glass, and we behold the law, as a perfect law of liberty, in the person of our Mediator. Like the cherubim, we are in happy company; and like them, we look towards each other, by mutual love. Our common standing is the atonement; our common study is the law in the person of Christ; and our common posture is that of angels with outstretched wings prepared to fly at the Master's bidding. 1. Note well that the law of God is worth looking into. I understand by the "law" here not merely the law of ten commandments, but the law as it is condensed, fulfilled, and exhibited in Jesus Christ. A law is always worth considering, for we may break the law unwittingly, and involve ourselves in penalties which we might have avoided. An unknown law is a pit-fall, into which a man may fall without knowing it. It is the duty of all loyal subjects to learn the law, that they may obey it. Better still, it is a perfect law. It is a law which touches our whole nature, and works it unto perfect beauty. Who would not wish to look into a law which, like its Author, is love and purity itself? It is called the "perfect law of liberty." He that wears the yoke of Christ is the Lord's free man. Oh, brothers, I do trust our eyes will be turned to the "perfect law of liberty"; for freedom is a jewel, and none have it but those who are conformed to the mind and will of our God! 2. The true hearer looks into this perfect law of liberty with all his soul, heart, and understanding, till he knows it, and feels the force of it in his own character. He is the prince of hearers, who delights to know what God's will is, and finds his joy in acting out the same. He sees the law in its height of purity, breadth of comprehensiveness, and depth of spirituality, and the more he sees the more he admires. A man looks into the law of liberty, and he sees all perfection in Christ; he looks and looks till, by a strange miracle of grace, his own image dissolves into the image of Jesus. Surely this is a thing worth looking into, and infinitely superior to any looking into a glass merely to see yourselves. He that looks into the perfect law of liberty will not only see Christ, but he will begin to see the Eternal Spirit of God bearing witness with that law of liberty, and operating by that witness upon his own soul. Ay, and he that looks into that perfect law will, by and by, see God the Father; for the pure in heart shall see God. Those who love and live the law of God become like unto God, they are "imitators of God as dear children." They that are familiar with God's will, and love it, and study it, gradually receive the likeness of God their Father till they are called the children of God. Thus the sacred Trinity are seen and known by those who do the will of the Father in heaven. "And continueth"; that is, he continues to meditate in the law, and he continues to own his allegiance to it. He also continues to practise it; he does not begin and then turn aside, but he continues to make advances in holy living, and he continues by a final perseverance to follow on. The man who obtains the blessing of the Lord is by God's grace made to continue in it. I have heard of a famous King of Poland, who did brave deeds in his day, and confessed that he owed his excellent character to a secret habit which he had formed. He was the son of a noble father, and he carried with him a miniature portrait of this father, and often looked upon it. Whenever he went to battle he would look upon the picture of his father, and nerve himself to valour. When he sat in the council-chamber he would secretly look upon the image of his father, and behave himself right royally; for he said, "I will do nothing that can dishonour my father's name." Now, this is the grand thing for a Christian to do: to carry about with him the will of God in his heart, and then in every action to consult that will. 3. To conclude: you

notice how it says, "this man shall be blessed in his deed." Mark: "this man," "this man." These demonstrative pronouns act like fingers. In my text there is a person who has seen himself in the glass, and he has gone his way; but we need not mind about him, he is of no account. But here is a man who has been looking into the law, and has continued to look into it, and the Holy Spirit has selected him from all others, and marked him as "this man." This man is blessed. Where is this man? Where is this woman? Judge whether you are the persons thus called and chosen; whether you are abiding in love to that law, which has won your heart. "This man shall be blessed in his deed." "Oh," saith one, "I do not see the blessedness of true religion!" No, you are not likely to see it, because you do not do it. This man is blessed "in his deed." "In keeping His commandments there is great reward." Much of the blessedness of godliness lies in the practice of godliness. Not in consideration of doctrine, but in obedience to precept the blessing lies. "This man shall be blessed in his deed." In the very act of serving his Lord and Master he shall be blessed; not for it but in it. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Word a mirror and a law:*—A capacity for self-knowledge is one of our distinctive endowments. We have no reason to suppose that other creatures are capable of knowing themselves. This distinctive capacity implies a duty. "Know thyself," we are told, is a precept that descended from Heaven. But, whatever its origin, it speaks with the highest authority. It is self-commended. And this duty is a great privilege. "The study of mankind is man." Our own nature is necessarily central to all our studies. For this self-knowledge we are furnished with abundant means. The universe, as a revelation of God, is a mirror for man. Nature, as in a book, presents us with a picture of ourselves. But how strange it is that, possessing such a mirror, we make so little use of it! With all our self-love, how is it that we are not only indifferent to, but even shrink from a genuine self-knowledge? We seek to know how we appear; we turn away from the knowledge of what we are. Against the consequences of this ignorance of ourselves, God warns us and urges upon us the duty of a genuine self-knowledge. In the text we are cautioned against the fatal temptation of paying a merely outward homage to the Word of God without any practical intent, as though hearing it were a lawful pastime, or could be pleasing to God, or of any avail to us apart from its embodiment in our will, our words, and our works. In a spirit becoming those who have received such an exhortation, let us hear and look into this "living Word," that "with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we may be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as of the Lord, the Spirit," that it may become to us "the perfect law of liberty," "the law of the spirit of life in Jesus Christ." For "the Lord is that Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty." I. FIRST OF ALL WE DIRECT OUR ATTENTION TO THE WORD WE ARE EXHORTED TO HEAR AND DO. It is emphatically called "the Word," "the Word of God," or, as in the connection of the text, "the Word of the Truth," or, in another scripture, "the Word of the Truth of the Gospel," as "Truth is in Jesus." Words are wonderful—as expressions of thought and feeling, reason and will. The Word of God brings God to us. In His Word we have the mind of His Spirit clothed in forms apprehensible by our senses. It is the record of His Mind and Will concerning us. The Word of God is the outward form of an abiding spiritual force; once uttered, it remains a spiritual power always, and everywhere working according to His will. "The Word of God," is the name of His only-begotten Son, who, at "the fulness of time," "came out from God, and came into the world," to reveal to us the Father, and make known to us in words of "spirit and life," His will. This final revelation of the Will of God has its verbal embodiment in the words of the gospel, its incarnation in Jesus, its abiding spiritual power in the Holy Spirit. As heard it addresses the ear, as seen it appeals to the eye, as felt it moves in the heart. II. THIS WORD OF GOD IS SPOKEN OF IN OUR TEXT AS A MIRROR, OR GLASS, IN WHICH WE MAY SEE WHAT MANNER OF MEN WE ARE. All words should mirror the mind of the speaker. God is revealed in His Word. He makes Himself known in all His words, and ways, and works. In the Son of Man we "behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord." In Him, the Incarnate Word, man's nature is complete, its idea satisfactorily embodied, the Divine image fully expressed, and God glorified in the world. God is "well-pleased" to see again His own image and likeness in the face of man; and men are called to behold in Jesus, the Word made flesh, "the glory of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." The revelations of God are means of self-knowledge for man. The Word presents a mirrored face of what man ought to be, and not only the ideal of what he ought to

be, but also the image of what he really is. It discerns and reveals the thoughts and intents of the heart. The shadow of the beholder, as he is, is thrown upon the bright image of what he ought to be. The true form in the Word, as a glass, reflects the false form of the beholder, which it judges and condemns. The mirror of the Word judges the shadow of what we are by receiving it upon the fair image of what we ought to be. III. THE WORD OF GOD IS NOT ONLY A MIRROR, BUT ALSO A LAW. The law commands, presents obligation, awakens conviction, points to its sanction, but does not enforce compliance. Force belongs not to the moral sphere. The capacity to obey is a capacity to suffer for disobedience, but one which is intolerant of force. Obedience is of the heart which is the very seat and soul of liberty. The discovery of our defects by the law which judges them, awakens a feeling of culpability, self-condemnation and exposure to punishment. We feel that defect and disobedience with respect to this law are not misfortunes but sins, hence a sense of blameworthiness. Now, of all laws, "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus," as law, is the most burdensome and oppressive, and for this reason, that it is perfect and pertains to the whole life—allowing no thought, no desire, for a single moment, to be withdrawn from its universal empire. IV. LET US NOW INQUIRE WHAT IS MEANT BY THIS EXPRESSION, "THE PERFECT LAW," AS APPLIED TO THE GOSPEL. Are not all laws perfect? There are many forms of law, all of which have their pre-supposition in goodness, and have also this in common, that their action is uniform under the same circumstances. Law is the regulative controlling power of that to which it belongs. As an idea, it is necessary to the conception of anything; and, as such, it is the same for the same creature under the same conditions. 1. Natural law is this governing idea in the form of necessity, and operative as force. Such are all the laws of inorganic matter; such, too, are the laws of vegetable and animal life, at least, for the most part. 2. But the law of intelligent creatures is presented for reception, not imposed; is a law which commands, but does not necessitate obedience. It pre-supposes freedom and the possibility of obedience being refused. 3. Then there is what Paul terms "the law of the spirit of life," which is a free, spontaneous, eager, intense spirit of obedience, not acting within a sphere it is required to fill by the imperative of an outward law, but from a central fire of love which anticipates all commands and outstrips all requirements. This was the service Christ rendered and required. "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." There is yet another form of law, which is determined, as to its form, by the circumstances, state, and condition of its subjects, in view of the end proposed. You may call it the law of the end. Let me illustrate. A gardener wishes to train a tree in a certain direction, and sees that it will require a certain number of stakes and a given strength of cordage to hold its branches in the required position; in other words, to be a law to it. These requirements, imposed by the purpose, are the law of the end. Their wisdom and value can only be judged of when looked at in relation to the end which they are intended to serve. In like manner, certain forms of ritual and ceremonial, among the Jews, owe their existence, form, and place in their history to the circumstances and condition of the nation, in view of the purposes of God concerning mankind. But, in addition to these, the text speaks of "the perfect law" in a sense somewhat different from any of them. By the perfect law is meant the Old Testament in its final, completed development—in its purposed, perfect outcome—in "the law of the spirit of life." What is meant is "the word of the truth of the gospel," as the *norm* of Christian life. It is "perfect" because it attains the end of the law—liberty. For "the word of the truth," as "is truth in Jesus," carries "the law of the spirit of His life," which makes free from "the law of sin and death." And further, the law of the spirit of His life is "the perfect law" as being final, complete, and possessed of the power and the purpose of all law at the height of its excellency—the power of the obedience of life. It pre-supposes other laws, and is spoken of as perfect in the sense of its being final. There is no other law to come after it. It is also perfect in this sense—that all the requirements of God are reduced to simplicity and unity of principle. "Love God," says this perfect law, "and you will not fail to do His will," for "love is the fulfilling of the law." This is the new and final commandment, the perfect law in a single word—"Love." And this one principle is, in "the perfect law of liberty," embodied in life. The law is fulfilled in Christ, lives in Him, is the spirit of His life, and capable of being given to us. In His Spirit the law of life is lost in liberty, and its freedom is the blessedness of a chosen necessity. V. WE NEED SCARCELY ADD THAT THIS "PERFECT LAW," HIDDEN IN THE HEART AS THE VERY SPIRIT OF THE AFFECTIONS,

GIVES LIBERTY TO THE LIFE. Law and liberty do but express opposite relations to the same ideal of our nature. When we are dead we are under it as law, but when we live our life is free in the restful, self-satisfied experience of its true and just-proportioned powers. The ideal has become real and enjoys its living fulfilment. And the life which fulfils it loves the measurements and limits of its sphere and is free. And when we are free we are so disposed to the governing law of our nature that we are sweetly drawn to all its requirements and instinctively observe all its limitations. The law of liberty is a power of love in the heart, the love of the creature to the Creator, of the child to the Father, of the saved to the Saviour. This is the freedom enjoyed under "the perfect law of liberty," or, as it is termed in another place, "the royal law." The law is perfect because it is embodied in its own life; it is a law of liberty, because the life in which it is presented is a spirit of love to the Law-giver; and it is a "royal law," because it proceeds from the royalty of the Father's heart, and lives in the loyalty of the child's affections, as a power of "bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." It thus liberates from every bondage by a Divine captivation, in which the liberty is a necessity hidden in the heart. (*W. Pulsford, D.D.*) *Standing before the mirror*:—I. THE APOSTLE SPECIFIES A CERTAIN KIND OF MAN. "If any man be a hearer of the Word, and not a doer." 1. A man may be prompted to hear the word by motives in which true religion is not at all involved. A habit formed in early life—a regard to what is considered respectable—or a wish to have his intellect gratified, may be the true explanation of the frequency with which he enters church. 2. A person, hearing the Word, may, notwithstanding, be so listless and unconcerned, as scarcely to receive any impression, whether intellectual or moral, from what he hears. 3. On the part of men who do, to a great extent, understand the meaning of what they hear, and who even receive mental excitement and enjoyment, there may be ingenuity enough to shut out from their consciences the moral impression which the heavenly message is intended to produce. II. The apostle proceeds, by a figurative illustration, to DESCRIBE THE HEARER WHOM HE SPECIFIES. "He is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass," &c. 1. The Word of God is represented as a mirror. And why? Because it makes objects manifest. 2. The man who hears the Word, but does it not, is compared to "a man beholding his natural face in a glass." True, of those who stand before the mirror of the Word there are some of whom it might be almost said, that they shut their eyes, and thus receive no impression from that Word at all. But certainly the hearer of Divine truth does, in general, receive some impression on his mind from hearing it. It seems morally impossible for any sane man to hear, for many successive times, a message so plain and so peculiar as that of the Word of God, without having his understanding, at least, whatever may be the case with his conscience and his heart, in a greater or less degree affected. But—3. The man to whom he that heareth the Word, and doeth it not, is here compared, is represented as "going his way," when he has "beheld his natural face in a glass," and "forthwith forgetting what manner of man he was." As from the one, so also from the other, the impression of what he has seen speedily departs. The hopeful impression dies—the man who so lately stood before the mirror "forgetteth what manner of man he was." (*A. S. Patterson, D.D.*) *Hearing and doing*:—Now the whole passage exhibits a striking difference, amounting to a complete contrast in the results which are accomplished in different persons who came into contact, more or less close, with this great "law," "word," or "gospel" of God. I. THERE IS A DIFFERENCE IN THE ACT OR MANNER OF LOOKING. The natural man looks into the gospel superficially, the spiritual man more deeply. A man looking well into the perfect law of liberty is as it were drawn into it, and draws it into himself. A man of appreciative taste looking at a famous painting, will feel drawn into it as it were. He will become in a degree unconscious of the things and the persons around. He will be standing in that highland glen! or resting in that sylvan glade! or dashing in triumph through that foaming sea! So a man, looking aright at the gospel, will feel as though he was drawn into it, and it into him! He will be received into the kingdom, and the kingdom into him. II. THERE IS A DIFFERENCE IN THE TIME OCCUPIED IN THE LOOKING. If a man were to sit down and make out a time-table of his own life, classifying his waking hours according to the several occupations in which he is generally engaged, and allotting to each the time that is spent in it, how much would be for religious contemplation for "beholdings" of the gospel of God? In the case of some, the time would be found to be exceedingly brief. So that, when the looking is not only superficial but extremely transient, it

is not at all surprising that the practical results should be scanty and poor. Here let it be understood that we ask for nothing high-strained or impossible. Religion is a reasonable service. Now I will put a case which has often been in your experience. You are very busy. And yet it has sometimes happened in your busiest time that a matter has arisen suddenly, one claiming instant attention. And you did it; and nothing else was neglected; a day that seemed full of duty, has room in it for a supreme duty; and that duty well done, imparted a higher character to everything else that was in the day, and the calm and rest of the evening were the sweeter for that happy retrospect in which nothing lay undone. It is just so that religion, having due time assigned to it, will come in not to enfeeble but to strengthen the toiling men—not to excite and waste, but to calm and purify, these fretful days. III. THERE IS A DIFFERENCE IN THE PRACTICAL ACTION TAKEN AS THE RESULT OF THE LOOKING. The careless looker—he who looks superficially and transiently—"goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth"—takes no action at all. Even with his looking, he saw that some action ought to be taken, and without delay. He looks in the glass, and sees spots on his countenance, and feels that these ought to be removed. He has sights, but no corresponding deeds. He has convictions, but no corresponding performances. He has feelings without decisions, longings without realisations, constant hearing of the Word but no doing of the work. On the other hand, he who looketh into the law of liberty with profit, looks that he may do; and does that he may look again with clearer eye. Suppose such a man, not yet an assured Christian, only becoming one. He looks and sees himself, covered as we all are by nature with the defilements of sin. And what does he do? Does he go away in forgetfulness, or does he lie down in despair? He does neither. He goes to the open fountain, and washes and is clean. Or he sees God revealed in Christ. Christ as "God manifest in the flesh," radiant in His own perfections and yet overflowing with love to us, reconciling the world unto God and not imputing unto men their trespasses. But is he satisfied with the sight? No. He comes to Christ. He trusts Him that he may be justified. And so of everything else, a required sacrifice is made—an incumbent duty is done—an opened path in providence is followed. And so strength comes, and purity returns, and the lost image of heaven. All who behold thus, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are "changed into the same image." (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*) *The Divine mirror*:—The Word, in reference to him who hears but forgets it, is represented under the figure of a glass or mirror, the general use of which, you are aware, is to exhibit by its reflective power, or by the formation of a correct image, what we cannot otherwise perceive by the eye, and thus a person is enabled to discover whatever is disordered or unsuitable in his outward appearance. What a mirror is for the discovery of deficiencies or stains upon the countenance, the "Word of truth" is for the discovery of deficiencies and stains in the heart and conduct, and he who carefully listens to the statements of that "Word," can no more fail to have a correct image of his spiritual condition brought before him, than he who looks into a mirror can fail to behold the similitude of his outward man. He must see himself as a moral being, represented in all the reality of truth. We may take the case of a licentious profligate, a man within whose bosom there is nothing to be found bearing any resemblance to moral far less to religious principle. He is the slave of his passions, and following no dictate but that of corrupt inclination, he lives as far from God and from the recognition of His authority as it is possible for a human being to do. Now, although it may not be a common thing that such victims to debased feeling and profligate habits should place themselves within the hearing of the "Word of truth," yet we know that sometimes they do hear the gospel proclaimed; and when this is the case how can they escape from seeing the picture of their own character which it unfolds? If they listen with any degree of attention while it describes the features and traces the descending footsteps of those who have thrown off all regard for Divine authority, and all deference to human opinion; if they hear it testifying of them that the "imaginations of the thoughts of their heart are only evil, and that continually"; that "they drink up iniquity like water"; that "being past feeling, they have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness;—that they sport themselves with their own deceivings, having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin, beguiling unstable souls, being cursed children, which have forsaken the right way, and gone astray";—and that "though they know the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them,"—if, I say, they hear "the Word of truth"

thus testifying of the conduct and progress of those that have abandoned themselves to the ways of vice, can they fail to perceive that it is just describing themselves? But, again, in illustration of the power of the gospel to discover their true character to those who listen with any attention to its declarations, we may contemplate another and a very different class of persons, when brought under its reflective influence; I mean those who may be characterised as men of virtue without godliness—men who are distinguished by a strict regard to the morality of the world, and are ready to exult in the self-righteous thought that, as they stand well with their fellow-men, they cannot have much to dread from God. They are, doubtless, endowed with many amiable and attractive qualities. They can compare themselves, without suffering from the comparison, with many around them. And, in the pride of their spirit, they are often ready to declare that no stain has darkened their reputation; they may be found, after a self-complacent view of their fancied attainment, virtually exclaiming, "What lack we yet?" With all these lofty claims, however, to moral excellence, they may yet be chargeable by the God that made and that sustains them, with an alienation of heart from Him and His authority, no less guilty than that of the licentious profligate; and when the question comes to be put to each of them, "What hast thou done unto Me?" they may every one be as little able to give a satisfactory reply as the most ungodly of our rebellious species; and thus there may be, in the sight of a holy and heart-searching Judge, chargeable against them, deficiencies of as fatal a nature as those with which the characters of the most abandoned are degraded and deformed. Now, when the gospel is proclaimed to such persons, if they duly consider what it says, it will not fail to reveal to them a faithful picture of their condition before God, and to summon up before them a lively representation of blemishes from which they perhaps imagined themselves to be free. When it brings within their hearing those distinctions which it constantly recognises between the decencies and observances of mere outward morality, or the offspring of natural disposition, and the fruits of that "pure and undefiled religion" which has had its vital principle imparted in a renewed and sanctified heart—when, for instance, it lays before them the history of the young man whose amiable deportment and external conduct were such as to call forth an expression of the Saviour's kindness towards him, but whose love to the world and its possessions was such as to exhibit the weakness and imperfection of his character, they must see a very obvious likeness of themselves; and when the Divine law, in all its extent and spirituality, is brought to their notice, must they not feel that their best and most beauteous moralities are sadly defective—that the pride with which they had often contemplated themselves on account of their fancied virtues, though it might find food for itself in their superiority to many around them, should be converted into the deepest humility when they compare themselves with the standard of God's holy law, and that, though from the mere dictates of their own nature they have been prompted to benevolence, and high-minded honesty, and upright dealing, they never knew the love of God to operate as a principle of action upon their minds? Let us advert to another illustration of the detecting power of the Word of truth, which is to be seen in its bearing upon the hypocritical formalist. He makes a fair, sometimes a bold, sometimes a most flaming profession. Whatever homage he can pay with the lip, none more ready to give it than he; whatever sacrifices he can offer with the outward man, none more forward to present them than he. But all the feelings of his heart contradict and belie the intended meaning of such offerings. Now, when the "Word of truth" falls upon the ears of such persons, like the licentious profligate and the man of mere worldly virtue, they will be made to feel that it exhibits a faithful image of their moral condition, detects the lurking hypocrisy of their hearts, and holds them up to their own contemplation, under the ignominious aspect of worthless pretenders and paltry formalists. When they hear its reiterated references to those who offer God the service of the body while "their hearts are far from Him"; who present "vain oblations, but delight not in obeying the voice of the Lord;" who have a "form of godliness, but deny the power thereof"; who are, to all human appearance, "fair and honest," while their inward man is defiled with wickedness and inhabited by "vain thoughts"; can they fail to see that it truly represents their own likeness, and displays before their mind's eye, in vivid but faithful delineation, those secret imaginations and hidden artifices which they thought were confined to their own knowledge? When they are directed in their thoughts to our Lord's description of the Pharisees, who "for a pretence made long prayers," who "made clean the outside of the cup and of the

platter, but were within full of extortion and excess"; and who, while "they appeared outwardly righteous unto men, were within full of iniquity and hypocrisy," is it possible for them to escape from the impression that they are themselves virtually described? I might adduce other and not less striking illustrations of the description which, in our text, is figuratively afforded of the "Word of truth." It would be no difficult matter, indeed, to show that it is a mirror in which every variety and class of character are exhibited in their moral features; or, in a word, that no man can attentively look into it without feeling that its reflective power is such as to present him to himself, in the actual reality of his spiritual condition, without the least exaggeration in the blemishes or in the virtues that may attach to him. In conclusion, I would put the question to each of you,—To what purpose have you heard the gospel? If you have any wish to be freed from those defects which you may see in your character; if you have any wish to be prepared for appearing in the presence of unspotted holiness, without those stains which must render you subject to its consuming indignation, it behoves you to take a steady and impartial view of yourselves in the mirror of the gospel, and to resolve, in the faithful application of the means which are therein prescribed, that you may be thoroughly purified, and furnished with every ornament of the Christian character. (*Jas. Noble, M.A.*) *Man's glass*:—There is a leading idea in each of the verses thus read to you; and because these ideas are perhaps more striking when taken together, than when detached the one from the other, we may solicit your attention to the whole of this passage of Scripture, rather than to either of its separate parts. The ideas are the following: the first, that the Word of revelation generally serves as a mirror or a glass, in which the natural man may see himself imaged; the second, that he will be nothing advantaged by this reflexion of his features if it do not make him active in the correcting and amending; the third, that to him who is not only a hearer, but a doer, revelation becomes a "perfect law of liberty." I. Now there are, as you will remember, expressions in Scripture which set before us THE WHOLE WORK, WHETHER OF CREATION OR REDEMPTION, AS ONE VAST MIRROR, upon which we must gaze if we would learn the great truths which have to do with the nature of our God. Thus St. Paul, wishing to contrast our present with our future condition, says to the Corinthians, "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face." He means, as it would seem, that here we have no direct vision; we see only as in a mirror—that is, by reflected rays—creation and redemption both imaging Deity, but neither our faculties nor our opportunities permitting us to look upon God face to face. And there is no doubt that in this sense the Word of God also is a mirror. God may be said to glass Himself in its pages; and when we look on those pages, they give back to us with greater clearness than any other reflector the attributes and perfections of our invisible Maker. But it cannot be in this sense that St. James represents the Word as a mirror; it is as showing man himself, and not as showing him God, that revelation is here likened to a glass. The supposition is that a man may place himself morally before the Bible, even as he may naturally before some polished surface, and learn with as much accuracy what are his lineaments or his features. And we may suppose that St. James refers to the same power in the Bible, as is referred to by St. Paul, when he describes himself and his fellow-workers in the ministry as "not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." And this is what, probably, you must have often heard of as the self-evidencing power of Scripture—the power which there is in the contents of the Bible to act as the credentials of the Bible; so that if all external witness were swept away, revelation might yet so vindicate its pretensions as to place beyond doubt its being a message from God. And this self-evidencing power of Scripture goes mainly on this fact—that there is such a correspondence between what we read in the Bible and what we find in ourselves, as is not to be accounted for except on the supposition that He who wrote the Book had a superhuman acquaintance with the heart. The point is here passed, in which we can allow the sufficiency of human sagacity; the acquaintance is too profound, too extensive, too accurate, to be measured by mere native powers, and our only way of accounting for the marvellous disclosure, which exhibits to us ourselves—every thought being laid bare, every motion of the will, every remonstrance of the conscience, every conflict between duty and inclination—our only way is by referring the document to more than human authorship. And is there any one of you utterly unaware of this power in Scripture to shadow himself? is there any one of you who has read so

little of the Bible, and read it with so little attention, that he has not found his own case described—described with so surprising an accuracy that he feels as though he himself had sat for the portrait? When Scripture insists on the radical corruption of the heart, in its native enmity and deceitfulness, is there any one of us who must not allow that the affirmations in every way hold good—just supposing his own heart to be that of which the affirmations are made? And when, over and above these more general statements, the Bible descends into particulars—when it speaks of the proneness of men to prefer a transient good to an enduring, the objects of sight, however inconsiderable, to those of faith, however magnificent—when it mentions the subterfuges, the excuses of those whom conscience disquiets—when it shows the vain hopes, the false theories, the lying visions, with which men suffer themselves to be cheated, or rather with which they cheat themselves—who is there among us who will venture to deny that the representation tallies most nicely either with what he is or with what he was—with what he is if he have never repented or sought the forgiveness of sin, with what he was if his nature have been renewed by the operation of God's Spirit? II. We now turn to the second great truth presented in the passage which is under review; THE TRUTH THAT WE SHALL BE NOTHING ADVANTAGED BY THIS REFLECTING POWER OF THE WORD, UNLESS WE SET OURSELVES TO THE ACTING ON ITS DISCLOSURES. St. James, as we before pointed out to you, is speaking of a man who is a hearer only, and not also a doer of the Word. He likens such a man to one, who "having beheld his natural face in a glass, goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." Are there not many of you who would be ready to own that sermons have occasionally had on them a mighty and almost overcoming effect; so that they have felt constrained to give their full assent to truths uttered in their hearing, though those truths have convinced them of heinous offences, and proved them placed in terrible danger? It is not that no impression has been made; it is not that the preacher's strength has been wholly thrown away, and that there has been no response to his statements in the breasts of those by whom he has been surrounded; it is rather that the hearers have taken no pains to deepen and make permanent the impressions which the preaching has made; nay, perhaps in many cases, that they have actually taken pains to obliterate those impressions, dreading the sacrifices which they must make if resolved to be religious, and therefore crushing the convictions which would have led them to repentance. It is that they have gone from the church into the world, with the voice of the preacher yet ringing in their ears, and so that voice has been drowned in the whirl of business, or in the sounds of pleasure. III. But now turn, lastly, to the third truth presented by the passage which forms our subject of discourse. This is the truth—THAT BY SUBMITTING IMPLICITLY TO WHAT IS TAUGHT US BY GOD'S WORD, WE SHALL FIND THAT IT BECOMES TO US A "PERFECT LAW OF LIBERTY." There has been no such nurse of freedom as the Christian religion. The principles which that religion expounds and enforces—the accuracy with which it defines the province and prerogatives of rulers and the duties of subjects—the rigour with which it denounces every form of injustice, enjoins benevolence, and asserts the brotherhood of man with man—these have caused it to become, though it professes not to interfere with civil institutions, the great extirpator of oppression, the great founder and the great guardian of all that deserves to be called liberty. And this beautiful word "liberty" may be prostituted and abused; it may be bandied about by venal statesmen or turbulent demagogues; but liberty and Christianity are synonymous terms, as are slavery and irreligion. He who would guide a nation to freedom, must take the Bible as his statute-book: and to attack its vices is the direct way to loosen its chains. They little know, who brawl about liberty and show contempt for Christianity, how ignorant they show themselves of the very essence and life of that which they profess to idolise and pursue. God guard us from the liberty which would be enjoined when Christianity was prostrate! It would be near akin to that liberty of which we read in the book of Jeremiah. "Behold, I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the Lord"—a liberty "to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine." But it is rather of an individual, than of a nation, that the apostle speaks in our text. And who, we may well ask, but the true Christian—the doer as well as the hearer of the Word—deserves to be accounted free? Is a man free, just because there are no fetters on his limbs, and he is not the inmate of a prison? There are fetters of the spirit; there are mental chains forged of such material, and fastened with such strength, that he who wears them may sit upon a throne, and be unspeakably more a bondsman than many a wretched thing

that grinds in a dungeon. What think ye of the fetters of bad habits? What think ye of the chains of indulged lusts? What think ye of the slavery of sin? The drunkard, who cannot resist the craving for the wine—know ye a more thorough captive? The covetous man, who toils night and day for wealth—what is he but a slave? The sensual man, the ambitious man, the worldly man—those who, in spite of the remonstrances of conscience, cannot break away from their enthralments. But whoso looketh into Scripture and continueth therein, finds himself gradually delivered from all this oppression and all this thraldom. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." If it be not the liberty of him who has no opponent, no tempter, it is the liberty of him who has broken the yoke, and who is ever on the watch that it may never be again fastened round his neck. It is not indeed to our lusts that Christianity proclaims liberty, nor to our natural inclinations and propensities; against these it proclaims war—a war of extermination; but on this very account it is that we declare it brings liberty to man. These lusts, these inclinations, are the taskmasters of man; and until grace gain the ascendency, and give the spirit dominion over the flesh, man is literally in bondage to himself—the lowest of slaves, because he does not hate slavery. And in respect of fears, the bondage is too apparent to admit of debate. But let the Spirit of God apply these blessed words to his heart, "There is now therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," and he casts off his chains and springs from his dungeon. Glorious liberty! Who would not long to be the freed man, by thus being the servant of Jehovah? (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

Ver. 25. **The perfect law of liberty.**—*The perfect law of liberty* :—I. Here is a summary of THE CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD'S ROYAL WORD. It is brought before us in its authority, in its sufficiency, and in its freedom. 1. It is, in the first place, a law. It is not an opinion amenable to the caprice of the individual, to be obeyed or to be ignored at the bidding of an arbitrary will. It is a law, a supreme and an authoritative obligation issued by one who has a right to claim unquestioning obedience, and enforced by sanctions which it were madness to disregard. Herein does the teaching of Christ, the great Gospel Lawgiver, differ largely from the teaching of all others. He does not argue, He pronounces; He does not suggest, He commands His words are veiled in no confusion and are prefaced by no apology. They are not opinions to be canvassed, perhaps refuted, but eternal truths, principles of conduct and of action, marching at once in their unconscious royalty to the lordship of the inner man. And with like majesty does the Word of God, our common and precious Bible, present itself as a claimant for the sovereignty of the human mind. It is the province of your intellect to examine its evidence, to elicit its hidden meanings. Then your conscience should acknowledge its supremacy, and then your hearts, with loyal affections, should apply its truths and reduce them into the practice of the life. 2. I observe, secondly, this Word is presented to us not only in its authority, but in its sufficiency—it is a "perfect law," given originally in fragments: it is presented now as the completed canon of Jehovah's will, the last, sufficient, everlasting message of God's love to man. It is a perfect law—then it can be followed by no supplement. Perfect—then it can be superseded by no supplement. Perfect—then it can be ignored by no school of modern illuminators. Coming from a holy God, its morality is spotless. Issuing from the Just One, its decisions are equitable. It is a sufficient revelation. It is enough; not as if God had begun to build and was not able to finish His work. 3. And then, thirdly, I observe, the Word is presented to us not only in its authority, and in its sufficiency, but also in its freedom. It is a "perfect law of liberty." It has been well observed that the highest liberty is a self-imposed restraint. The lark enjoys as rare a sense of freedom when it nestles in the tuft of grass as when it trills its sky-song in the visionless heights. We do not wonder that James, and Peter, and Jude, so delighted to call themselves servants, or, as the word might be with equal accuracy rendered, "slaves" of the Lord Jesus; that Christ Himself should have presented it as the condition of Christian discipleship; that we should take His yoke upon us, which is easy; or that the heart, in the fulness of its new experience, should exultingly exclaim—"Thy service is perfect freedom." And this is the liberty promised by the perfect law. And this inner freedom extends to all needs, and is poured over every department and every faculty of a man. 4. And this law of liberty is perpetual. It perpetuates this freedom. "There is now, therefore, no condemnation," &c. Such is the glorious freedom conferred by this law of liberty upon every believing soul. It is a freedom which the universe cannot parallel,

There is a magic, you know, in the very name of liberty to which every heart responds. Poets have sung its praises; painters have immortalised its heroes upon canvas, and sculptors upon marble; patriots have looked proudly to heaven from its death-beds: its associations have glorified the commonest and least interesting spots of earth into holy shrines beaten with the pilgrim-feet of the world. The Thermopylæ of the world's liberties; the Marathon of its triumph; the flat marsh upon the banks of the Thames where the charter of our freedom was wrung from a monarch's dastard soul; that field upon the Belgian plains which has grown up into the Waterloo of a nation's prowess—these flush our cheek, brighten our eye, and send the blood pulsing through our veins. But political liberty, dearly as we love it, though it has entailed sacrifice of blood and treasure, exerts no liberating influence upon the inner man, and can benefit any individual only for a few brief and fleeting years. But moral freedom is gained with no such price. We wade through no slaughtered hosts to reach it. Every individual is a partaker of its benefits. It dies not with the death of time; it is not an earthly boon or charter of victories that have turned tribunes into autocrats of a mob. There is no law of liberty here. It is there, if you choose to look for it, where frail and erring men —men of like passions with yourselves—have won, by the grace of God, the victory over their own hearts and passions, have pressed on in holiness of life and philanthropic service, resulting in blessing, and, at last, in the recompense of the conqueror's heaven. II. THE HEARERS OF THE WORD. If there be such a Word, so authoritative, so perfect, so free, and if that Word be the gospel which is preached unto you, there is a very solemn obligation resting upon you to take heed how ye hear. Those who fulfil this duty aright will not be forgetful hearers, to whom the truth comes in monotonous accents, as the dull sound of apology. (*W. M. Punshon, D.D.*) *The perfect law of liberty*:—I. A DIVINE DESCRIPTION OF THE GOSPEL. 1. A law. Not a mere set of propositions, theories, doctrines, which need not concern us; but a rule of life and conduct. 2. A perfect law. (1) Made by the only and absolute Sovereign of mankind. (2) Based upon a perfect knowledge of man's entire nature, conditions, and relationships in every place and time. (3) Adapted to promote the highest ends of law in every way perfectly. 3. A law of liberty. (1) It accepts only willing obedience. (2) Submission to it brings liberty from—(*a*) guilt; (*b*) fear, (*c*) sinful habits and propensities, (*d*) the everlasting consequences of past (forgiven) transgressions. II. MAN'S DUTY TO THE GOSPEL. 1. Careful personal investigation. 2. Retention of the truth thus learned. 3. Continual obedience. III. THE BLESSINGS OF THE GOSPEL. 1. Approval of conscience. 2. Assurance of Divine favour. 3. The delight of conscious moral progress. 4. The joys of usefulness. (*Systematic Bible Teacher.*) *The perfect law of liberty*:—I. A PARTICULAR DESIGNATION GIVEN TO THE GOSPEL. Modern legislation is very largely a history of repeal—the repeal of unjust laws; and this will go on until all inequalities and injustice are swept away. The gospel is perfect. You cannot improve it. II. A PARTICULAR CONDUCT TOWARD THE GOSPEL DESCRIBED. A persistent childlike look of a trustful obedient child. III. A PARTICULAR ASSURANCE made to him who maintains that conduct toward the gospel. "Virtue is its own reward," so is obedience in this case. (*J. Lewis.*) *The gospel the perfect law of liberty*:—I. THE GOSPEL IS A LAW. The gospel may be called a law, because everything that concurreth to the right constitution and making of a law is found in the gospel; as—1. Equity. All precepts of the gospel are just and equitable (Rom. vii. 12). 2. Promulgation, which is the life and form of a law (Mark xvi. 15; Isa. lxi. 1). 3. The author, God; who has a right to prescribe to the creature (1 Tim. i. 11). 4. The end, public good; and the end of the gospel is salvation (Rom. i. 16). 5. By this law we must walk (Gal. vi. 16; Isa. viii. 20; Rom. ii. 16). II. A LAW OF LIBERTY. 1. Because it teacheth the way to true liberty (John viii. 36; Rom. vi. 18). 2. The bond of obedience, that is laid on us in the gospel, is perfect freedom. (1) The matter. Duty is the greatest liberty, and sin the greatest bondage (Psa. cxix. 45; 2 Pet. ii. 19). (2) We do it upon free principles (Rom. xii. 1; Titus ii. 12). (3) We have the assistance of a free Spirit (Psa. li. 12). (4) We do it in a free state (Rom. viii. 15; Gal. iv. 31; Luke i. 74). III. A PERFECT LAW OF LIBERTY. 1. When compared with the law of Moses (Heb. x. 1, 2). 2. It directs us to the greatest perfection (1 John iv. 18). 3. Because it is pure, free from error (Psa. cxix. 140), And, lastly, because it maketh perfect (Psa. xix. 7). IV. "WHOSO LOOKETH." 1. Deepness of meditation (Psa. cxix. 97). 2. Diligence of inquiry (Prov. ii. 3, 4). 3. Liveliness of impression (2 Cor. iii. 18). As Moses's face shone by talking with God; and we, by conversing with the Word, carry away the beauty and glory of it

in our spirits. V. AND CONTINUETH THEREIN; *i.e.* persevereth (John viii. 31; 2 John 9). He being not a forgetful hearer, but remembereth, so as to reduce to practice; vers. 23, 24. (Prov. iv. 20, 21; Luke ii. 19); a doer of the work. The gospel was not ordained only for speculation (Matt. iii. 8; John vi. 29; Heb. vi. 10). The apostle speaks of "a form of knowledge" (Rom. ii. 20). Let not the tree of knowledge deprive us of the tree of life. Work the works of God: faith is our work, repentance our business, and the life of love and praise our duty. "This man shall be blessed in his deed," alluding to Psa. i. 3; in his deed, not for it (Psa. xix. 11). He shall be blessed here with peace (Gal. vi. 16), and hereafter with eternal happiness (Rev. xxii. 14). (*T. Hannam.*) *Looking into the perfect law*:—"Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty." A law must in the first instance be known and understood. It is by means either of the eye or the ear; by examining it for ourselves, or by receiving an account of it from the testimony of others. Both of these are alluded to in our text. The man whom the apostle pronounces "blessed" is he who "looketh into the perfect law of liberty." He does not merely look at it; he looks into it. The word is expressive of fixed, earnest, and scrutinising inspection. Such is the disposition of the Christian inquirer, looking into the perfect law of liberty. He does not take matters on trust, or at second-hand. It is not enough that he has been instructed in the truths of the gospel in his youth by parents and others. He must look into it with his own eyes, and form a judgment of it from personal observation. Nor is he satisfied with a superficial inspection, or a general survey: He must look into it particularly—embracing in his inquiry every doctrine it reveals, every precept it recommends, and every ordinance it appoints; considering the nature and importance of each separately, estimating the evidence and excellence of the whole collectively. He gives it not a mere passing glance, but considers it with a steady, deliberate attention; reflecting on it calmly, dispassionately, with personal application and fervent prayer. It discloses to him the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ: it unfolds the plan of redeeming mercy; opens up the way of reconciliation; makes manifest the privileges of the people of God, both in a state of grace, and in the kingdom of glory. He looks into them not merely with the bodily eye, but with the eye of faith, realising their truth, persuaded of their necessity, continually discovering more and more of their grandeur, contemplating them with unfeigned growing delight; and by each new discovery animated to pursue his researches, until, in the light of eternity dissipating every shade of ignorance and error, he shall in God's light see light, and know even as he is known. "A hearer" of it, and attends to the preaching of the Word, as well as the reading of it. I might enumerate classes of hearers in great variety, all of them equally in error, but time does not permit, nor does the subject call for it. Our text contains a description that includes them all. They are all "forgetful" hearers. They all forget the very thing which they should be most concerned to remember; and that is, their own personal interest in what they hear. They forget that their design in hearing should be the same with God's design in speaking, and that is, that the heart may be made better. What they hear, however, makes no lasting or practical impression. But the man whom the apostle declares to be blessed, is "not a forgetful hearer." He listens with deep attention, having both the understanding, the conscience, and the heart in exercise. He mingles faith with what he hears. Above all, he endeavours to follow up the design, and to secure the profit of hearing, by a course of devoted obedience. For true religion is altogether a practical thing. In this view, the apostle here contemplates it. The man whom he pronounces "blessed," is, in opposition to the "forgetful hearer." "A doer of the work." It is observable that he says nothing of believing, and speaks only of doing. Nor was it necessary that he should. The "doer of the work" must, in the first instance, be a believer of the Word. The fountain must be cleansed that her streams may be pure. The tree must be made good that the fruit may be good. But as principle must precede, so it will produce practice. The believer, in obedience to the impulses of his renewed nature, will also become a doer. The man who from right principles yields obedience to any one precept of the law, will, under the impulse of the same principles, yield obedience to every other precept; will resist sin in all its forms, and pay a regard to duty in all its branches. What he ought to be at any time, he desires and endeavours to be at all times. To complete the description of the man whom he pronounces "blessed," the apostle includes this thought. It is added, that he "continueth therein." Of what use are momentary impulses and superficial impressions? There is a goodness which promises fair, but it soon vanishes, like the morning cloud and the early dew. The apostle has said of him, in most

emphatic language, "This man shall be blessed in his deed." This blessedness, though principally future, is partly present. He is even now blessed with an assured confidence, he is blessed with an approving conscience, which bears testimony to the sincerity of his profession, or the genuineness of his character, and holding out to him the prospect of a gracious reception, and a triumphant acquittal, at the tribunal of his Judge. He is blessed with a good hope, which rests on the surest foundation, is warranted by the clearest evidence. He is blessed with a contented mind, satisfied with the dealings of his heavenly Father, thankful for His mercies, patient under His chastisements. The consummation of blessedness is reserved for the just made perfect, who shall suffer neither the misery of desire ungratified, nor the sickness of hope deferred; who shall drink deep in the river of pleasures, and be replenished with that fulness of joy which is at God's right hand for evermore. (*Jas. Barr, D.D.*)

The perfect law of liberty:—I. What is "THE LAW—THE PERFECT LAW OF LIBERTY"? This question I have no hesitation in answering. It is the gospel. And, as a designation of the gospel, it is full of encouragement. 1. In the first place, the gospel is a law. Let none be alarmed. Instead of there being anything fearful in this view of it, there is everything that is fitted to impart the surest confidence to our souls. Were it not a law, no such confidence could be ours. It is as much the law, or revealed will of God, that man the sinner should be justified by faith, as it was that man the innocent should be justified by works. The way of deliverance from the law's curse has the same authority as the law itself, and the law's sanction. 2. In the second place, the gospel is a law, as coming with the full force of a Divine command. And strange that sinners should refuse submission to it!—strange that they should not embrace it with gratitude and joy!—for it is "the law of liberty." Now, in the terms of prophetic intimation, the gospel proclaims, with the full authority of the Supreme Lawgiver, "liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound": and various are the descriptions of liberty which it imparts. And it is "the perfect law of liberty." All that is Divine is perfect. All God's doings, in creation, in providence, and in redemption, are "perfect." This "law of liberty" is "perfect," in two senses:—1. It is perfect, in regard to the ground of freedom which it reveals. That ground is perfect, as it perfectly provides for the unsullied glory of all the attributes of God; as it perfectly answers the demands of His pure and holy law; and as it perfectly secures the principles of His moral government, and the stability of His throne. 2. It is perfect also in its effect on the conscience and on the heart. In this respect, it stands in contrast with the institutes of the Mosaic dispensation; which is termed "a yoke of bondage,"—"a yoke," says Peter, "which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear." II. THE DUTY OF LOOKING INTO THIS LAW: "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth"—that is, I apprehend, continueth looking. There is apparently an intended contrast between the transient and careless "beholding of the natural face in a glass" referred to in the preceding verses. The "looking" is not, in this case, cursory and forgetful, but steady, and constant, and mindful. The full contents of "the law of liberty"—"the glorious gospel of the blessed God"—are full of sublimity and interest, in all the manifestations they make of the Divine Being, and of His relations to His creatures. They are inexhaustible. The duty incumbent upon us, then, is that of close, constant, unwearied contemplation. III. THE INFLUENCE OF THIS LOOKING UPON THE CHARACTER: "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work." How is this? Mere looking is not doing. Contemplation is not action. No; but doing is the result of looking; action of contemplation. The contemplation will increase faith: and the faith will "work by love"; producing, by the efficacy of what God reveals, a growing conformity to what God enjoins. The effect, indeed, may be traced to two principles—that of fear, as well as that of love. The more we contemplate the wonders of Christ's work in the gospel, the more must we see of the purity, the perfection, and the irrepealable sanction of the Divine law—of which the transgression by men mingled for Him the inexplicably bitter cup of mediatorial suffering; and, as inseparable from this, the holiness, the justice, the truth, and the avenging judicial jealousy of the Lawgiver: and the more must we be filled with a salutary fear of offending, and so of incurring His displeasure, who has thus testified how infinitely hateful in His sight all sin is. Then, on the other hand, "the love of God," and "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ," so marvellously discovered in the gospel—"in the law of liberty"—cannot fail, the more closely they are contemplated, to animate the great principle of all godly practice—the principle of love—of love at once complacential and grateful—love for

what God is, and love for what God hath done, delightfully harmonising, and blending into one irresistible impulsive affection—the moving power of active and devoted service. IV. THE HAPPINESS THENCE RESULTING: "This man shall be blessed in his deed." In holy obedience to God's will—in the filial and free service of this Divine Master—there is true happiness; happiness with which "a stranger cannot intermeddle"; which no man can take from its blessed possessor. He is "blessed in his deed." Whatever enjoyment he might have in the contemplation, there could be no blessing upon him from God, without the result of the contemplation—the holy practice. He enjoys subdued and regulated desires and affections; and has thus peace within. He has the inward consciousness of love to God and love to men; and thus a participation in the blessedness of the Divine benevolence. (*R. Wardlaw, D.D.*) *Law and liberty*:—"Law"—merely "law"—"law" only—is a bondage harsh and severe. "Liberty" alone, and unguarded, passes into licentiousness, runs riot, and becomes tyranny. "Law" needs to be sweetened by "liberty," and "liberty" is no "liberty" without the fences of law. St. James strikingly blends them, and finds the blending where only it exists—in God's Word: "The perfect law of liberty." It is just what all good legislation has as its aim: "Law" which is no less than "liberty," and "liberty" which is compatible with "law." But what human legislation has ever yet reached it? It would not be too much to say that the Christian religion is the only code in the whole world which ever has united, or can perfectly unite, those two things, so as to make them really one. See how it is in God's method. And, first, we look at the "liberty." Every man who becomes a real Christian becomes a free man: and the more he is a Christian the more he is free. The date and the measure of his Christianity are also the date and measure of his "liberty." For, as soon as ever we really know Christ, and come to Christ, and believe in Christ, our sins are all forgiven. Therefore we are free from our past. And then, the Christian now, by his union with Christ, made, in a higher sense than before, a child of God, is undertaken for in everything: so that he need have no anxiety about what is coming. Every needful thing is covenanted to him for time and eternity: therefore that man is free from his future—he is liberated from the bonds of care. And the "liberty" is not only thus of a negative character. He is free, every moment of his life he is free, to go to the throne of God "by a new and living way"; to his own God, and to open there his whole heart and to tell Him everything; and have the closest communion with Him. And then to listen for "still small voices" which shall speak back to him. He is free to claim every promise. He is free to lay his hand of faith upon the Cross, and all that Cross has purchased, and say, "It is mine!" He is a freed man of the heavenly city, free, as a child of God is free of his Father's house. To him the doors of glory are flung wide open! And he is free to mingle with the saints; to sit down at the feast; to join in the song; free, to the very feet of Jesus; to know as he is known, and love as he is loved. That is "liberty!" Now see the law—"the perfect law of liberty." God has given, since the creation, four laws to man; but only one of the four can be rightly called a "law of liberty." The original "law" of all was the law of conscience, a law which if man had not fallen would have been, we must believe, a perfect guide. But as man is now, conscience is only "law" in so far as it is the reflection of other laws which God has given us. Secondly, there was a "law" given to Adam and Eve in Paradise. This was a law of prohibition. Therefore it was not a "law of liberty." The next "law" which God gave was the law enacted from Mount Sinai. But neither was this a law of liberty. Almost the whole of it is negative; it tells what we are not to do: and negatives can never be liberty. Fourthly, came the law of the Lord Jesus Christ. See what is the basis and the character of that fourth law. Every other law had failed; no man did keep it, or could keep it. If a man's eternal happiness depended upon any law which could be given, no man, from Adam to the latest man, could have fulfilled the condition. Christ saw that, and He came, and He Himself fulfilled all the law, to the minutest point. He carried out the whole mind of God. He fulfilled it as a Representative Man, that His fulfilment might be our fulfilment. And so God accepted it. What, then, is our "law"? Love, love, love for a law which has been kept for us. It is the strictest law that was ever made on earth. It binds every thought, every moment: but it has no shackles. It is more than voluntary: it is happy, quite happy—the only thing that is happy and makes everything else happy. It is free, quite free—the only thing that is free and makes everything else free. It is the outcome of the heart. It is the law of angels. It is the law of the saints in heaven. It is the law of love; and the law of love is "the law of liberty."

(*Jas. Vaughan, M.A.*) *The perfect law of liberty*:—I. THE OBJECT. 1. The gospel, therefore, has all the qualities and characteristics of a Divine legislation. (1) A law is the mandate of a superior, who is supposed to possess judicial authority. (2) A law is supposed to be founded in equity; and it is assumed that its requirements and exactions are such as justice and reason bind its subjects to observe. (3) A law is established for the public good, and is beneficial in its operations. (4) A law must be promulgated or made known to those who are under it. (5) A law has certain punishments annexed to the violation of its institution. 2. This system of religious truth, which we designate the gospel, is emphatically a perfect law. (1) It is perfect, having nothing either deficient or redundant. (2) It is pure. (3) It is perfect, contrasted with the ceremonial ritual of the Mosaic law. 3. The gospel is also a law of liberty. (1) The gospel exhibits to us the privilege of liberty. (2) The gospel exhibits the means necessary for the attainment of this liberty. (3) The gospel is the instrument of liberty. II. AN ACTION. 1. This action implies—(1) Attention to the letter of the gospel. (2) That it is our duty to search into its signification. (3) It implies also a participation in the benefits of the gospel. 2. It is necessary that we not only look into "the perfect law of liberty," but that we continue therein. (1) There must be a continuance in the possession of gospel privileges. (2) Constant use of its ordinances. (3) A constant exercise of gospel graces. 3. We now proceed to consider another branch of Christian duty—"He being not a forgetful hearer." (1) The man who is entitled to the blessedness of the text must be a hearer. Endeavour to cultivate an affection for the Word of God—it requires no labour to remember what we love. Let us meditate on its precepts, not only when we are in the house of God, but when we have returned to our several occupations (Psa. cxix. 97). That we may not be forgetful hearers, we must seek Divine assistance (John xiv. 26). (2) In order to profit by what we hear, it is necessary that we reduce it to practice. III. THE BENEFIT RESULTING FROM THE PERFORMANCE OF THIS DUTY. The reward here mentioned does not consist in the acquisition of worldly wealth, nor yet in freedom from trials or persecutions. It implies that his soul shall receive such a measure of the favour of God as shall enable him to find comfort and satisfaction in every dispensation of Providence. He shall be blessed with the approbation of God. He has also peace of conscience. He enjoys heavenly protection. (*R. Treffry.*) *The gospel law*:—I. THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST, HERE COMPARED TO A LOOKING-GLASS, IS ALWAYS BEFORE THE EYES OF THE CHRISTIAN, AND IS CALLED "THE PERFECT LAW OF LIBERTY." 1. By this glass the soul discovers its filthiness (John xvi. 8, 9). 2. This points him to Christ for cleansing (1 John i. 7). 3. This shows him his perfect purification (Heb. x. 14). 4. And freedom from condemnation (Rom. viii. 1). 5. Hence the gospel is called a law (Rom. iii. 27). (1) It is perfect (Psa. xix. 7). (2) It is the law of liberty from sin, Satan, the world, death, hell; to love, know, enjoy, and believe in God (Rom. viii. 21). II. THE BELIEVER'S CONDUCT IN RESPECT OF THIS GOSPEL LAW. He "looketh into it." 1. He has now spiritual eyes to see (Isa. xxix. 18). 2. To look is to understand (1 Pet. i. 12). 3. To look is to believe (Isa. xlv. 22). 4. To look is to expect (Psa. cxxiii. 2). 5. By metaphorical usage, it denotes to look into by way of examination: and by implication, to comprehend. Hence, believers look—(1) Diligently. (2) Anxiously. (3) Constantly. (4) Prayerfully. (5) And with faith in Christ. III. HIS PERSEVERANCE AFTER DIVINE KNOWLEDGE. "And continueth therein." 1. God has pledged the grace of continuance (Jer. xxxii. 40). 2. The believer desires to continue (Psa. xvii. 8). 3. The Scriptures exhort to continuance (Heb. xiii. 9). 4. The gospel is a means of continuance (2 Cor. iv. 7). 5. Through this glass he continues to look unto Christ, and is saved (John xv. 9). IV. THE INDIVIDUAL CONSEQUENCE OF UNDERSTANDING THE GOSPEL. "He being not a forgetful hearer," &c. 1. Being conscious of his weak memory, he prays for the Spirit as his Remembrancer (John xiv. 26). 2. And of his wavering heart, that the gospel may be written therein (Psa. cxix. 80). 3. He is a doer of the work of faith and love (1 Thess. i. 3). 4. It is not man's, but God's work (John vi. 38). 5. It is not performed by man's but God's strength (Phil. iv. 13). 6. It is done to Christ's glory (Rom. xi. 36). V. THE RESULTS OF BELIEVING THE GOSPEL. "This man shall be blessed in his deed." 1. Not for what he does, but in what he does (Psa. xix. 11). 2. He shall be blessed providentially (Rom. viii. 28). 3. He shall be blessed graciously (Psa. cxxxii. 15). 4. It also denotes that the Christian shall be blessed with—(1) A knowledge of himself. (2) A knowledge of God. (3) A knowledge of His Word. (4) A knowledge of salvation. (5) The fulfilment of the promises. (6) Deliverance from enemies. (7) Support in difficulties. (8) Joy in death. (9) Everlasting glory of both soul and body in

the life to come. (*T. B. Baker.*) *Christianity in three aspects*:—I. AS A SYSTEM TO BE PROFOUNDLY STUDIED. 1. Its subjects have the highest claims to intellectual investigation. 2. Its method of revealing its subjects requires intellectual investigation. 3. Its blessed effects upon the heart can only be realised by intellectual investigation. II. AS A LAW TO BE CONTINUALLY OBEYED. There are three things implied in a law—authority, publicity, and power of obedience. This law has the highest authority; is widely published; and all who hear it have the power to obey. The "law" of the gospel consists of two elements: the evangelical and the moral; the first, involving repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; and the second, love to our neighbour and our God. III. AS A BLESSING TO BE NOW ENJOYED. "This man" is "blessed," not in his ideas, sentiments, talk, but in his deeds; not for deeds in some future state, but in his deeds now. (*D. Thomas.*) *The law of liberty*:—I. THE NATURE AND PROPERTIES OF THIS LAW. The law by which Christ governs is "holy, just, and good." It unites the glory of the sovereign with the good of the subject. II. MAN'S DUTY IN RELATION TO THIS LAW. III. THE ADVANTAGES RESULTING. "This man shall be blessed in his deed." 1. He shall have the approval of his own mind. 2. He shall be blessed with increasing light and knowledge. 3. That which he doeth shall prosper. 4. He shall be blessed after his deed. "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love." "Every man shall be rewarded according to his works." (*Joseph Taylor.*) *The perfect law*:—1. We should with all seriousness and earnestness apply ourselves to the knowledge of the gospel. Jewels do not lie upon the surface; you must get into the caverns and dark receptacles of the earth for them. No more do truths lie in the surface or outside of an expression. The beauty and glory of the Scriptures is within, and must be fetched out with much study and prayer. A glance cannot discover the worth of anything to us. He that doth but cast his eye upon a piece of embroidery doth not discern the curiousness and the art of it. So to know Christ in the bulk doth not work half so kindly with us as when we search out the breadth, and the depth, and the length, the exact dimensions of His love to us. 2. The gospel is a law, according to which—(1) Your lives must be conformed (Gal. vi. 16). (2) All controversies and doctrines must be decided (Isa. viii. 20). (3) Your estates must be judged (Rom. ii. 16). 3. The Word of God is a perfect law. (1) It maketh perfect. (2) It directeth us to the greatest perfection, to God blessed for ever, to the righteousness of Christ, to perfect communion with God in glory. (3) It concerneth the whole man, and hath a force upon the conscience: men go no further than outward obedience; but "the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul" (Psa. xix. 7). It is not a lame, defective rule; besides outward observances, there is somewhat for the soul. (4) It is a perfect law, because of the invariable tenor of it; it needeth not to be changed, but is always like itself: as we say, that is a perfect rule that needeth no amendment. (5) It is pure, and free from error. There are no laws of men but there are some blemish in them. (6) Because it is a sufficient rule. Christ hath been "faithful in all His house," in all the appointments of it. Whatever is necessary for knowledge, for regulating of life and worship, for confirmation of true doctrines, for confutation of false, it is all in the Word "That the man of God may be perfectly furnished unto every good work" (2 Tim. iii. 17). Well, then—(1) Prize the Word. We love what is perfect. (2) Suffer nothing to be added to it: "Ye shall not add to the Word which I command you." So the whole Bible is concluded (Rev. xxii. 18). 4. That the gospel, or Word of God, is a "law of liberty." As it is a perfect, so it is a free law. So it is in divers respects. (1) Because it teacheth the way to true liberty, and freedom from sin, wrath, death (John viii. 36). There is no state so free as that which we enjoy by the gospel. (2) The bond of obedience that is laid upon us is in deed and in truth a perfect freedom. For—1. The matter itself of our obedience is freedom. 2. We do it upon free principles. 3. We have the help of a free Spirit. 4. We do it in a state of freedom. Well, then, consider whether you be under a law of liberty, yea or no. To this end—(1) Ask your souls, which is a bondage to you, sin or duty? When you do complain of the yoke, what is grievous to you, the commandment or the transgression? (2) When you do duty, what is the weight that poiseth your spirits to it? Your warrant is the command; but your poise and weight should be love. (3) What is your strength for duty—reason or the assistance of the free Spirit? When our dependence is on Christ, our tendency is to Him. (4) Would you have the work accepted for its own sake, or your persons accepted for Christ's sake? It is an ill sign when a man's thoughts run more upon the property and quality of the work than upon the propriety and interest of his person. 5. From that "and abideth

therein." This commendeth our knowledge of and affection to the Word, to continue in it. Hypocrites have a taste; some men's hearts burn under the ordinances, but all is lost and drowned in the world again "If ye continue in the Word, then are ye My disciples indeed" (John viii. 31). There may be good flashes for the present, but Christ saith, "If ye continue," if ye ripen them to good affections. So 2 John 9. 6. From that "being not a forgetful hearer." Helps to memory—(1) Attention. Men remember what they heed and regard. (2) Affection. An old man will not forget where he laid his bag of gold. (3) Application and appropriation of truths. We will remember that which concerns ourselves. (4) Meditation, and holy care to cover the Word, that it be not snatched from us by vain thoughts. (5) Observation of the accomplishment of truths. (6) Practise what you hear (Psa. cxix. 93). (7) Commit it to the Spirit's keeping and charge (John xiv. 26). 7. From that "he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer." Sin cometh for want of remembering: forgetful hearers are negligent (Psa. ciii. 18). There are some truths that are of a general use and benefit; others that serve for some cases and seasons. In the general, hide the whole Word in your heart, that ye may have a fresh truth to check sin in every temptation (Psa. cxix. 11). "Remember and forget not how thou provokedst the Lord thy God in the wilderness" (Deut. ix. 7). Labour thus to get a present ready memory, that will urge truths in the season when they do concern us. 8. From that "but a doer of the work." The Word layeth out work for us. 9. From that "shall be blessed in his deed." There is a blessedness annexed to the doing of the work of the Word; not for the work's sake, but out of the mercy of God. See, then, that you hear so that you come within the compass of the blessing; the blessing is usually pronounced at the time of your addresses to God in this worship. (*T. Manton.*) *The perfect law and its doers*:—I. THE PERFECT LAW. 1. No word of the New Testament is given to us only in order that we may know truth, but all in order that we may do it. Every part of it palpitates with life, and is meant to regulate conduct. 2. In the very central fact of the gospel there lies the most stringent rule of life. Jesus Christ is the Pattern, and from those gentle lips which say, "If ye love Me keep My commandments," law sounds more imperatively than from all the thunder and trumpets of Sinai. 3. In the great act of redemption, which is the central fact of the New Testament revelation, there lies a law for conduct. God's love redeeming us is the revelation of what we ought to be, and the Cross, to which we look as the refuge from sin and condemnation, is also the pattern for the life of every believer. 4. This law is a perfect law. It not only tells us what to do, but it gives us power to do it: and that is what men want. The gospel brings power because it brings life. II. THE DOERS OF THE PERFECT LAW. 1. Cultivate the habit of contemplating the central truths of the gospel, as the condition of receiving in vigour and fulness the life which obeys the commandment. 2. Cultivate this habit of reflective meditation upon the truths of the gospel, as giving you the pattern of duty in a concentrated and available form. 3. Cultivate the habit of meditating on the truths of the gospel, in order that the motives of conduct may be reinvigorated and strengthened. 4. The natural crown of all contemplation and knowledge is practical obedience. III. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE DOERS OF THE PERFECT LAW. Notice the *in*, not "after," not "as a reward for," but "blessed *in* his deed." "*In* keeping Thy commandments there is great reward." The rewards of this law are not arbitrarily bestowed, separately from the act of obedience, by the will of the Judge, but the deeds of obedience automatically bring the blessedness. This world is not so constituted as that outward rewards certainly follow on inward goodness. Few of its prizes fall to the lot of the saints. But men are so constituted as that obedience is its own reward. There is no delight so deep and true as the delight of doing the will of Him whom we love. There is no blessedness like that of increasing communion with God, and the clearer perception of His will and mind which follow obedience as surely as the shadow does the sunshine. There is no blessedness like the glow of approving conscience, the reflection of the smile on Christ's face. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The blessedness of doing*:—To have the heart in close communion with the very Fountain of all good, and the will in harmony with the will of the best Beloved; to hear the Voice that is dearest of all, ever saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it"; to know "a spirit in my feet" impelling me upon that road; to know that all my petty deeds are made great, and my stained offerings hallowed by the altar on which they are honoured to lie; and to feel fellowship with the Friend of my soul increased by obedience; this is to taste the keenest joy and good of life, and he who is thus "blessed in his deed" need never fear that that blessedness

shall be taken away, nor sorrow though other joys be few and griefs be many. (*Ibid.*) **Forgetteth what manner of man he was.**—*Self-forgetfulness* :—There are some who have not forgotten what manner of men they are, simply because they have never known it. From childhood they have been brought up with utterly false notions of themselves. Subservience and flattery may create convictions which take such firm hold of the mind that it can never get free from them; or constant engrossing work may so expend its forces as to leave none for introspection. But most of us at times have had little glimpses of ourselves. We have been worsted in some conflict; and although we do say to ourselves that the contest was not quite fair, yet there is the fact that we have been beaten, that perhaps we have been beaten often; and there does come the little suggestion of disappointment at times, that perhaps we are not quite so wise and competent as once we took ourselves surely to be. Or some friend whose affection for us determines that we shall not think, without protest, more highly of ourselves than we ought to think—called "the malice of kind people"—such a friend feels it a duty to tell us of some fault which "people talk about and think such a pity," and the spiteful truth, or lie "truth-tinged," gives us a side view of ourselves which we have never seen before, and we do not like it much. Or people talk about graces and gifts which so eminently distinguish others, when, to tell the truth, if anybody is remarkable for possessing them, certainly we thought we were. It was mortifying that nobody seemed to know it. Then, again, there have been moments when, as it were, the devil himself has entered into us, and, by the lurid light of his presence, we have for an instant seen inside some of the dark chambers of our heart, and looked upon the unclean spirits which hide there, yet ready at any moment to go forth on an evil work. Or the vision of some beauty or purity with which the trust of love had endowed us, but which we knew was not ours, or some voice of God which seemed to draw the soul up from its low dwelling-place to fairer regions, have made us dissatisfied with ourselves and shown us our grievous faults, and yet filled us with the hope of rising above them. Few men thoroughly know themselves, few men can look upon their characters as upon a geological map, with each stratum clearly marked, showing its colour and extent and fossil history, so that a man can stand before his mapped-out character and see what manner of man he is. If the dead are able to read their own memoirs, how startled at times they must be, how mortified, how indignant! How should one of us like to read these words about ourselves: "His life was one long series of tricks—mean and malicious. He was all stiletto and mask. To injure, to insult, to save himself from the consequences of injury and insult by lying and equivocating, was the habit of his life. Besides his faults of malignity, of fear, of interest, and of vanity, there were frauds which he committed for love of fraud alone"? Do you think the man about whom such words were written thought himself all that? Yet that is Macaulay's estimate of the character of Pope. But, as I have said, if we know ourselves very imperfectly, we do at times get glimpses of ourselves, and these transient glimpses should be turned to profit in new labour of caution and prayer. In the first place, I think we may say that there are those who not merely forget what manner of men they are, but who almost forget the fact that after all they are only men. Because circumstantially they differ from their fellows, they think that they belong altogether to another race. The vauntings of Nebuchadnezzar; the bursting ostentation of Herod Agrippa; the frenzy of some of the Roman emperors, whose deity compelled obsequious courtiers to shade their eyes; the punctilios of abject daily observance demanded by Louis XIV., these are types of moral dementia. But the same kind of improper forgetfulness extends through all ranks of life. It is sometimes seen in the mental arrogance of some powerful mind, which has nothing but scorn for the simple and the dull. It is seen in that overweening sense of social superiority which is a fertile parent of bad manners. If, instead of this weak, foolish self-importance, we realised the Church's teaching, "All ye are brethren," the lot of the humbler and less fortunate of our fellow-men would be alleviated by the tender consideration and affectionate courtesy of those more highly favoured. But if we are in danger of forgetting that we, however highly placed, are only men, is it not a fact that we still more frequently forget that we are weak, faulty, and, indeed, too often fallen men? When one thinks of it, how few things can be more surprising than the readiness with which the mass of mankind are prepared to pass decisive judgment on anything which may come under their notice. They allot approval to this, and pronounce condemnation upon that, and have forgotten what manner of men they are—forgotten that they possess nothing but inherited prejudices, or capricious partialities,

or fugitive reflections from other minds on which to found their assumption. And, more especially, would not the hardness and intolerance which is shown by thousands towards certain Churches and certain parties be shamed away, if only those parties and Churches were thoroughly understood; and if only we all remembered how apparently accidental is our own position, that but for chance, as we say, we might have been that which now we denounce. But, again, if men forget their intellectual poverty, do they not oftener forget their moral depravity? Certainly there is a great deal of evil in the world, but it does not strike one that the mass of mankind are possessed by a sense of their own badness. Take those we severely blame in our tenants, servants, dependants. Have we not quite forgotten that something like the same thing is done by ourselves? Even a fraudulent bank director has sentenced a petty thief to gaol without blushing. The things we have done, and the things we should like to do if we dared—these tell us something of our nature, and should tinge all our judgments with pity. Or, take it again in the quiet scenes of worship, when the tumult of life is stilled, and we draw nigh in confession to the great throne of renewal. There are uttered the solemn words of confession, and on bended knees we join with the priest and make our self-revelation. But what is there we see when we pour forth the litanies of the penitent? Is it a line of hated foes through which we have passed, and by which we have been smitten on every hand, and does the new week show the same dark gauntlet to be run again? and is the cry, "Lord, have mercy upon us," our cry of conflict with recognised evils? Then the pangs of memory become a cross of salvation. Or, on the other hand, when we make our confession, is the only thing we have forgotten our faults and the ruin they are working, our moral diseases and the grave to which they are leading us; and the only thing we see—ourselves arrayed in Sunday graces? Oh, we forget the days of the week, each with its evil of temper, intention, and indulgence, its meanness, its frivolity, its cruelty; the scenes of home, and work, and recreation—the scenes which, if some one for whom we cared had seen, would have compelled an unaccustomed blush—all these we forget as we kneel and confess. Oh! it is time that we remembered ourselves, so would a humbler and more gentle spirit rule us. It is time that we remembered ourselves, so would a regenerating intention inspire us. And if we would indeed see ourselves, and, having seen, see that same self no more, we must "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (*W. Page Roberts, M.A.*) *The nature of the gospel law*:—Christ did not make laws for His Church as Phaleas, in Aristotle, did for his commonwealth, who took good order for preventing of smaller faults, but left way enough to greater crimes. No; He struck down all, digged up all by the roots, both the cedars and the shrubs, both the greatest and the smallest. He laid His axe to the very beginnings of them, and would not let them breathe in a thought, nor be seen in a look. Nor did He, like that famous Grecian painter, begin His work, but die before He could perfect it. It were the greatest opposing of His will to think so. He left nothing imperfect, but sealed up His evangelical law, as well as His obedience, with a *Consummatum est*. What He began He ever finished. In a word, His will is most fully and perspicuously expressed in His gospel. But yet, to urge this home, this giveth no encouragement to condemn those means which God hath reached forth to direct us in our search. Though the lessons be plain, yet we see many times negligence cannot pass a line, when industry hath run over the whole book. Nor can we think that *that* truth which will make us perfect is of so easy purchase that it will be sown in any ground, and, like the devil's tares, "grow up whilst we sleep" (Matt. xiii. 25). (*A. Farindon, B.D.*) *True liberty*:—Horace Bushnell speaks of a liberty above, and a liberty below the elbows; and Charles Kingsley says, "There are two freedoms—the false, where a man is free to do what he likes; the true, where a man is free to do what he ought." *Slavery and liberty*:—James II., on his death-bed, thus addressed his son:—"There is no slavery like sin, and no liberty like God's service." Was not the dethroned monarch right? (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) **And continueth therein.**—*Continuance*:—I commend perseverance unto you as "a condition annexed to every virtue"; so Bernard—as "that which compasseth every good grace of God about as with a shield"; so Parisiensis—as "that gift of God which preserveth and safeguardeth all other virtues"; so Augustine. For though "every good gift and every perfect gift be from above" (ver. 17), though those virtues which beautify a Christian soul descend from heaven, and are the proper issues as it were from God Himself; yet perseverance is *unica filia*, saith Bernard, "his only daughter and heir," and carrieth away the crown (Matt. xxiv. 13). He runneth in vain, who runneth not to the mark. He runneth in vain, that fainteth

in the way, and obtaineth not. Whatsoever is before the end, is not the end, but a degree unto it. What is a seed, if it shoot forth and flourish, and then wither? What is a gourd, which groweth up in a night, and shadoweth us, and then is smitten the next morning with a worm and perisheth? What is a fair morning to a tempestuous day? What is a Sabbath-day's journey to him who must walk to the end of his hopes? What is an hour in Paradise? What is a look, an approach towards heaven, and then to fall back and be lost for ever? A good beginning must be had, but let the end be like unto the beginning. Let not Jupiter's head be set upon the body of a tyrant; as the proverb is, "A young saint, and an old devil": but let holiness, like Joseph's coat of many colours, be made up of many virtues, but reaching down to the very feet, to our last days, our last hour, our last breath. For this is our eternity here on earth; *et propter hoc æternun consequimur æternum:* Our remaining in the gospel, our constant and never-ceasing obedience to it, is a Christian's eternity below; "and for this span of obedience, which is the mortal's eternity, we gain right and title to that real eternity of happiness in the highest heavens." To remain in the gospel and to be blessed for ever, are the two stages of a Christian; the one here on earth, the other in the kingdom of heaven: to "look into" the gospel, that is the first; and the second is like unto it, to "remain in it," to set a court of guard about us, that no deceitful temptation remove us out of our place. Our perseverance is a virtue which is never *in actu completo*, "never hath its complete act in this life." (*A. Farindon, B.D.*) *The eye effects the sight:*—There is much in the eye. For the law of liberty is still the same; it moulteth not a feather, changeth not its shape and countenance: but it may appear in as many shapes as there be tempers and constitutions of the eyes that look into it. An evil eye seeth nothing but faction and debate. A lofty eye seeth nothing but priority and pre-eminence. A bloodshot eye seeth nothing but cruelty, which they call "justice." All the errors of our life, as the philosophers speak of the colours of the rainbow, are *oculi opus*, "the work of the eye." For the law itself can lend nothing towards them, but stareth them in the face, when the eye hath raised them, to shake and demolish them. It were good, then, to clear our eye before we look into the law, lest whilst we find what pleaseth us, we find what will ruin us. But oh that we should have such eagles' eyes in the things of this world, and be such bats in the gospel of Christ! The covetous looketh into the world, and that hath power to transform his soul into earth. The wanton looketh upon beauty, and that turneth his into flesh. David beholdeth Bathsheba in her bath, and is on fire. Ahab looketh upon Naboth's vineyard, and is sick. The eye of flesh pierceth deep into the object, and the object pierceth as deep into the soul. But we look and look again into the law of liberty, but so faintly that we draw no power from it to "renew us in the inward man" (Eph. iii. 16). It is a law of liberty, and we look upon it, and yet are slaves. (*Ibid.*) **Not a forgetful hearer.**—*Spiritual mnemonics; or rules for improving the memory:*—It is a bad thing to have a poor memory. What a difference there is between people in this respect! How little impression events make on some persons! How easily they forget names, dates, faces, the books they have read, the scenes they have visited! And how wonderfully others remember all these things! Macaulay could repeat from memory books he had read when he was a boy; could repeat the whole of "Paradise Lost," or one of the books of Homer. Indeed, there seems to be hardly any limit to the power of memory. Generals have been known who recollected the name of every soldier in their army, and politicians who could call by name every man to whom they have been introduced. A good memory is the necessary basis of all intellectual action. I think the time will come when we shall know how to educate and discipline the memory, and keep it from forgetting. There will be rules for memorising taught in our schools, to strengthen the memory and keep it in a healthy condition. The most important element of such a system will probably be to form a habit of attention with the purpose of remembering. How we recollect times, places, scenes, adventures, experiences, in which our whole soul was interested! I have heard a woman describing the last days of her husband's life, or that of her child, and every minutest incident was photographed on her brain. So the Evangelists recollect and record all the sayings of their Master, word for word. So the man who has been in a shipwreck, or a railroad accident, or a battle, describes, with intense minuteness and accuracy, all the details, till it rises before you a vivid picture, which you also will remember always, though hearing it at second hand. The stories of travellers are interesting for the same reason, because the novelty of the scenes they visit rouses their attention, and the vivid impressions made on their own minds excite a

like interest in ours. We remember that in which we are interested, because we give our attention to it. But when we are not interested in anything, and so do not give our attention to it, we are sure to forget it. Facts and lessons which do not interest us are like the plants which have no root in themselves, and soon wither away. I heard a worthy gentleman arguing that studies ought not to be made too interesting, because boys and girls should have the discipline of hard work. But who works the hardest, I should like to know, he whose heart is not in the work, and who has to force himself to do it by main strength of will, or he who enjoys it while he does it, or does it with the hope of future joy. It is hope and joy which give us strength to work, not disgust or indifference. But we weaken the memory by inattention, which results from the absence of a deep interest and a living purpose. The general rule, then, for improving the memory is, "Take an interest in anything, and you will attend to it; attend to it, and you will recollect it." But what cure is there for moral forgetfulness? Here is a man who forgets all the lessons of experience. He commits the same faults over and over again. Each time, he says to himself, "This is the last time; I will never do so again; I will keep my resolutions hereafter." But he goes his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he is. When I was a boy at the Boston Latin School, our master introduced one day a learned-looking gentleman, who, he told us, had come to teach us a new system of intellectual mnemonics. The thing was done by help of the law of association. We first fixed in our mind a list of familiar objects, and then associated them with the names of kings and queens. But where is the science of spiritual mnemonics? Who shall teach the conscience to remember its duty in the hour of temptation? the heart to remember its best love when drawn aside to the world. There are many marked instances of moral forgetfulness, which show the importance of such a science as this. We are very apt, for example, to forget the religious and moral truth which we hear. We are forgetful hearers of the Word. Where is all the instruction which has been poured into our ears and heart from childhood, by ever-faithful parents, by teachers, professors and guardians. It has all gone. Again, how we forget our own good resolutions! We arrange our life, at the beginning of the year, into a perfect order. We select the faults to be conquered, the virtues to be acquired, the studies to be pursued, the good actions to be done. At the end of the year we look back and find that all these resolutions were presently forgotten, and we went on as before. Again, we forget our duties. "You are one of the most perfect of men," said Lamb to Coleridge, "with only this one slight fault, that if you have any duty to do, you never do it." We remember everything but our duties—these slip from our memory too easily. We forget our promises and engagements. How very mortifying to find that we have promised to do a multitude of things, and that we have forgotten them all! Alas! and worse, we forget the kindness done to us. At the time we feel very grateful, but gratitude becomes burdensome, and so, after a while, we have forgotten our benefactors and their deeds. We forget them, but do not forget those who have injured us, who have wounded our pride. Ah! we remember that too well; "the deadly arrow adheres to our side." We forget the holy love of Christ, the ever-present providence of God, the impending judgments of the future. Who shall give us the system of moral mnemonics by which to remember these things? The difficulty is that we are not really as much interested in the love of God, in duty and spiritual progress, as we are in other matters. But we have all seen those who did not suffer from this fatal want of memory. How is it that they remember so well? It is love which quickens all the powers, memory among the rest. Did Dr. Howe ever forget his blind people? Did Mr. Garrison ever forget his slaves? Did Howard ever forget his prisoners? Did Dorothea Dix ever forget her insane persons? Did Florence Nightingale forget the sick soldiers? Did Lincoln forget the dangers of the country which he served? Or did Jesus ever forget His disciples or His work? No. All these, having loved their own, loved them to the end. Where the heart goes, there memory watches, a sleepless sentinel, ready for every occasion. Only to hear about truth, therefore, profits nothing. We must do it ourselves in order to know it. Lazy acquiescence in another's opinion is not knowledge. Easy assent to the established creed is not belief. Enthusiastic admiration of the eloquence of some favourite teacher is not faith. Truth helps no one who has only heard about it. Until we are doers of the Word, as well as hearers, we are like the clocks and watches in the watchmaker's shop. He sets them all to the right time, and winds them up; but till he touches the pendulum and sets in motion they cannot keep time. So we go to church every Sunday, and the minister winds us up by convincing arguments and

by the truths of the gospel; and then he appeals to our feelings, and touches our hearts, and we are set exactly right. The hour-hand and minute-hand are right to a moment. The moral chronometer is regulated to a second. But we ourselves must set the pendulum in motion, and begin to go; else what does it profit us? To be set right and regulated every Sunday morning, what use is there in that, unless we keep going through the week? When we are hearers and not doers, we deceive ourselves. All our thoughts are excellent, our ideas of duty correct, our sentiments noble: we take the highest grounds on all occasions. But this is all outside of our central life. We wash our hands, but not our hearts. Because we are so familiar with what is true and right, we forget at last what manner of men we are. Hearing the truth, when we refuse to act it out, ends in opinion, and opinion in talk, and talk in self-deception. There is a good deal of cheating in the world, but people usually cheat themselves more than they do others. We repeat by rote what we hear, and think that we know it. We talk well and imagine that we are what we say. We hear a truth, and imagine that it is a part of our own character. So we deceive ourselves. Until we have put a truth into action, we do not really know it. The artist may study colours and forms for ever; but until he tries to paint a picture he is only a dilettante artist. The carpenter may hear lectures on the use of tools, but till he learns to use them we do not call him a carpenter. The youth who graduates in a law-school, full of the theory of law, is not yet a lawyer. Do anything, and you come to know it, and then truth becomes knowledge and creates love. We have in Boston a "Free Religious Association," as it is called. Yet true religion is always free, and always sets us free. It is a law of liberty; liberty and law in one. Religion is the source of all real freedom, for true freedom is not wilfulness, but self-direction. And we can only direct ourselves when we have some rule or law by which to direct ourselves; some aim of life, and some method by which to pursue that aim. The rule for strengthening the memory, then, so that we shall not be forgetful hearers, is, first, to give our attention to what we hear, to put our mind into it. A common phrase in English is "to mind a thing," meaning "to remember it." Another meaning of mind is to obey. "Mind your father and mother, child!" To put our mind seriously into anything, leads, first to memory; next, to action. And this action, if we continue therein, becomes at last interesting for its own sake, and so we make it a part of ourselves. We eat it and drink it, and it enters into our life, and life's most secret joy, so that finally we become "blessed in our deed." Thus continued, persistent attention, given to what is true and right, leads to action; and persistent, continued action, leads to love, and deed. (*J. Freeman Clarke.*) *Forgetful hearers*:—Were you to stand at the door of many of our churches, and ask the people as they came out what had been the subject principally dealt with, or the point aimed at by the discourse they had just been listening to, how many would be able to give an intelligible and satisfactory answer? In a large number of cases even the text is, I fear, forgotten before the ascription is reached. Only a short time ago a friend of mine was preaching in one of our cathedral churches. As he was going to select for his text a prominent passage in one of the portions for the day, he thought it expedient to inquire of the clerk, "What did the Canon preach from this morning?" The clerk became very pensive, seemed quite disposed to cudgel his brain for the proper answer; but, somehow or other, he really could not think of it just then. But there were all the men of the choir robing in the adjacent choir-vestry; he would go and ask them. Accordingly the same question was passed round the choir, and produced the same perplexity. At length the sagacious clerk returned with the highly explicit answer, "It was upon the Christian religion, sir!" I think those good people must have needed a reminder as to how we should hear, don't you? (*W. H. M. H. Aitken, M.A.*) **But a doer of the work.**—*Doctrine rendered into life*:—The truth in Jesus is not a comet, attracting attention, awakening wonder, appearing for a little time and then vanishing away; it is the sun which makes and which rules our spiritual day, and it is the moon relieving the darkness of spiritual night. The truth in Jesus is not like the pictures on the walls of our dwellings, pleasant rather than serviceable, or if useful, not essential; it is as the necessary furniture of our homes. It is not as the garnish of the dishes of a feast, it is as the viands themselves; it is not as honey to bread, but is itself bread of life. It is not an unimportant appendage to Christian character, it is that character's necessary foundation. Let us not neglect doctrine, and let us be careful to render it into action and life. (*S. Martin.*) **This man shall be blessed in his deed.**—*Happiness connected with obedience to the law of Christ*:—I. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE GOSPEL REVELATION. 1.

James calls it "the law," "the law of liberty," and "the perfect law of liberty." The gospel revelation is the law of the Christian. It is a law of life in contrast with a law of sin and death. It is revealed by Christ Jesus in contrast to that revealed by Moses; it is a law of grace and truth: "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." 2. The gospel revelation is the law of liberty, in describing which we cannot, perhaps, more simply and impressively dwell upon it than by keeping before the mind the contrast between the Old and the New Testament revelations. The moral and ceremonial laws enslave their subjects, or rather, they are in bondage who are under the law. But the law of the gospel is a law of liberty; it is a provision of mercy and love to set free from the law of sin and death. The son who loves his father feels a delight in doing his father's will; the service done is perfect freedom, and the law of the father is perfect liberty. It is just in this spirit and in this way the gospel is a law of liberty to us. It is true that the natural man cannot understand this, for the service of religion appears to him servile duty; he cannot find interest nor pleasure in it, and by his own feelings and inclination he judges of others. He is, it may be, a very slave to the vilest propensities of his fallen nature, and yet never dreams that he is suffering himself to be led captive by the devil at his will. 3. The gospel revelation is the law of perfect liberty. There is perfection in everything that originates with God. This law is perfect with respect to its completeness and the liberty it affords. As a revelation from God, it contains a full development of the mind of God concerning the covenant of His grace with men; it contains a perfect directory to us as sinners; it opens up and points out the way to happiness and God. It is perfect in all its provisions; perfect in the sinless obedience of the Son of God, who engaged in covenant with the Father for our salvation; perfect in the infinite satisfaction given by Him to Divine justice; perfect in the spotless sacrifice He offered for our sins; perfect in the complete salvation obtained for us and therein revealed. It is perfect in its precepts, perfect in its promises, perfect in its doctrines, and perfect in the countless blessings it brings to men. 4. Now, this perfect law of liberty is given to us that we may know the mind and will of God concerning our salvation. We have not to say, "Who shall ascend into heaven? or, Who shall descend into the deep?" to obtain this law of the gospel for us, for the word is nigh us, even in our mouth and in our heart. II. THE CONDUCT OF THOSE WHO ARE INFLUENCED BY IT. 1. Such conduct is described in our text as looking into it, continuing therein, and doing the work. Looking into it signifies no superficial investigation, nor casual perusal, such as the uninterested and unconcerned would give it under some conviction of conscience arising from a sense of duty. A profound meditation is directed into the word of the gospel, with a view to comprehend the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. When savingly interested in the gospel, we look into it so as to find the virtue of it in our hearts. It cannot be better explained, perhaps, than in the words of the apostle (2 Cor. iii. 18). The Christian cannot rest satisfied unless he is looking into the law of the gospel so as to be transformed by it into the likeness of Christ. 2. The continuance therein proves that with the true Christian religion is not of an evanescent character. It is true that the Christian is the subject of many changes. The liveliness of his impressions may not always be the same. Clouds may cover his mind, temptations may assault his soul, unbelief may distress his spirit. But under all such painful exercises he does not despise the perfect law of liberty; he rather turns to it with solicitude and prayer. It is his chart to heaven; it sheds a light upon his path to cheer and comfort his distressed spirit. 3. Continuing therein presents a line of conduct directly in contrast with that of the casual observer or the individual who discovers in it the deformity of his own character, and straightway goeth his way and forgetteth what manner of person he was, or that of a hearer and not a doer of the work. 4. Doing the work is knowledge reduced to practice, theory carried to a living embodiment of truth, and principle followed to active development. Where there is sincerity of heart, obedience will follow. The glory of the gospel revelation is, that God, by implanting a gracious principle in the souls of the regenerate, gives power to the Christian to do all that He requires. Though we are not under the moral law as working for life, we are under it as a rule of action, and every Christian delights in it. The commands of the New Testament are to repent, believe, love, serve, worship, and praise God. The individual who doeth these doeth the Christian work—the work that God requires of us in the gospel of His grace—and such shall be saved. III. THE HAPPINESS OF THE PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN. "This man shall be

blessed in his deed." It is not every man nor every professor of Christianity to whom attention is directed, but that individual who lives his profession by learning from the revealed will of Heaven what is required of him, and who reduces it to practical godliness. He may, in his onward course to heaven, experience rebuffs, assaults, and various trials; but with all these the Lord points him out as the object of His favour and delight. It is in his deed he is to be blessed, for in the practice of godliness the blessing comes. It is a medium or a channel through which the Lord visits him with blessing, or makes him happy. It is as impossible to separate happiness from religion as it is to separate sensation from life. The seraphic joys of heaven spring from likeness to God and from doing His will; and were it not for the remaining corruption of nature and the imperfect knowledge and service of the Christian on earth, the bliss of a paradise would be experienced. The devoted Christian's happiness is a combination of spiritual peace, love, joy, fellowship and communion with Jehovah. The experience of this blessedness is not in its full measure. There are degrees of happiness, and for the most part in this life moderately and faintly experienced. But the lowest degree makes the Christian feel how foolish, vain, and hurtful are the highest enjoyments of sinful and worldly pleasures, so that he turns from what the world calls happiness with sorrow and disgust. It must not be forgotten that the devoted Christian is not exempt from trials and afflictions as diversified and multiplied as those of men generally, and by reason of mental and bodily infirmities may have sorrow, distress, and darkness of soul. He has seasons when he is in the valley as well as on the mount, but he is blessed notwithstanding. God is still his covenant Father; Jesus Christ is still his Saviour, Friend, and Brother; the Holy Spirit is still his Sanctifier and Comforter; the promises of God are still his. He is pardoned, he is justified, and he is sanctified. The life of Christian devotedness is, then, a life of happiness. There is blessedness in all spiritual exercises of the Christian heart, blessedness in all the performances of Christian devotion and duties, and blessedness in all the benevolent operations of the Christian's life and actions; so that not even a cup of cold water can be administered in the name of a disciple unregarded by the Lord or unblessed by Him. (*S. Wills, D.D.*)

Vers. 26, 27. **If any . . . seem to be religious.**—*A false and a true religious ritual:*—The word "religious," here, does not mean the entire religious life—the inner experience and the outward manifestation of religion—but only the outward expression of it. It is the branches and fruit of religion; not its root—that without which the root would be useless, but which is itself dependant upon the root for its very existence. It is the body of religion; not the soul—yet the body by which the soul acts. It is—to use a now commonly repeated word—the ritual of religion. To the Christian the whole world is a temple, and all life that religious service of which we speak. This is the ritual we care to preach, and long to revive; the ritual of a pure morality; not the morality of worldly maxims, or human standards; but the morality that springs from love to Christ, and is possible only through faith in Him. I. A FALSE RITUAL. James is here merely citing one example of many false rituals, and he is probably citing that one because it was emphatically the sin of the Church of that age. It is, in a word, the sins of the tongue—the sin of wantonness of speech. Notice that all external manifestation of religion—if you like, all ritual—is faulty, fantastic, and false—that is—1. Self-deceptive. There are some sins, in the midst of whose blighting influences a man cannot satisfy even his imagination that he is religious; that are too flagrant to let a man "deceive his own heart." But there are others that many a man commits, and yet imagines that he is religious. Refined sins, that have a smooth attire and a gentle voice; customary sins, that are easily lost in the crowd of other men's sins, because they are so common in their appearance. Such men are their own dupes. 2. Inconsistent. All wrong expression of religious life is inconsistent. Is not murder? Yes, you say quickly—and so is lying! However, James instances a more common, and, some might have thought, excusable, inconsistency. But he quotes it as an example of all the rest, and sternly condemns it. All garrulousness, all excessive talkativeness, is here condemned—whether it is that of uncharitableness, including the words of hatred, of passion, of detraction, or that of untruthfulness, where there is deceit, false witness; or that of unreality, when in social intercourse, or in worship, unmeant, unfelt things are continually being said, or sung—words that circulate in the home, the drawing-room, or the sanctuary that are base coin. (1) The gossip "bridleth not his tongue." Such is the man who is greatly interested in, and constantly con-

versing about, the concerns of others, who is ever ready to say many things about the commercial concerns, the home, the social life, or the moral character of his neighbour. (2) The censor "bridleth not his tongue." Such is the man who is constantly criticising and condemning his fellow-men, forgetting the Divine command, "Judge not, lest ye be judged." (3) The bigot "bridleth not his tongue." Such is the man who has no brotherly words for any beyond his own Church. (4) The sentimentalist "bridleth not his tongue." Such is the man who strongly utters what he weakly feels; who glibly says or sings what is mere matter of superficial feeling rather than of deep spiritual conviction. 3. Valueless. We are as Christians what priests in the sanctuary before the congregations profess to be—we are performing the holy rites, and thus symbolising the faith and uttering the worship of Christ. Our ritual is our life. That life is the performance of religious rites which symbolise our faith to the world, and utter our worship to God. Now, the life of such as we have glanced at, must evidently be a false ritual. It does not symbolise our religion to the world, for when the lynx-eyed world observes the conversation of the gossip, or of the censor, or of the bigot, or of the sentimentalist, it is not awed by it, it is not attracted by it. There is nothing religiously impressive in such conduct. Such a "man's religion is vain." Nor does it honour God. II. A TRUE RITUAL. Coleridge well says that "While the outward services of ancient religion, rites, ceremonies, and ceremonial restraints of the old law had morality for their end, were the letter of which morality was the spirit, morality itself is the service and ceremonial of the Christian religion." 1. Beneficence. The charities that lead us in the footsteps of Emmanuel, who "went about doing good," are the best authorised rites of our religion. (1) Care for the afflicted. (2) Personal intercourse with the afflicted. Charity seems to do too much of her work in these days by proxy. If you would really be of Christian service to the afflicted, be a brother, not a benefactor only. 2. Purity. (1) The world is a defiling thing. (2) The Christian is to mingle with the world. (3) That the Christian must not be defiled with the world. These two, then, charity and holiness—not apart, but together: not in themselves, but as the expression of piety, the simple and sublime ritual of religion—are necessary and possible to every Christian man. Our Pattern exemplified them. (*U. R. Thomas.*) *Religion*:—St. James here speaks of religion under one particular aspect, and one only; that of external form, ceremonial, and observance—those outward expressions which are helpful, and needful, to bring into act and substance the inner workings of heart and soul. Such external things are necessary to all religion, to all worship—such as we in this world can offer. It is a good sign of our days, that there is less of that poverty of heart many of us can remember which made men shrink from all outward appearance of religion; when godlessness, immorality, or levity of life was magnified into a meretricious repute; and the vast majority of people would rather be thought votaries of the world than devout followers of the gospel of Christ. But just as one extreme form of evil diminishes, another, under the fine policy of the enemy of souls, comes in danger of gaining ground. It is that which St. James sorrowfully saw in his day, the mere seeming of religion in outward things; the too easy, often too humanly attractive ways which look like the service of Christ, when really they may be but the service of our own wills and desires, of the fancied ideal we substitute for "pure and undefiled religion." 1. First I would say be jealously watchful against every kind of simulation in the religious life; against any weak or morbid care for the seeming of your character and ways; for what you may appear to be, rather than for what you really and vitally are. In the depth of our own hearts our effort must be to love and serve "our Father which seeth in secret"; and commit to Him the care of "rewarding us openly." 2. That spirit and temper of "religion is vain" too in which a man "bridleth not his tongue." All experience tells us, as the records of other generations in our own history bear witness too, that it is in the very nature of controversy to quicken our most questionable feelings, to stimulate our least beneficial powers; and happiest are they who are most spared its trial. 3. There remains one other note of danger to real and practical religion which St. James touches, when he speaks of a man "deceiving his own heart." This may seem a general form of expression; but we may consider it as enforcing the great lesson that all vital religion has more to do with the heart than the head; and must be judged by its power over those deep-seated affections, to which the most moving appeal of Christ's religion is made. (*Canon Puckle.*)

Vain religion and true:—I. A SPECIMEN OF VAIN RELIGION (ver. 26). "If any man among you"—any man, be he who he may, be his standing and authority, his pro-

fession and position, what they may, among you Christians. By putting the matter thus, he would lead them to deal with themselves individually and inquire whether the supposition was realised in regard to himself. "Seem to be religious." "Seem,"—that is not so much to others as to himself—if he think that this is his character and condition. 1. The sin specified. It is that of not bridling the tongue. The person who speaks uncharitably, maliciously, slanderously, who gives ready utterance, free circulation to calumnies, suspicions, insinuations—who propagates false charges, or true ones, in a bitter, envious or malignant spirit—he assuredly bridles not his tongue. The reviler, the backbiter, the whisperer, the reckless, abusive partisan, the inventor and publisher of bad names and injurious rumours—all such are clearly involved in this condemnation. And short even of this the sin here specified may exist, may reign. We may not bridle the tongue as regards vain, light, foolish talking. Our speech, if free from the bad feeling of those whose words are spears and arrows, may be trivial, frothy, unprofitable. It may signally want dignity, gravity, purity. 2. The evidence it furnishes. Why does James make so much of the bridling of the tongue? Set any part of the Divine statute-book at nought, and you in effect trample on every part; you strike at the foundation of the entire structure. It indicates a rooted rebelliousness, whatever appearances of submission, and even whatever acts of submission, there may be in certain duties and for certain purposes. The tongue, let it be remembered, is regulated and ruled by the heart; for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt. xii. 34, 35). The one is the index of the other. The stream corresponds to the hidden spring, and tells us what are its qualities. And yet again, the sin which, in a sense, is begun with speech, does not end there, but goes a great deal farther. It spreads in every direction, and involves often the most extensive evil influences and consequences. As it issues from a fountain of impurity, it becomes in turn such a fountain itself, and the bitter waters flowing forth from it carry desolation and death to quarters which had otherwise been fresh and fruitful. II. THE NATURE OF TRUE RELIGION (ver. 27). "Pure and undefiled"—characterising it both positively and negatively. "Pure," that is, genuine, sound, as it were, clean like the region from which it comes, and to which it returns. "Undefiled," not contaminated by any corrupt, earthly mixture, not polluted or stained by the introduction of carnal, beggarly elements. "Before God and the Father"—God, who is the Father, the paternal relation being specially mentioned, it may be, with reference to them as begotten by the Word of Truth, and so His spiritual children. "Before Him," meaning in His presence, or in His estimation. "Is this," consists in this, not meaning that it is confined to the particulars which follow. It embraces gracious principles and affections which are now left out of sight, the subject treated of by the apostle being definite and limited. And even as regards outward duties, which are those embraced in the peculiar term rendered religion, only such are singled out as bore on the writer's present purpose—these, however, being highly significant and representative in their character. 1. "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction." Observe the parties—"the fatherless," orphans, those deprived of parents. In the mention of them there may be an allusion to God, as here presented to view in the character of a father. Such children are in a peculiarly desolate and distressing condition. The duty specified is that of visiting these parties, which includes every kind of friendly office—counsel, aid, defence, soothing their sorrows, supplying their wants, vindicating their rights. We are not to be satisfied with acting through a substitute—a missionary, an agent of some religious or charitable society. We are to come into contact with them—to go to them in person. 2. "To keep himself unspotted from the world." Here strict purity is enjoined. The world is corrupt and defiling. And, mark, we are not even to be spotted by it, we are to guard against the slightest stain, avoiding all its vanities as well as its vices. From everything of the kind we are to "keep ourselves." Now, mark, these two things go together, and may not be separated. There must be both the generous heart and the circumspect walk, goodness in union with holiness. And when genuine, they spring from, and are pervaded by, godliness. They are rooted in a filial relation to the Father above, in a right standing before Him, and a gracious conformity to Him; with Him they originate, and to Him they have respect in all their actings. (*John Adam.*) **And bridleth not his tongue.**—*Sins of the tongue:*—I. NOTICE THE UNBRIDLED TONGUE AS IMPLYING FALSEHOOD. 1. Some men lie maliciously. (1) They may be actuated by a desire to be revenged for some real or fancied injury. (2) They may wish to benefit themselves at the expense of others. (3) They may desire to set two persons at variance,

and therefore misrepresent the actions and motives of one to the other. 2. Some men lie indiscreetly. They garnish, modify, or magnify the story, so that it conveys a wrong impression. 3. Some men lie thoughtlessly. Such are tattling gossips, the newsvendors of small communities. 4. The unbridled tongue is often the tongue of a hasty, choleric person. II. THE RELIGION OF THE MAN WHO DOES NOT BRIDLE HIS TONGUE IS VAIN. 1. He deceives his own heart. 2. He only seems to be religious. 3. He proves that one great ruling sin at least remains unsubdued. III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF AN UNBRIDLED TONGUE ARE SERIOUS. 1. To the person himself. (1) His mind must be unhappy, filled with jealousy, envy, and hate. (2) No one will trust him, give him his confidence, or listen to him without misgivings. (3) He gets into trouble when his indiscretion or his falsehood is found out. (4) God knows his character 2. To others. (1) Misrepresentation, trouble, sorrow, injustice. (2) Men will hate and avoid the unbridled tongue as much as possible. (3) Lying is the grand characteristic, if not the root, of all vicious conduct, and of which Satan is an embodiment. (*Homilist.*) *The government of the tongue:*— At the Stephen's Institute, Hoboken, there is a testing department devoted to the business of testing the quality of oils and other substances; and I am told it is a very lucrative business, since it is a matter of great importance to large numbers of people to have a scientific and impartial test of the quality of the articles alluded to. There is an oil, however, which is not quoted in the markets, though it is of the greatest value, and which is not tested at any of our institutes, though to be sure of the quality is a thing of unspeakable moment. It is that oil which many of us—who, like the virgins in the parable, have gone forth to meet the Bridegroom —are supposed to have taken in our vessels with our lamps. But it is of the last importance that we should know the quality of this our oil, whether it is genuine or no, whether it will burn on through the night of death and trial, or will prove spurious or adulterated oil, so that when the cry is heard, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh," and we arise and trim our lamps, we find that they burn low, and go out, and leave us in the darkness. Now the Bible furnishes the tests whereby we may ascertain its genuineness. Here is one of them. Sometimes a single chemical test is sufficient to settle the quality of an article: so it is here. If our oil cannot stand this test, it is not pure. The government of the tongue is the test of the genuineness of a man's religion. But one may ask, Why should the tongue be bridled? And what is there in the bridling of it, which carries such significance that it is alone the sufficient and crucial test of the quality of a man's religion? I give three reasons. I. BECAUSE THE POWER OF SPEECH, WHICH IS THE USE OF THE TONGUE, INVOLVES A VERY GRAVE RESPONSIBILITY. It may not be exercised lightly or thoughtlessly, but reverently, discreetly, soberly, and in the fear of God. The man of science tells us the vibrations of the air which we produce in speech are transmitted on through the centuries. So is it oftentimes with the influence of an idle, or a sinful, or a hasty word; once spoken, who shall recall it? or who shall put a period to its influence for evil? Not one. In the Alps the traveller is sometimes bidden by his experienced guide to avoid speaking, because under certain conditions the vibrations of the voice may precipitate the terrible avalanche. The hasty or the intemperate word, or even the whispered slander, has often precipitated great crises in history which have involved myriads in misery, and oftener has brought down on men, in their social or domestic life, an avalanche of ills and woes. II. BECAUSE THE TONGUE BOTH MAKES AND REVEALS THE MAN. If it makes the man, then it ought to be bridled, lest it make him ill. If it reveals him, then the bridling of it, so that it shall not transgress its proper limit, is a fair test of the quality of a man's religion. The tongue, I say, makes the man. Yes, for the influence of speech is reflex as well as direct. No word is spoken but leaves its impress behind it upon the lips that utter it before it can exercise any influence upon the ear that hears it. Your speech goes to form your character. You will grow largely what your words make you—light, unstable and unreliable, fickle and false, peevish and irritable, impure and ungodly, if your talk be such. I say, therefore, again, the tongue makes the man. Then let it be bridled, let it be wisely regulated. It is also the expression of the man. It reveals him, tells what he really is. Yes, though he may train his tongue to deceit, misrepresentation, prevarication, suppression of the truth, even downright falsehood, yet in the end, and on the whole, the tongue will be the expression of the man. No man can be false always. The mask worn in public must commonly be laid aside in private. And not only so: the habit of concealing the truth, and assuming a character which is unreal, will beget a habit of tortuous and indirect expression which by and by will reveal the man. III.

BECAUSE OF ITS WILD AND UNGOVERNABLE NATURE AND ITS GREAT AND PECULIAR POWER FOR MISCHIEF. The twelve labours of Hercules were easier than the task of controlling the tongue at all seasons and under all circumstances. Curbed at one point—profanity, for instance—it will break out at another. Subdued to-day, it will break its fetters to-morrow. Docile under the influence of reason and reflection in the quiet of the chamber, it will suddenly become fierce under some unexpected provocation, at some undeserved slight or rebuke. Then, too, the tongue possesses peculiar powers for mischief. A hunter in the Adirondacks drops a spark from his pipe, and soon that little spark has kindled the whole mountains into flame, and for weeks the fire burns on, filling the land with smoke by day and lighting up all the heavens with its lurid glare by night, until at length it dies for want of fuel to feed on. And the tongue, says St. James (chap. iii. 5), little as it is, is likewise destructive. Often some spark from a hasty or an inconsiderate tongue has set a whole neighbourhood on fire, and the flame of hatred has smouldered on for a generation. Often some spark from an unruly tongue has kindled in a household a spirit of petulancy which has scorched all the sweet, tender grass and fragrant flowers of domestic love and fellowship. And then the tongue possesses this peculiarity, that it draws all the members and all the faculties after it in its transgression. He who bridleth not his tongue need not think to govern his temper or to restrain his hands from evil, or to walk in the paths of peace. As poison quickly permeates the blood, as the fire sweeps on the wings of the wind over the prairie, so the tongue inflames the whole man: "it setteth on fire the whole course of nature"—the whole compass of man's being, the circumference of his corporeal powers. Whence does it derive this fatal power? "It is set on fire of hell!" Oh, the pity! oh, the shame! that speech—that high prerogative of man, whereby he is in his bodily structure chiefly distinguished from the brutes—should be made the means of bestialising, yea, demonising, this heir of immortality! (*R. H. McKim, D.D.*) *The regulation of speech*:—This admonition teacheth that the law of God, being a lantern unto our feet and a light unto our paths, and a thing Divinely inspired from above to make a man perfect in righteousness, doth not only restrain the unbridled actions of man, but also the disordered speeches of their mouths, that both in action and communication they may be holy unto the Lord. The reasons hereof are two. 1. It causeth error in our lives and hurt unto ourselves when we are given to babbling and prating; thereby our hearts are deceived and ourselves endangered. Solomon setting down the inconvenience of not restraining the tongue, affirmeth that life and death are therein. He that keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from trouble. As a city lying open and uncompassed with walls, even so is a man that cannot restrain his tongue. 2. As not moderating our tongues we deceive our own hearts, so we corrupt and defile our religion and make it vain before God. (1) Vain talk, idle and frivolous, serving to no profit, prating where there is no need, we shall give account to God for. (2) Another evil of the tongue to be restrained in men is when we talk of God, of His Word, of His law and religion, not desirous to reform our lives according unto His commandments. This is a great evil and point of halting hypocrisy whereby our religion is vain. 3. As from these evils our tongues must be restrained, so from rash judgment. 4. Another evil is flattery. 5. Dissimulation—when we pretend one thing in our words and speeches and have another thing in our hearts, whether it be to God as hypocrites or to men as counterfeits—maketh also our religion vain. 6. The sixth evil from which we must refrain is lying, which is a false signification of speech or voice with intention to deceive. 7. The next evil which corrupteth our religion and maketh it vain before God is filthy speech, whereby not only our lives are descried to be evil, but our hearts to be wicked and our religion counterfeit. 8. Another is slander, whereof chap. iv. 11. 9. Another, cursing and execration (chap. iii. 9). 10. A tenth evil is blasphemy and swearing, spoken of chap. v. 12. Of all these may we worthily say with the apostle, "If any man among you seem religious, and restraineth not his tongue from these, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." (*R. Turnbull.*) *Government of the tongue*:—I. SOME GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS, TO DEMONSTRATE THE NECESSITY OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGUE. 1. Consider what amazing good or awful mischief your tongue may be the instrument of effecting. The tongue of the eloquent Demosthenes roused the Athenians against the boundless ambition of Philip; the bold tongue of the eloquent Cicero delivered his country from the deep-laid plots of the artful Catiline; the wild harangues of a solitary hermit filled all Europe with frenzy, and armed them for the romantic

exploits of the Crusade; and there have not been wanting in modern times instances of the power of words, when, at the name of Austerlitz or Marengo, thousands have rushed upon the bayonet's point and hurried to the arms of death. 2. Consider the intimate connection of your words with your thoughts and actions. 3. The laws which all civilised nations in every age have found it necessary to enact for the government of the tongue. In the laws of Menu, the great legislator of the Hindoos, the most tremendous judgments are threatened to the slanderer or the perjured witness. These are the remarkable words: "Whatever places of torture have been prepared for the slayer of a priest, for the murderer of a woman or a child, for the injurer of a friend, or for an ungrateful man, those places are ordained for a witness who gives false evidence"; and again: "The fruit of every virtuous action which thou hast done, O good man, since thy birth, shall depart from thee to dogs if thou deviate in speech from the truth." In China excessive talkativeness in a woman is by the law considered a sufficient ground for a divorce. Solon enacted wholesome laws against calumny and slander, and annexed heavy fines to the violation of them. Augustus Cæsar declared the authors of all libels, &c., attacking or blackening the reputation of any person whatsoever, guilty of high treason, and punishable with death. Amongst the Egyptians perjury was regarded as a capital crime, and the false accuser was doomed to undergo the punishment which, had the charge been substantiated, would have been inflicted on the accused. 4. Your tongues are the property of God. It should, then, be your constant care that it unite with its kindred organs to advance the Redeemer's praise. II. SOME OF THOSE VICES OF THE TONGUE WHICH THE SCRIPTURES HAVE PARTICULARLY CENSURED, AND THE PREVALENCE OF WHICH MORE ESPECIALLY DEMONSTRATES THE NECESSITY OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGUE. 1. The profane tongue. Under this head may be classed—(1) All kinds of blasphemy. (2) Perjury. (3) Common swearing. (4) All jesting with the Scriptures. (5) All sorts of incantations and enchantments. (6) All cursing or imprecating the Divine vengeance upon ourselves or others. (7) The performance of religious services in an irreverent and thoughtless manner. 2. The false tongue. (1) Lying in the common acceptation of the word. (2) There is a species of lying, however, for which some writers on moral philosophy have contended as not being injurious to society or unlawful in itself, but which, in my opinion, is highly prejudicial to the simplicity and confidence of social intercourse, and very far from the undisguised and open spirit inculcated by the gospel. I mean the habit of exaggeration and embellishment in narratives; the practice of denying one's self to those persons whom it does not suit either our convenience or our inclination to see; the compliments and declarations of friendship which come not from the heart; and the welcomes which are dictated by politeness to persons whom we secretly dislike: in all which cases truth and sincerity would dictate a very different style of address to that which is actually employed. (3) In addition to this it may be observed that there may be lying, and that of a most aggravated kind, without absolute untruth: as in the case of prevarication, or dissimulation, or when words are used in another sense by the speaker than that in which it was intended the hearer should understand them. 3. Idle tongue. (1) All vain, foolish, and frivolous conversation. (2) Hence follows tale-bearing in all its hateful and injurious varieties. 4. The malignant tongue. Under this head I might say much of—(1) Detraction, a species of calumny and a vice of the malignant tongue far too prevalent, and that where least of all it should be known; I mean among friends and brethren—the tongue which, under the colour of friendship, aims a deadlier blow and inflicts a deeper wound. III. SOME GENERAL RULES FOR THE PERFORMANCE OF THE DUTY. 1. Look well to the cultivation of the heart, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. 2. Look well to the furniture of the head. "Some people's heads," says an old divine, "are like a bell, in which there is nothing but tongue and emptiness." If you would have your tongue delivered from stupid silence on the one hand and vain and foolish talking on the other, take care to be well furnished with holy and useful matter for discourse; and that you may be so, accept the following advice:—Read much; think much, and upon the best of subjects; hear much, and for this purpose seek the best society; write much if you have leisure, for this will correct the flippancy of speech and habituate you to express your thoughts with sobriety and precision. 3. Learn the art of silence. I say the *art*, for there is as much wisdom required in knowing when to be silent as when to speak. 4. That your tongue may be well regulated in company, always furnish yourselves for the occasion, according to the nature of the society in which inclination or necessity

may place you—as the surgeon, who carries his instruments about him, and the traveller who is furnished for the necessities of his journey. Go with a chastened spirit into the presence of the haughty, with powerful arguments into the society of the sceptic, with useful information into the company of the ignorant; and thus supplied from those treasuries of wisdom which are "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," you will be thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work. 5. Watch against the influence of pride, vanity, and passion. The first will make your speech disgusting, the second contemptible, and the third dangerous. 6. Bear constantly in mind how great a conquest is the government of the tongue. This is more than repulsing armies and subduing kingdoms. It is related of one of the ancients that a man without learning came to him to be taught a psalm. He turned to the thirty-ninth. But when he had heard the first verse of it—"I said I would take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue"—the man would hear no more, saying this was enough if he could practise it; and when the instructor blamed him that he had not seen him for six months, he replied that he had not done the verse; and forty years after he confessed he had been all that time studying it, but had not learned to fulfil it yet. 7. Make the government of the tongue the subject of your daily prayer. 8. Every evening, ere you retire to rest, let the words you have uttered constitute an important part in the retrospect of the day. 9. Realise the presence of the Eternal God. (*T. Raffles, LL.D.*) *An unbridled tongue, a sign of a vain religion:*—I. Then it would seem that there is such a thing as not only being religious, BUT APPEARING TO BE; that rejoicing though we can in the sincerity of some, we are not to be blind to the pretence and hypocrisy of others. Now this sin is one which may consist with an assumed high standing in grace. It may be so managed as to conceal its deformity; it may assume even an air of religiousness. It may, and it does, abound within the most sacred enclosures; and it tells sadly for our fallen nature that in spots the most favoured there not unfrequently it most luxuriates: where the gospel is most faithfully preached there does it most prevail. Not that at the door of the gospel the evil lies, nor that its faithful ministrations have any natural tendency to beget or to strengthen it; but it springs altogether from the native vileness of the heart brought in contact with the gospel. Its own native tendency is to change and purify the heart, but when this its direct object is not attained, it serves but to call forth latent corruption; or, while it puts a check upon a sinful propensity in one direction, it is the innocent and accidental cause of its rushing more violently in another. And it is in this manner that we account for what, at first sight, might seem to cast dishonour on the gospel. II. Now HOW DOES HE PROCEED TO DETECT AND EXPOSE THIS SEEMING RELIGIOUSNESS? You remark that he makes no appeal to any open or gross violation of the moral law. It is the sin of the tongue, "the best member that we have," whose right use most dignifies and exalts, but by reason of our apostasy becomes the very worst. Now, it may seem strange that our apostle should have made this selection by which to test the conscience; but what better test could he apply? Take the connection which subsists between the tongue and the heart. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh"; and surely an evil tongue is undeniable demonstration of an evil heart. Besides which, what is religion but a link, a bond, a tie between God and the soul? What God is in His moral nature, that religion binds man to be; and so close is the union cemented that the soul of a truly religious man begins to love what God loves and hate what God hates. Impossible, therefore, whatever he may profess, that the man who "bridles not his tongue," but suffers it to sport itself in reviling, censuring, or detraction—impossible this man's religion can be other than "vain." Hath not He whose religion bids us love Him "with all our heart and soul and mind and strength" also commanded us to love our neighbour as ourselves? Can we obey the one command and disobey the other? We stop not to inquire into the thousand ways in which an unbridled tongue, with an open ear, evidences an unsanctified heart. The love of slander, whether it be to tell it or to hear it, argues a disposition as fallen as Satan's, and with sad but certain truth may it be said of all who love to indulge in it, "Ye are of your father the devil," for his works ye do, whose very name betrays his nature—"accuser," slanderer of "the brethren." There is one thing, however, we must not leave unnoticed; it is the effect of this sin upon the individual himself. "He deceiveth his own heart." The fabricator of lies, by repeating them, soon begins to believe them; and if at the onset there were some slight misgivings of conscience, they are soon silenced, and a hardened conscience and a deceived heart are the appalling reward

of a deceiving, slandering, unbridled tongue. III. And now we come TO THE JUDGMENT THE APOSTLE DELIVERS ON SUCH A RELIGION: "It is vain"—unprofitable, injurious, destructive. To the individual himself it is the pathway to endless ruin; to others it is frightfully mischievous; to God most dishonourable. (*J. Hazlegrave, M.A.*) *Tongue-sins*:—The text is not solitary in the importance it attaches to the power of controlling our speech. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue," says the wise man. "What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good," says the Psalmist: "keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile." "He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life, but he that openeth wide his lip shall have destruction." Nay, more, in that awful description of human depravity contained in the third chapter of Romans, it is observable how the chief instruments of human offending are made to consist in the organs of speech. "Their throat is an open sepulchre," it is said; "the poison of asps is under their lips; their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness": all tending to corroborate the position of the text, that the soul has no greater enemy than an unbridled tongue. 1. In proceeding to illustrate the mischiefs arising from this source, our first example may be taken from the use of unbridled speech when we are yielding to the passion of anger. Well, see we a man given to this fierce contention, it is the argument of the text that such a man's religion is vain. The root of the matter is not in him: his religion is a mere outside show, an empty vessel, a thing without life. He is ignorant of the first article of practical Christianity, he has no rule over his own spirit. Solomon thus describes the course of one of these—"The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness, and the end of his talk is mischievous madness." "For the lips of a fool will swallow up himself." Bold image this of a man swallowing up himself, and what does the wise man mean? Why, that an open mouth on earth may open the mouth of that pit which shall swallow up all who are cast into it. "I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." Vain then is the religion of a man who against the course of anger bridleth not his tongue, for Satan, knowing his tendencies, will always find some occasions for fanning this flame. Through pride and wounded self-love, that most sensitive of all sensitive plants, the man is in a constant broil; his irritability breaks up all the tranquillities of his religious nature. It wounds his peace, frets his spirit, sours his charity, mars his prayers. He gives place to the devil, says the apostle; that is, invites him into his heart, and at the same time he drives out another guest, the blessed Spirit of God. This Divine Being dwells not in the convulsed region of human strife. 2. But another form of tongue sin comprehended in the sentence of the text, is that of detracting, uncharitableness, and malicious gossiping. Thus whosoever makes not conscience of what he repeats to the prejudice of another, who is not slow to speak out against him, and then only with deep and not affected sorrow—that man's religion is vain. He is wanting in that charity which "rejoiceth not in iniquity," even when the report is true, but which "hopeth all things, believeth all things"—covereth all things, as the original has it—in the possibility that the allegation may be after all false. And the lack of this personal grace of our Christianity stamps his whole religion as hollow and unreal. 3. I pass to a third form of the sins of the tongue, which, though we may hope but of rare occurrence, must not be passed over: I mean that which another apostle censures in the words—"Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient." The tongue-sins hitherto commented upon are acknowledged sins; where these are, we shall all admit such a man's religion is vain. But do we judge thus of some other sins to which the tongue chiefly ministers? For instance, the sin of ostentation, and boasting, and vanity, and self-display. Can a man be Diotrephes and Christian? Can the humility, and gentleness, and self-hiding of one who feels that he owes all to free grace consist with the practice of an unbridled tongue? "No," says the apostle, "such a man's religion is vain; and vain," he adds, "for this reason, because he deceiveth his own heart." He has looked so long on the waters that reflect his image, that at length his heart knows not its own bitterness, and is an utter stranger to its own plague. Put the bridle on your tongue, then, whenever you feel it is about to say something which is to attract attention to yourself. It is an offence before God; He will have no flesh glory in His presence. I will touch upon one other form of unguarded speech, very different indeed from any we have yet considered, yet I nothing doubt, designedly comprehended within the range of the apostle's censures. I allude to the sin of rash and violent complainings when we are under the chastening hand of God. In

all times of tribulation learn the wisdom of keeping a tight reign upon the tongue. There is only one ear into which you can pour your lamentations with safety. Grief delights in the exhibition of its own passion; it is maddened into frenzy by the extravagance of its own recitals. The truth of this is seen in the case of the patriarch Job. We do not find a single word of impatience from him until he has begun to pour out his sorrows into the ear of human listeners. (*D. Moore, M.A.*) *A sign of a seeming religion:*—I. A MAN MAY "SEEM TO BE RELIGIOUS" WHILE "THE ROOT OF THE MATTER" IS A-WANTING. 1. An unconverted man may do many decent and honourable things. In domestic life, he can, indeed, discharge his duty faithfully. In the transaction of mercantile business, too, a man who has never appropriated Christ by faith, may scorn to utter a falsehood or to do a dishonest deed. 2. Much, in a man's character and conduct is concealed from the eye of others. Besides the insidious efforts of the hypocrite to conceal his vices the true character of man is withdrawn from the public eye. Vice, too, when practised by a man who seeks to preserve a decent reputation, naturally courts the shade. 3. The world does not prescribe any very lofty standard of religion. II. WITH RESPECT TO HIS CHARACTER AND CONDITION A MAN MAY "DECEIVE HIS OWN HEART." Neglecting self-examination altogether, some men give themselves up to the direct influence of the pride and self-conceit which are so natural to the human mind. Others, in examining themselves, resort to false and unscriptural tests—such as, Am I not as good as my neighbours? Am I not better than I once was? And some who employ good tests. Do I love the Lord? Have I been born again?—apply them in so unintelligent, so cursory, or so dishonest a way, that they come to a false conclusion respecting their own character and case. III. IT IS A DARK SIGN OF A MAN WHEN HE "BRIDLETH NOT HIS TONGUE." (*A. S. Patterson, D.D.*) **This man's religion is vain.**—*A mistake as to religion:*—We must not be deceived by our own profession. If any member of our body be an instrument of sin, it shows that our hearts are still unconquered by the grace of God. And no member more quickly shows this than the tongue. And few things are more injurious than an unbridled tongue. A fool's tongue wanders everywhere, into fields lawful and unlawful. Men have no right to talk heedlessly. It is no excuse that a speaker did not mean to do wrong, or that he "meant nothing by it." We are bound to mean something every time we speak, and we are bound to mean something good; the tongue must have on the bridle of thought, and that must be held by the reason, which is the right hand of religion. It is of those words which were not intended by the speaker to be profitable, words uttered when he "meant nothing," that Jesus said (Matt. xii. 36). It may be a question which does most harm, a false tongue, or an unbridled tongue. In the case of the former, it may so soon be discovered that it is the instrument of a liar that all men can guard themselves against it; but the unbridled tongue may belong to a man who has some pleasing qualities, or to a woman who but for her wild tongue would be a charming person, and so people are thrown off their guard, and the secret poison of the bitter and bad word may work disastrously. The man who professes to be a believer, and possesses an unbridled tongue, is utterly useless to the cause of all true religion. He may be very punctual in attendance on all forms of public worship; he may even take part in them, exhibiting great gifts in prayer, and great zeal for religion; he may be a very genial and companionable person, witty and bright; he may seem to take great interest in others, and give of his own income or substance to promote what are considered the interests of religion; all that and much more may he do; with the industry of a gambler striving to cheat from himself the verdict that he is a truly religious man; and yet all the while that man's religion may be as empty as a bubble, vain and unprofitable to others and unhelpful to himself; idle, foolish, useless, trifling, thoughtless, wanton, irreverent, profane, for the word translated "idle" means all these things. (*C. F. Deems, D.D.*) *Religion a life:*—Men will write for religion, fight for it, die for it; anything but live for it. (*W. Cotton.*) *Christianity a life:*—A man has no business to call himself a Christian unless the virtues of Christianity are in his life. I do not ask for degree, but I ask that they shall be there. If you have got a plant in a pot that for ten years, through summer and winter, sunshine and cloud, rain and dry, has never put out a leaf, nor shown the least symptom of life, what reason have you to believe that it is alive at all? It looks uncommonly like a bit of dead stick. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *True religion:*—It were a great mistake to consider this an authoritative, scientific definition of religion. The writer has been pointing out the marks of a useless religion. He now indicates the characteristics of any religion which is pure and spotless. Indeed,

it might be written "*any* religion," which God sees to be pure and spotless, will have the characteristics of outward beneficence and inward purity. By a beautiful figure, he likens religion to a gem, a precious stone, the value of which depends upon the two qualities of—1. Being clear through and through, without any inner malformation, and—2. Being free from all stain or flaw on the outside. Positively, and as to its interior, it is clear and unclouded; negatively, and as to its exterior, it is spotless and flawless. Any religion which has these qualities is a true religion, and will produce purity and usefulness; and, whatever its pretensions, a religion destitute of these is worthless. (*C. F. Deems, D.D.*)

Ver. 27. **Pure religion and undefiled before God.**—*The true ideal of religion:*—In our day, perhaps more than at any previous time, attempts have been made to define religion, to give us some description of what religion is, of what is that mysterious element that mingles so largely with, and colours so largely, human life. Religion, says one, is the sense of the infinite overshadowing and influencing life. Religion, says another, is the determination of human life by the feeling of a bond uniting the human spirit to the mysterious spirit, whose domination over the world and himself he recognises, and to which he likes to feel himself united. Religion, says another, is the feeling of man, together with the activities, customs, and institutions springing out of that feeling concerning the relation in which he supposes himself to stand to the universe. These are some definitions of religion, culled almost at random, from modern speculative literature; and when we come from the sphere of philosophy to that of theology, and still more to that of Churchism, the definitions become almost countless. Religion in some quarters is retirement from the world to a monastery or a nunnery, and a monk or a nun is called by the distinctive name religious. The more ritual sects or Churches have called it religion, to observe devoutly and strictly certain prescribed rights and forms; and mere doctrinal sects have made religion consist in modes of belief, in holding certain opinions, in interpreting difficult passages of Scripture in a certain way. Now it is with something like a feeling of relief that one turns from all the carefully put together and logically constructed, and wonderfully polished definitions—philosophical, ecclesiastical, and theological, to one like that in the text. It tells us that religion in its essence is twofold—it is charity and it is purity. On the one hand it is mercifulness, kindness, generosity in our dealings with others, as exemplified in the case of the widow and the afflicted; and on the other hand, as regards ourselves, it is purity of life in all its aspects. What has been called a "white soul"—a life without a stain, a life on which no shadow of dishonour rests, a life which, though led in the world, and perhaps in the busiest scenes of the world, is unspotted by the meanness and falsity and impurity found in the world. That, according to the text, is "pure religion and undefiled." Now, when we take that as a definition of what religion is, and when we hold it up before us, and look steadily at it, how do we feel regarding it? 1. Well, first, does not there come to us a sense of its supreme beauty? It is told of one of the best men of our time—a man who specially exemplified the ideal of the text on both its sides—how, travelling with a party up the Nile, his character produced a profound impression on the Arab attendants, and when one said of him to the Sheik or leader of the party that in his own country he was regarded somewhat as a heretic, his reply was, "He may be called what you like, he may not be a good Christian; I know not; but this I know, he is a good man." Such was the impression a character like this produced upon a Mahomedan of the desert, and such is the impression of beauty and reverence which a religious life of the kind indicated in the text is calculated to produce in time upon any mind in which a trace of goodness still lingers. 2. And close upon this thought of the beauty of religion there comes to one, in looking at the text, another and a second thought—namely, the permanence and durability of religion. We cannot conceive of a time, except, perhaps, in the final break up of society, when goodness shall not be esteemed as the highest form of human life, when charity and stainlessness of character shall not be reverenced as the noblest expression which life can take, and the highest level to which human perfection can rise. Men may fall away from that ideal, they may run amuck in selfishness and sensuality, but they will never cease in their hearts to reverence it, and after their madness is past to come back to it again. 3. Take a third thought that the text suggests. If this be religion, how very wrong we all are in the standard and criterion we often apply in our judgment of others. We laugh when we read of the child asking her parent whether such a person is an irreligious

man, a bad man, because he does not hide his face in his hat at the beginning of divine service. But are we much better ourselves? Is not our test often equally false, if not equally silly? We ask whether a man can be religious who does not hold this belief, who does not belong to this or that church? I believe it is far better not to judge our neighbours in this matter at all, for we will likely be wrong; but if we are impelled to form an opinion, let us take the measuring standard of the text and apply it. There is religion. How do they stand in this matter? I fear if you were to go through our professed religious people with a measuring rod of this kind, many of them would fall very far short, and many of them would be out of the reckoning altogether. If any of you are to judge of a fruit-tree growing in your garden, what method will you take to do so? Will you bore holes into it, and see whether the sap is running, and whether the inner bark is green, or will you uncover the roots and see whether they have a firm hold, and whether they are rightly spread where the moisture lies; or will you take note of the fruit that it produces in autumn? The last way is the better way, whatever may be said in favour of the former methods; but that is not the way most men take in pronouncing an opinion as to whether a man is religious or not, and there are very few who do not think themselves perfectly qualified to sit in judgment. 4. Once more, does not the text give us an idea of a comprehensive, wide-spread Catholic Church? It was said of a distinguished ecclesiastic—the remembrance of whom still lingers in the hearts of those who knew him, like a strain of sweet music—it was said of him that he was a clergyman of the Church of England and an honorary member of all other Churches. The words were uttered in contempt, and were thought by some to be a piece of irony, and of refined and scornful wit; but, to my mind, no higher tribute could be paid, for they tell how he based his idea of religion, essentially not upon dogma or rite, but upon goodness, and drew to all in whom goodness could be found as spirits, kindred with himself. I do not know myself anything that brings one more truly to the gospel than this definition of religion. Take the first half of it—charity, or, as it is put here in a strong form, "visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction." Can such a life as that be carried out—except in a very spasmodic way—without a strong internal spiritual impulse, like that which comes from Christ. It is hard to raise charity from men who do not feel such an impulse. You might as well raise water from a pump without a valve. You work the piston of persuasion and push the water up, but there is no valve, and it straightway flows down again. I do not think anything can produce a life dedicated to humanity, but a self-dedication to that Christ who identified Himself with it, the strong impulse that comes from personal self-consecration to Him who "bore our sins and carried our sorrows." Or take the other half of this text—Keeping one's self unspotted from the world. How hard it is for any one to do that. How hopeless the work seems to any one who tries steadily to do that. To conquer old habits, and to put down passions by philosophy, is like trying to put out a fire with a scanty supply of water or a small hose. I believe if we would "walk in white," we must find our hidden life in Christ, through whom we can find a sense of forgiveness for the past, and strength for the time to come. Now, I may speak to some one here who has drifted, or who thinks he has drifted, away from Christianity. I hold up to him this idea of religion, "pure and undefiled." Unless he has fallen away from goodness, as well as from Christ, he must acknowledge its perfection and its beauty. (*J. C. Lees, D.D.*) *Pure and undefiled religion*:—I. The virtue of BENEVOLENCE is here described by one of its most interesting and incumbent exercises. There is no description of persons who have a stronger claim on the tender compassions of our nature than those here specified—the widow and the orphan. It is deserving of special remark how frequently and how strongly God represents them as engaging His sympathies—how explicit and peremptory His charges are in their behalf, and how full of pointed force and heavy severity His denunciations against their oppressors (Psa. lxviii. 5; Deut. x. 18; Prov. xxiii. 10, 11; Exod. xxii. 22-24). If we fancy ourselves, or any dear to us, placed by Divine providence in the conditions referred to, we are powerfully sensible how much we should value the soothing sympathy and the kind attentions of friends and fellow Christians, and how deeply we should be wounded were these to be withheld. The more strongly we are sensible of this, the more imperative does the obligation that rests upon us become in behalf of those whom the Lord has afflicted. That He afflicted them is no reason why we should. Instead of its being a time when we are to keep aloof, and to add affliction to the afflicted, it is a time when we are to hear the voice of Him whose very nature

is love, enjoining by His providence and by His word the exercise of sympathy and kindness. The terms of the text suggest the lesson that our benevolence must not be mere emotion—no, nor mere words, or mere regrets, and sighs, and tears. Benevolence must be evinced by beneficence. Well-wishing must manifest its sincerity by well-doing. It is not in word only, but in deed. "It visits the fatherless and widows in their affliction." I need not say that to "visit" is to visit for the purpose of consolation and relief. It is quite obvious that under the term "visiting" there ought to be included all that we have it in our power to do for them: all for which visiting is of any real service. And surely there is no visitation of the fatherless and the widow more truly benevolent than that of which the object is to impart to them the consolations, the joys, the hopes of the very religion itself, by whose principles we are ourselves actuated in paying the visits. II. The second part of practical religion, "pure and undefiled," contained in the text, is "to keep himself unspotted from the world." To this we give the general designation of SELF-GOVERNMENT. The style in which it is expressed is quite peculiar to the Scriptures. In this sacred book God and the world are invariably set in opposition to each other; as masters of opposite characters and opposite requirements, whose services can never be reconciled. The expression may be interpreted as including the whole of Christian purity of character. God is holy. All the precepts of God are holy; and all His truths, containing the manifestations of Himself and the motives to this purity, are holy. Purity is the first and most essential attribute of whatever comes from Him who "is Light, and in whom there is no darkness at all." But the world—the fallen, apostate, alien world—is in its maxims, and principles, and ways, opposed to the purity of God. It is polluting; it is infectious. It is hard to keep white robes clean in passing through the midst of all that is defiling. It is hard to shun contagion amidst crowds infected with the plague. Such, however, in a moral and spiritual sense, must be the Christian's daily and hourly endeavour. With such circumspection, jealous and incessant, is he called to walk. He must "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." He must "cleanse himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." He must, in every department of his walk and conversation, seek to make it to all apparent that, although in the world, he is not of the world. III. Let me now guard against prevailing and injurious MISCONCEPTIONS by one or two general observations. 1. Let not the two parts of pure and undefiled religion be separated. They too often are. There are men many a time to be found who are very humane, but who are by no means patterns of personal purity or separation from the world. They found their confidence before God on their charity as the means of pacifying His anger and conciliating His good-will, and rendering Him, if not blind altogether to their vices and their self-indulgent worldliness, at least very indulgent to them, and very gentle in His verdict against them. Men of humanity, without religion, may, no doubt, do good by the direct influence of their liberality on the temporal comfort and well-being of others. But they contribute as directly to an opposite result, in regard to interests of a higher order—the spiritual and eternal interests of men. And what is the body to the soul?—what is time to eternity?—"what is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord." And even where there is not open licentiousness, where there is only a mind that seeks its happiness in the world, the character is, in one view, the more dangerous from there being the less in it that does violence to the moral principles, whilst yet there is in all so lamentable a deficiency, the destitution of the hallowing and consecrating influence of piety. The mind is almost unconsciously deceived into the impression that religion is not essential to a good character. Everything appears to go on so amiably and usefully, and, on the whole, well and happily, without it. Oh that I could impress you all, deeply, permanently, influentially, with the conviction of the radical defectiveness of all principles that do not begin with God. 2. That neither the benevolence nor the purity enjoined by the text should be separated from those Christian principles of faith by which they are produced and maintained. Scriptural faith is faith that produces practice; scriptural practice is practice that springs from faith. It is with the extreme that talks of faith, to the overlooking of practice, that James has here to do. This is clear from vers. 21–26. It will not do to divorce morality from religion. The principles of religion are the only principles of true morality. They form, indeed, themselves the first and highest branch of morals; the obligation that arises from our relation to God Himself being, in the strictest sense and strongest degree, of a moral character. And as all Bible morality is founded in

religion, let it not be forgotten that the Bible is a revelation of God to sinners; and that the religion of a sinner must necessarily regard God as so revealed. And this is the same thing with saying that the religion of a sinner must begin with the humble acceptance of mercy, as it is made known and offered by the gospel. (*R. Wardlaw, D.D.*) *Benevolence and self-government enforced:*—The Christian religion is eminently "good-will towards men"; for, like its Divine Author, it breathes a spirit of universal benevolence. The benefits which it proclaims are for the whole human race—benefits which respect as well the present as the future world. We are not to understand the apostle as proposing morality to us in the abstract, but as enforcing upon our attention the necessity of personal purity and practical piety, from the acknowledged principles of our profession. Consequently it will not be either improper or unprofitable to offer in the first instance—1. Some observations connected with THE MOTIVES AND OBLIGATIONS OF CHRISTIAN DUTY, with especial reference to the two comprehensive duties of benevolence and self-government, described in the text. God is love. His tender mercies are over all His works. Whether we trace the character of the high and lofty One in the works of nature or in the dispensation of grace, the same benevolent trait of the Deity everywhere meets our view. "What return shall we make unto the Lord for all His benefits?" To present themselves "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God," they acknowledge to be "a reasonable service." Hence their most earnest desires are that they may be holy, even as God is holy; that they may be preserved "blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a perverse and crooked generation." And hope supports them in their conflict with every enemy of their peace, and, in faith of the promises, they anticipate the glory that shall be revealed. But, besides motives of personal holiness, there are others also which influence our conduct as respects the world at large. Thus, both individually and collectively, the benign power of the gospel is exerted. The Christian reasons, "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." This life we know is only a preparation for a better, and accordingly as we shall have performed our parts well or ill here to our brethren that are in the world, so will our reward be hereafter. Thus we see that our own best, our immortal interests, are inseparably connected with those duties of sympathy and charity which we owe to our less fortunate brethren. Not, indeed, that our benevolent actions, or works of any other description, possess any innate value to recommend us to the favour of God, much less to merit a reward from Him: yet a reward of grace shall be given to them who, actuated by the principles of their Divine Master, have in their generation, after His example, gone about doing good. The foregoing remarks naturally lead to a further consideration, viz., that of—II. PRACTICE THE TEST OF RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLE. Motives of duty implies duties to be performed. It sufficiently appears that the whole of Christian duty is not comprised in a system of opinions, nor in the mere observance of external ceremonies. Our Saviour hath Himself laid down a distinguishing mark, equally applicable to both true and false disciples (Matt. vii. 20, 21). Now, one essential requisite of pure and undefiled religion the text informs us is—1. "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction." A mind truly touched with heavenly influence will lead us to view with eyes of pity and compassion all the sons and daughters of affliction, to enter into their sorrows, and to pour into their wounds the balm of consolation. And sure I am that the humblest Christian will rejoice to have it in his power to contribute to the alleviation of the common misery. 2. "To keep himself unspotted from the world." My brethren, the whole world lieth in wickedness. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. viii. 7); "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Gen. viii. 21); "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John iii. 6). Now examine yourselves by the test here proposed. Inquire what are your real characters in the sight of the holy, heart-searching God. Does your sympathy for the distressed spring only from natural feeling? or are you also actuated by Christian principles and motives in visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction? (*T. Sharples, B.A.*) *Benevolence and purity essential to true religion:*—I. It is here asserted that religion, in order to be pleasing and acceptable unto God, must exhibit itself in acts of SYMPATHISING KINDNESS AND COMPASSION towards those who are placed in circumstances of helplessness, difficulty, and distress. As all these manifestations of benevolence could not be enumerated, they are represented by the apostle under one prominent form—that of visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction, thus presenting a case of affliction, and an occasion for

kindness, from which no age of the world and no condition of society can be altogether exempt. He knew that other losses might be more easily compensated; that other sorrows might with less difficulty be soothed; that other bereavements would leave less of helplessness and loneliness behind them. He knew that the loss of property might be repaired by liberality, industry, and perseverance; that the loss of health was not invariably without its remedy; but that the loss of the fatherless and the widow would necessarily leave a vacuum which nothing could adequately supply. It is to the alleviation of this peculiar form of affliction, therefore, that the energies and the sympathies of the pure and undefiled religion of Him who cherished every form of social and domestic tenderness, who made little children the objects of His most gracious regard, and manifested towards His mother a most filial and watchful attention, are to be specially directed. In this amiable feature of its character, indeed, Christianity stands honourably distinguished from all the other forms and theories of religion which have ever prevailed in the world. It is the pure and undefiled, the compassionate and god-like religion of Jesus Christ alone, which has taught men their duty in this respect, as well as supplied them with adequate motives to the practice of it. It is this alone which has taught its professors to regard the whole human species, amidst all the diversity of its ranks, and pursuits, and conditions, as one great family. It has thus unsealed the great fountains of human sympathy and tenderness, which had hitherto been in a great degree locked up in the unconscious ignorance of our obligations, or concealed beneath the frost of selfishness. II. But, in connection with the exercise of sympathetic kindness and practical benevolence, the apostle subjoins another essential constituent of pure and undefiled religion—that it maintains A CHARACTER UNSTAINED BY THOSE VARIOUS FORMS OF MORAL AND SPIRITUAL POLLUTION, with which the atmosphere of the present world is so deeply impregnated. Christian charity must not be less pure than generous; though she is in the world, she must not be of the world; though she blesses the earth with her presence, her origin is from heaven, and she must never forget the high and holy motives by which she is to be actuated. Like the sunbeam, she must illumine the darkest recesses of ignorance and vice without being contaminated by the contact; she must warm the desolate abodes of poverty without kindling into pride and self-righteousness; she must dispense her blessings with an open hand, and yet ascribe all the glory to that Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift; she must be willing, as occasion requires and her strength allows, to mingle in scenes from which the eye of taste and the sensibilities of worldly refinement, which have not been trained in the discipline of Christian humility and self-denial, would recoil; and yet she must be "as the wings of a dove, which are covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." But this exemption from the predominent sway and the polluting influence of the world, as contradistinguished from true and scriptural piety, is not only necessary as the concomitant of pure religion in general, but it is also indispensable to the due exercise of the duty previously inculcated. The spirit of Christian benevolence and the spirit of the world are diametrically opposed to each other. Where every effort of labour and science and art is directed with such intense energy to the main end of multiplying and accumulating wealth, it requires a more than ordinary measure of watchfulness and prayer—of the generous, and effusive, and constraining influence of the love of Christ shed abroad in the heart, to keep it untainted by the contracting and indurating spirit of covetousness and grasping selfishness. Whatever has a tendency to concentrate the thoughts and feelings upon self, and to make the enjoyment of personal gratification the great business of life, must inevitably impede the free and spontaneous development of that great and diffusive principle of Christian love. Amidst the various trials and sufferings which are more or less inseparable from the present state of existence, she unfolds to their view a world where sin and sorrow are unknown; a world whose atmosphere is health, whose resources are exhaustless, whose pleasures are untainted, and whose honours are unfading; a world in which there are neither fatherless nor widows, because all earthly unions and relations have been lost and absorbed in the delightful fellowship of one great family, of which God Himself is the Father, Jesus Christ the Elder Brother, and the eternal Spirit the all-pervading bond of holy and affectionate communion. (*J. Davies, B.D.*) *The evidences of true religion:* — The name of religion has perhaps been as much misapplied as the thing itself has been neglected. Creeds and systems of doctrine, outward observances and forms of service, conventionalisms in the use of meats

and drinks, apparel, and modes of speech, have all among different parties been dignified by the name of religion. The primary cause of the mistake is to be found in the sensuous tendencies of the sinful heart; but a secondary cause, worthy of attention, consists in not keeping distinctly in view the character and gracious relations of that glorious Being with whom religion is immediately concerned. The religion described in the text is, as it were, a continuous spiritual worship, presented, in the harmonious working of renewed emotions and their consequent actions, to our God and Father in Christ. I. THE FIRST OUTWARD MARK OF RELIGION MENTIONED BY THE APOSTLE IS BENEFICENCE. We use this word to denote the sincere and active exercise of love toward our fellow men. The connection of such love with those emotions towards God in which religion more immediately consists is best expounded in 1 John iv. 16, 20. But such beneficence admits of degrees, from the easy donation of sixpence out of the accumulations of prosperous trade up to the willingly laying "down our lives for the brethren." It may be doubted, therefore, what kind and what particular motive even of beneficence is enough to satisfy the question before us. To anticipate this difficulty, the apostle lays hold of one of its most real and impressive practical displays. "To visit," says he, "the fatherless and the widow in their affliction." 1. Religious beneficence addresses itself to the most necessitous objects. While impure beneficence, adulterated with an admixture of selfish policy, prefers a case of smaller to one of greater affliction, that which is sound at the core, and really springs from the presence of Divine love, contemplates affliction as such, and is impelled by the greatest force of desire to that wherein it finds the extremest need. Claims arising from duty to God may sometimes modify this feeling, but regard to worldly interest or convenience, never. 2. Religious beneficence especially singles out those objects which the worldly mind is disposed to despise. A poor widow is not unfrequently like a queen dowager forsaken by the sycophant courtiers that formerly sunned themselves in the beams of her glory. The names of charity schools and charity children have passed into terms of reproach. Among all the evidences of human degeneracy this is perhaps the most widespread and manifest, that power is adored and goodness is despised. There is, therefore, a striking singularity in the conduct of the man who seeks out the fatherless and widows in their affliction. Our natural impression at once is that a Divine flame of love has been kindled in his heart, and that he is made a partaker of the nature of Him who, in the immensity of His glorious works, has distinguished Himself by the unveiling of His goodness and the hiding of His power. 3. Religious beneficence expresses itself in personal effort and sacrifice. It is only an easy kind of beneficence when the rich give of their abundance to the relief of the poor, or where the eloquent on stated public occasions before listening thousands raise their voices on behalf of the fatherless. A feeble pulsation of love is all that is required for such benefactions. A better proof of its power is to be found in personal effort and sacrifice, or in the doing of that which is felt to be irksome in itself. Howard, descending into the depths of dungeons, placing himself in contact with the abandoned and the outcast, breathing the tainted air, of which he at length died, was an illustrious living embodiment of what the apostle has in view. Those who in such loving sympathies are seen bending over the beds of sickness and cheering with their presence the home of sorrow and want are truly ministering angels, and present the nearest approach to that Divine love which, as a pure and glorious atmosphere, invests the regions of the heavenly paradise. II. THE SECOND GREAT SIGN OF TRUE RELIGION MENTIONED BY THE APOSTLE IS PERSONAL PURITY OR HOLINESS, EXPRESSED IN THE WORDS, "TO KEEP HIMSELF UNSPOTTED FROM THE WORLD." This may be regarded as the natural outworking of love to God, just as beneficence is more directly that of love to mankind. "If ye love Me," says the Saviour, "keep My commandments." "Whoso," says John, "keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected." On the one side is God, the sovereign Creator and Ruler of all things, holy in all His works and righteous in all His ways, most justly demanding the worship and service of men formed originally in His own image and sustained continually by His bounteous care. On the other side is the rebellious human race, sunk in sin, estranged from its Creator, conspiring with Satan, its actual god, against His law and government, and forming in its godless spirit, its selfish maxims, and its bondage to flesh and sense, the world, which bids Him defiance. "To be kept," therefore, "from the world," and "not to be of the world," are expressions which denote an entire renunciation of all that belongs to its spirit and its relation to God—purity, that is, from its sins. The term "unspotted" seems to imply a notion of the world as

something not only evil in itself, but also as being apt to contaminate those who are merely passing through it. As if the society of ungodly men were like a murky, polluting atmosphere, such as often envelopes our great cities, from which small particles of defilement are continually falling in silence on the objects below, and insensibly changing the brightest colours into those most nearly allied to blackness. Obviously in such circumstances the greatest care is necessary in order to keep one's self unspotted, not only by using means of protection, but also by observing regular seasons of cleansing. The world most fully presents this danger to the followers of Christ. The spirit which breathes in their necessary intercourse with society, the occasional excitement of sinful feelings by the provocations to which they are subject, the impressions continually made on their senses, and the secularising tendency even of their own lawful business, all conspire to damp the ardour of their spiritual life and to tarnish the lustre of their graces. Few Christians are absolutely without spots. But to be able in any fair measure, by the blessing of God or the use of means, to keep one's self unspotted from the contaminations of our age, is identical with a consistent and blameless Christian life. (*J. M. Charlton, M.A.*) *Pure religion*:—At first sight this text looks bad. It seems subversive of all our theologies, and ethics also. The fact is, this text of ours is in no respect the simple formula of definition it looks like. It has a profound start, and takes a prodigious reach. I. "Pure religion and undefiled." Stop, now, just there. The first proposition found in the verses is this: THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE TRUE PERSONAL RELIGION FOR THE HUMAN SOUL. 1. Some argue for a mere intellectual scheme of belief. They would rest everything upon a certain fixed group of articles of faith and practice. The Christian religion has a creed of doctrines, and has a code of morals; but it is a life. 2. Some persistently press a mere poetic scheme of humane sympathy. It begins with a sigh, "Oh, I wish I could be good!" It continues with a song, "Nearer, my God, to Thee!" But it feels no sense of sin, and confesses none; so it generally rejects need of an atonement. 3. Some would urge upon us a mere routine scheme of ritual. This is little more than sentiment become artistic, devotion transmuted into devoteeism. 4. Some seek to present us with an ascetic scheme of moral observance. Of course, at its highest development, this ends in the cell of a hermit, and the white veil of a nun. But as we meet it in ordinary life, it goes not much farther than an iron rule of obedience to precept, and a strict treasuring of tradition. 5. Some insist on a scheme of mere philanthropy and benevolence. If such people knew there was a verse like ours in the Bible, they would flaunt it as the very motto on their banner—till they learned what it meant. II. How is a man to choose? Who shall decide when all differ so? "Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this." The next proposition may be stated thus: THE STANDARD OF REFERENCE, UP TO WHICH ALL RELIGION MUST BE BROUGHT, IS DIVINE. 1. It will not do to settle it by the opinion of others. 2. Nor will it do that one's religion be settled by himself. Any one can easily make a foolish mistake, just by thinking more highly of himself than he ought to think, and so be lost. 3. All this matter must be, and certainly will be, settled by God's opinion, and none other whatsoever. III. We are ready to read on now somewhat further in the text. "Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction." That is enough, and the new thought runs thus: THE TEST OF ALL TRUE PERSONAL RELIGION MAY BE FOUND IN CARE FOR THE WEAK AND LONELY. 1. The subjects of Christian charity mentioned here are typal as well as specific. Out of all classes of feeble people, the unprotected, and the helpless, God has chosen for our notice widows and orphans. The most trying condition in this world is brought to mind. A lonely mother, with fatherless children, is not only a living appeal for assistance and succour, but a thorough and exhaustive type, by which to teach the lesson that a true man's piety must be tested by the care he accepts for others. 2. But when is this duty binding? That brings out the occasion. The text says, "In their affliction," that is, in the time of it and in the place of it. Our help must be given when our help is needed. Consider times of narrowness, of panic, of business depression, as offering special occasion. 3. The method of bestowing help is all found in one word of the text, "visit." That cannot mean mere contribution of money; it means personal contact with those we hope to benefit. The one grand obstacle to all proper endeavour is found at the present day in the actual withdrawal of living heart from living heart in mutual acquaintance and interest. 4. But how far in such matters is one expected really to go? That inquiry is

answered in our text also; the measure of obligation is quite clear. The significant lesson is taught us that religion is to be tested by feeling for the fatherless, and the feeling is to be measured by the fatherhood of God! IV. Only on one condition can this ever be done; this is found in the final clause of the text. PERSONAL RELIGION DEMANDS THE ENTIRE SURRENDER AND SEPARATION OF THE SOUL TO CHRIST. "Unspotted from the world." Oh, how much that means! No self; no waiting for applause; no expectation of return; all this is of the world, worldly, and the true religion will have none of it. Of course, then, we all see this entire verse is addressed to Christians. Only thus can it be counted a definition. The text says that religion, "pure and undefiled," is for a converted man; for an unconverted man it says nothing. Humanitarianism has nothing it does not borrow from religion. Success in all its enterprises would be secured better the moment the soul of the worker puts on Christ as a penitent believer. And he who puts on Christ, puts on also the burden of Christ. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The true tests of faith*:—It is a paradox, and yet it is perfectly true, that man is not justified by works, and yet that man is not justified without works. I. BETWEEN OBEDIENCE AND FAITH THERE SUBSISTS AN INSEPARABLE CONNECTION. II. OBEDIENCE IS THE REQUISITE EVIDENCE OF FAITH. It is the one evidence. And, moreover, this is the evidence by which the world will judge. We sometimes hear the ungodly babbling they know not what about Christian doctrine, and affirming that there is so much obscure, and so much mysterious, that they cannot separate that which is practical and intelligible. But we very seldom indeed find that they bring any accusation at all against a benevolent, painstaking, self-denying, active life. (*S. Robins, M.A.*) *The wisdom of religion*:—I. TRUE RELIGION IS THE DIVINE SPRING OF PURE THOUGHT AND ACTION. As a watch is moved by its spring, so our actions are moved by the force of our inward belief. It is, therefore, of the highest importance to have true and inspiring faith, like that of a minister of the seventeenth century, when he said that "the first act of religion is to know what is true of God, the second act is to express it in our lives." II. TRUE RELIGION IS AN INWARD FORCE OR YEARNING FOR PERSONAL PURITY. It is the birth and existence of a cleansing spirit within us. III. TRUE RELIGION IS THE FLOWING OF GOD'S LOVE THROUGH US TO ALL MEN WITH WHOM WE HAVE TO DO. (*W. Birch.*) *Pure and undefiled religion*:—I. "TO VISIT THE FATHERLESS AND WIDOWS," THAT IS, TO BE PLENTEOUS IN GOOD WORKS; "THESE ARE THE VERY BEGINNINGS AND NURSERY OF THE LOVE OF GOD." 1. There is no surer and readier step to the love of God, "whom we have not seen," than by the love of our brethren, "whom we see" (1 John iv. 20). 2. As compassion to our brethren is a fair preparation to purity of life, so doth purity of conversation commend our liberality, and make it to be had in remembrance in the sight of the Lord. It may be bread, it is not an alms, that is brought by the hand of an oppressor or a Pharisee. 3. Therefore, in the next place, as they bear this fair correspondence, and mutually uphold each other, so we must not think it possible to separate them. Both are required at our hands; and if God hath joined them both together, let no man take upon him to divorce or put them asunder. II. For, in the next place, THESE TWO THUS LINKED AND UNITED TOGETHER WILL KEEP RELIGION "PURE AND UNDEFILED"; which are as the colours and beauty of it, "the beauty of holiness," which hath its colour and grace from whence it hath its being and strength, and, if it be true, will shine in "the perfection of beauty." "Religion, if it be true, and not a name only, is as a virgin pure and undefiled, and maketh us so, and espouseth us to Christ." So is true religion, simple and solid, full of itself, having no heterogeneous matter, but ever the same, and about the same. There is nothing in our love which soureth our justice, nothing in our justice to kill our compassion, nothing in our liberality to defile our chastity, nothing in our fear to beat down our confidence, nothing in our zeal to consume our charity. "A true religious man is always himself." And as religion is "pure," without mixture, so it is "undefiled," and cannot subsist with pollution and profaneness. "Now are our Olympics, now is the great trial" to be made "before God and the Father." And our religion consisteth in this, "to fight it out legally" (2 Tim. ii. 5); a condition they were bound to who were admitted to those games and exercises. III. And now I have showed you the picture of religion in little, represented it to you in these two, doing of good, and abstaining from evil; filling the hungry with good things, and purging and emptying ourselves of all uncleanness. You have seen its beauty in its graceful and glorious colours of purity and undefiledness; a picture to be hung up in the Church, nay, before God Himself. And THUS IT APPEARETH "BEFORE GOD AND THE FATHER," AND HATH ITS RATIFICA-

TION FROM HIM. Application: 1. This may serve, first, to make us in love with this religion, because it hath such a Founder as "God the Father," who is wisdom itself, and can neither be deceived, nor deceive us. 2. Again, if St. James be canonical and authentic, if this be true religion, then it will make up an answer sufficient to stop the mouth of those of the Romish party who are very busy to demand at our hands a catalogue of fundamentals, and where our Church was before the days of Reformation. Do they ask what truths are fundamental? Faith supposed, as it is here, they are—charity to ourselves and others. "To know this, is to know all we need to know." For is it not sufficient to know that which is sufficient to make us happy? But if nothing will satisfy them but a catalogue of particulars, "they have Moses and the prophets" (Luke xvi. 29); they have the apostles; and if they find their fundamentals not there, in vain shall they seek for them at our hands. 3. To conclude then. Men and brethren, are these things so? Is this only true religion—to do good, and to abstain from evil? If this should take place amongst the sons of men, we should have more religion and less noise. Could this religion, could the gospel of Christ prevail; could we "deny ourselves and take up the cross," and "keep ourselves unspotted from the world," there would be then no "wars, nor rumours of wars." Let us not deceive ourselves. It is the neglect and want of this that hath been the main cause of all the hot contentions which have been, and as yet are, in the Church of Christ; I mean, amongst those who call one another "Christians"; whose mark and badge it is "to love one another." (*A. Farindon, B.D.*) *True religion*:—1. It is the glory of religion when it is pure. The true Christian religion is called "a holy faith" (Jude 20). No faith goeth so high for rewards, nor is so holy for precepts. Well, then, an impure life will not suit with a holy faith. Precious liquor must be kept in a clean vessel, and "the mystery of the faith" held "in a pure conscience" (1 Tim. iii. 9). We never suit with our religion more than when the way is undefiled and the heart pure (Psa. cxix. 1; Matt. v. 8). 2. That a pure religion should be kept undefiled. A holy life and a bounteous heart are ornaments to the gospel. Religion is not adorned with ceremonies, but purity and charity. 3. A great fruit and token of piety is provision for the afflicted. In Matt. xxv. you see acts of charity fill up the bill. Works of mercy do well become them that do expect or have received mercy from God. 4. Charity singleth out the objects that are most miserable. That is true bounty when we give to those that are not able to make requital (Luke xiv. 12–14). 5. This charity to the poor must be performed as worship, out of respect to God. The apostle saith to visit the fatherless is worship. A Christian hath a holy art of turning duties of the second table into duties of the first; and in respect to man, they worship God. "To do good, and to communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifice God is well pleased" (Heb. xiii. 16). Well, then, alms should be sacrifice; not a sin-offering, but a thank-offering to God. 6. True religion and profession is rather for God's eye than man's. It aimeth at the approbation of God, not ostentation before men (Psa. xviii. 23). 7. We serve God most comfortably when we consider Him as a Father in Christ. We are not servants, but have received the adoption of sons. Get an interest in God, that His work may be sweet to you. 8. The relieving of the afflicted and the unspotted life must go together. 9. The world is a dirty, defiling thing. A man can hardly walk here but he shall defile his garments. (1) The very things of the world leave a taint upon our spirits. By worldly objects we soon grow worldly. It is hard to touch pitch and not to be defiled. (2) The lusts of the world, they stain the glory and deface the excellency of your natures (2 Pet. i. 4). Your affections were made for higher purposes than to be melted out in lusts. (3) The men of the world are sooty, dirty creatures. We cannot converse with them but they leave their filthiness upon us. (*T. Manton.*) *Why men should minister to the necessity of their brethren*:—1. In His law and gospel the Lord requireth this duty of love and service to be done, to whom seeing we are infinitely indebted, we herein must be obedient. 2. The remembrance of our frailty, fickleness of our worldly condition, must move to charity; for such as are rich to-day may be poor to-morrow. 3. That we are members each of each other, and all members of one body; might it not move us to mutual succour? 4. If we require example, God is rich in mercy and in all goodness; He giveth abundantly to all men, and reproacheth none. 5. If we look for a president, our Saviour Christ is our Pattern, who laid down His life for us, that we should lay down our lives (much more our goods) for the brethren. 6. If reward may allure us, we have not only therefore promise of increase and multiplying our store here, as we see was performed to the widow of Sarepta, but also of eternal blessing. 7. If punishment

may terrify us, then let us recount that as God promiseth exceeding great reward, both temporal and eternal, to the merciful, so He threateneth grievous punishment, both in this life and in the life to come, to the merciless, which thing should move us. 8. If we consider that by the apostle is set down as a property and effect of true religion, without which our religion is but counterfeiting, our holiness but halting, our devotion but dissimulation before God, thereby shall we be stirred up to this duty. 9. Finally, we shall be better moved hereunto, if we shall consider that we are only stewards of these goods, and that they are committed to us upon trust. (*R. Turnbull.*)

The ritual of the gospel:—The reference is to the externals of religious worship, the *cultus exterior*, the ceremonial, the ritual of worship. St. James throws into contrast the old law with its gorgeous and imposing exhibitions, with the humble simplicity of the gospel, and the self-denying duties it enjoins. If religion needs a ritual, an outside by which its highest and holiest service may be made manifest, let all that is external be evidenced in the visiting of orphans and widows in the hour of their woe and want, and in a holy separation from the defilements of a wicked world. (*F. T. Bassett, M.A.*)

To visit the fatherless and widows.—*Visiting the fatherless and widows:*—I. WHAT IS MEANT BY VISITING THE FATHERLESS AND WIDOWS IN THEIR AFFLICTION. 1. The objects of our charity; the fatherless and widows in their affliction; in any want or distress wherein they need and are capable of our assistance. 2. The charitable act we are to exercise towards them who are in want or distress. II. THIS IS A NECESSARY AND PRINCIPAL PART, AND A SIGNAL TESTIMONY, OF TRUE RELIGION. Mercy and charity are those duties which the gospel, the rule of our religion, doth in a most earnest and especial manner require and press the performance of (1 Tim. i. 5: 1 Cor. xiii. 13; 1 Pet. iv. 8; Heb. xiii. 16; Luke iii. 8; Matt. v. 7; James ii. 13; 1 Tim. vi. 17–19). Other exercises of religion can be of no value in the sight of God, where this duty of charity is neglected. What an affront must it be to God to pretend to join in prayers to Him for those who are in trouble, need, sickness, or any other adversity, if He hath put it in our own power to relieve them, and we will not! What mockery is it to come and sit before God as His people, and to hear His word, if covetousness hath so possessed our hearts that we have no regard to the most plain and express commands of it! The vanity and inefficacy of all such religious exercises, without charity, is most frequently asserted in Holy Scripture (Isa. i. 11, 12, 17, 18; lviii. 6, 7, 9). The great ends of religion, the glory of God, the good of His people here, and the disposing us for heaven hereafter, are most highly promoted by charity, and therefore it must be a principal part of it. III. IT IS A SINGULAR TESTIMONY OF TRUE RELIGION, AND WHAT IT OBLIGETH ALL SORTS OF MEN TO; TO TAKE PARTICULAR CARE OF THE FATHERLESS CHILDREN AND WIDOWS OF GOD'S MINISTERS IN THEIR AFFLICTION, AND TO HAVE A MORE SPECIAL REGARD TO THEM IN THE EXERCISE OF THEIR CHARITY. (*L. Butler, D.D.*)

Work for orphans:—Dr. Guthrie whispered to me, as the children left the class, "Do you see that golden-haired boy with full face and laughing eyes? Let me tell you his story"; and as we descended he continued, "You see," he said, "that splendid boy had followed his mother to the grave; and being friendless and shelterless, he returned when night fell and stretched himself on the grave, contented if he might but die. Next morning he was found half frozen to death. His little hands were frozen as cold as those of his dead mother or the earth on which he lay. If you had only seen him! Yes, it is a noble work which God has given us to do." (*Robert Kœnig.*)

The Egyptian emblem of charity:—A boy, naked, his heart in his hand, giving honey to a bee that has lost its wings. How beautiful and how suggestive! (*A. T. Pierson, D.D.*)

A scholar and a sick woman:—A gentleman, near London, went to visit a woman who was sick. As he was going into the room, he saw a little girl kneeling by the side of the poor woman's bed. The little girl rose from her knees as soon as she saw the gentleman, and went out of the room. "Who is that child?" the gentleman asked. "Oh, sir!" said the sick woman, "that is a little angel, who often comes to read her Bible to me, to my great comfort; and she has just now given me sixpence." The gentleman was so pleased with the little girl's conduct, that he wished to know how she had learned to love the Word of God and to be so kind to poor people. Finding that she was one of the scholars of a neighbouring Sunday school, he went to the school, and asked for the child. She felt rather afraid when she was called to the gentleman; but he was very kind to her, and asked her if she was the little girl that had been to read the Bible to the sick woman. She said she was. The gentleman said, "My dear, what made you think of doing so?" She answered, "Because, sir, I find it is said in the Bible, that 'pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this—to

visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction.'" "Well," said he, "and did you give her any money?" "Yes, sir." "And where did you get it?" "Sir, it was given me as a reward." (*K. Arvine.*) *Traces of Jewish habits of thought:*—In these large and noble words we find some traces of Jewish training and habits of thought. For when we read "Pure and undefiled ritualism is to *visit orphans and widows* in their affliction," we instantly recognise a Jewish tone of thought and speech. Among the Jews, as among most Oriental races of the ancient world, widows and orphans were of all classes the most liable to plunder and oppression. Their inheritance was often filched from them under forms of law, now that they had no strong arm to protect them, by an unjust judge whom they were unable to bribe, or even forcibly wrested from them by some rapacious kinsman or neighbour. Hence it was that the prophets constituted themselves the champions of the defenceless orphan and widow, denounced the curse of Heaven on all who wronged them, and even, by a bold figure of speech, declared God Himself to be the Husband of the widow and the Father of the fatherless. St. James, therefore, simply carries on the Hebrew tradition when he bids us, as part of the service, or worship, we owe to God, "visit orphans and widows in their affliction." (*Almoni Peloni.*) *Visiting:*—The very word "visit" has a Hebrew twang in it. For, to the Jew, this word meant more than to us. God *visited* His people when He redeemed them from bondage, or gave them abundance for want, joy for mourning. God *visited* Job when he cleansed him from his leprosy and gave him "twice as much as he had before." And, in like manner, we *visit* orphans and widows, in St. James' sense of the word, not when we call upon them, or say a few kind words to them, which cost us nothing, but when we defend them from insult or wrong, when we effectively minister to their wants or comfort them in their sorrow. (*Ibid.*) *Godlike to live for others:*—Just as the rosebud which refuses to unfold its petals, rots at the heart and dies, while the bud which bursts into blossom and scatters fragrance all around is healthy, and beautiful, and strong; so the man who lives to himself, dies while he lives; but the man who, forgetful of self, lives for the good and happiness of others, finds in his very unselfishness, health, and peace, and joy. In the great world around us, the sparrow gives nothing to God, yet day by day God cares for the sparrow. The worm and the insect give nothing back to God, yet God never forgets them. What is the lesson? Surely it is this, viz., that it is Godlike to work for another's good, never looking for or expecting anything in return. (*A. C. Price, B.A.*) *The blessedness of charity:*—A story is told, in the "Annals of the Round Table," of a knight who set out to find the Holy Grail. Forth from the castle gate rode the knight, filled with his lofty purpose, having no eyes or ears for the common things about him, and giving no heed to the grey-bearded beggar that lay asking alms. Forth he went, and began to do many wonderful works. His sword wrought prodigies of valour, in gloomy woods by robbers' strongholds, in wild mountains where the dragons lay. But he never saw the holy vision, the reward of God's true knight. Then, spirit-broken, he gave up the quest as hopeless, and rode wearily homeward. He came with head hung down and eyes that looked upon the ground. "Not for me, not for me," he muttered, "is the holy vision." Then he caught sight of the beggar that lay yet at his gates. "Ah, now thou shalt be helped, old man," cried the knight, "for I must content myself with such small acts of pity." He sprang from his horse, and laid aside spear and crested shield, and bent over the beggar tending his wounds. He bade the servants bring him bread and wine, and himself saw all his wants supplied. And lo! as he turned, there floated the wondrous vision—he saw the Holy Grail! The truest and best service we can render is that which lies before us, in our way and next to hand. (*M. G. Pearse.*) *Christianity beneficent:*—Once, referring to the fact that orphanages are never maintained by infidels, Mr. Spurgeon used the felicitous expression, "The God that answereth by orphanages, let Him be God." (*H. P. Hughes, M.A.*) *Philanthropy and piety:*—John Howard, when he grew sad about his piety, put on his hat and went out among the poor. He came back a gainer. *Active charity a part of pure religion:*—I. The apostle's words prove, first, THAT SOMETHING MIGHT APPEAR TO BE, OR BE HELD TO BE, PURE AND UNDEFILED RELIGION, WHICH IS NOT SATISFACTORY BEFORE GOD. 1. They prove, for instance, that a scriptural and orthodox creed is not in itself sufficient. 2. Neither, it here appears, is an inactive, contemplative religion such as God approves. II. IT SEEMED NEEDFUL THUS BRIEFLY TO HINT AT ERRORS IN THIS MATTER, FOR THE PURPOSE OF SHOWING MORE PLAINLY WHAT IS TRUE AND UNDEFILED RELIGION. 1. It is, first, as we are here told, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction. One half of the world, as has sometimes been

said, knows not how the other half lives. This will not be the case where there is pure and undefiled religion. There will be then a principle which will lead the one half to inquire into the condition of the other. And truly, there is much need. 2. When St. James mentions the widows and the fatherless, he means, of course, the destitute and afflicted of every class. He specifies these only as most especially deserving our compassion. 3. Observe, brethren, to visit. The original word is more comprehensive than any one word of ours can fully render. It is to look round for and to inspect their circumstances: to see the assistance which they need, even as God Himself did when He visited and redeemed His people, having seen and pitied their condition. III. I come now to THE OTHER CHARACTERISTIC OF PURE AND UNDEFILED RELIGION—to keep himself unspotted from the world. 1. In regard to worldly business, I need not say that a man does not keep himself unspotted from the world by withdrawing from it. The cases must be few where this could be needful. Religion consists in "using the world, as not abusing it." 2. The pleasures and amusements of the world are still more injurious than the business of the world, to pure and undefiled religion. Many of them, either considered in themselves, or viewed in their consequences and effects, are opposed to it altogether. They involve a waste of that time and that money which ought to be employed in the service of God and the welfare of mankind. 3. He is in danger, thirdly, from its sentiments as well as from its pleasures. Because the world, avowedly, does not take its sentiments from the Bible; but sets up its own authority, enacts its own rules, and issues its own decisions. At the same time, it must not be conceived that a man acts religiously, or thinks scripturally, merely because he opposes general opinion. The only proper course is, to be independent of general opinion; to choose a course according to our special case and circumstances, which we believe that God will approve, and which we resolve to follow, whether approved of men or no; whether with the world, or against the world. (*Bp. Sumner.*) **Unspotted from the world.**—*Unspotted from the world*:—Men and women grow older in this world of ours, and as the years advance they change. Of all the changes that they undergo those of their moral natures are the most painful to watch. The boy changes into the man, and there is something lost which never seems to come back again. It is like the first glow of the morning that passes away—like the bloom on the blossom that never is restored. Your grown-up boy is wise in bad things which he used to know nothing about. His life no longer sounds with a perfectly clear ring, or shines with a perfectly white lustre. He is no longer unspotted. And then when a grown man sees and knows all this either in himself or in another, he is sure also that the change has come somehow from this boy having grown up to manhood in the midst of his fellow-men. Home, school, business, society, politics, human life in general in all its various activities —out of this have come the evil forces that have changed and soiled this life. We all think of ourselves, and in our kinder moments think of our brethren, as victims. We have not cast away the jewel, but we have fallen among thieves, and it has been taken from us. We have not merely been spotted, but "spotted by the world." There is something very sublime, I think, in the Bible conception of "the world" which we are always meeting. The Bible touches us because it seems to know all about this "world"—this total of created things, this cosmos, this aggregate of disorder with purposes of order manifest all through it, this sea of tempest with its tides of law, this mixture of insignificant trifles with the most appalling solemnities, this storehouse of life and activity and influence which we are crowding on and crowded by every day, out of which come the shaping forces of our life, which we call the world. The Bible knows all about it, and so we listen when the Bible speaks. Here, then, we have one fact. Our own experience discovers it. The Bible steps in and describes it. "Lives spotted by the world." The stained lives. Where is the man or woman who does not know what it means? There is the most outward sort of stain—the stain upon the reputation. It is what men see as they pass us, and know us by it for one who has struggled and been worsted. Then there are the stains upon our conduct, the impure and untrue acts which cross and cloud the fair surface of all our best activity. And then, far worst of all, there is the stain upon the heart, of which nobody but the man himself knows anything, but which to him gives all their unhappiness to the other stains, the debased motives, the low desires, the wicked passions of the inner life. These are the stains which we accumulate. They burn to our eyes even if no neighbour sees them. They burn in the still air of the Sabbath even if we do not see them in the week. You would not think for the world that your children should grow up to the same stains that

have fastened upon you. You dream for them of a "life unspotted from the world," and the very anxiety of that dream proves how you know that your own life is spotted and stained. And that dream for the children is almost hopeless. At any rate the danger is that you will give it up by and by, and get to expecting and excusing the stains that will come upon them as they grow older. The worst thing about all this staining power of the world is the way in which we come to think of it as inevitable. We practically believe that no man can keep himself unspotted. He must accumulate his stains. It is not true. Men do go through political life as pure and poor as any most tired mechanic lives and works at his bench. And there are merchants who do carry, through all the temptations of business life, the same high standards—hands just as clean, and hearts just as tender, as they have when they pray to God or teach their little children. And social life is lighted up with the lustre of the white, unstained robes of many a pure man or woman who walks through its very midst. But the spots fall so thick that it is easy for men to say, "No one can go there and escape them. It is hopeless to try to keep yourself unspotted from the world"; and then (for that comes instantly), "We are not to blame for the world's spots upon us." I said this was the worst, but there is one worse thing still. When a man comes not merely to tolerate, but to boast of the stains that the world has flung upon him; when he wears his spots as if they were jewels; when he flaunts his unscrupulousness, and his cynicism and his disbelief and his hard-heartedness in your face as the signs and badges of his superiority; when to be innocent and unsuspicious and sensitive seems to be ridiculous and weak; when it is reputable to show that we are men of the world by exhibiting the stains that the world has left upon our reputation, our conduct, and our heart, then we understand how flagrant is the danger; then we see how hard it must be to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. And now, in view of all this, we come to our religion. See how intolerant religion is. She starts with what men have declared to be impossible. She refuses to bring down her standards. She insists that men must come up to her. No man is thoroughly religious, she declares, unless he does this, which it seems so hard to do, unless he goes through this world untainted, as the sunbeam goes through the mist. There is something sublime in this unsparingness. It almost proves that our religion is Divine, when it undertakes for man so Divine a task. It could not sustain itself in its great claim to be from God unless it took this high and godlike ground, that whoever named the name of Christ must depart from all iniquity. Our religion is not true unless it have this power in it. We must bring our faith to this test. Unless our Christianity does this for us, it is not the true religion that St. James talked of, and that the Lord Jesus came to reveal and to bestow. Let us be sure of this. We go for our assurance to the first assertion of the real character of Christianity in the life of Jesus. The very principle of the Incarnation, that without which it loses all its value, surely is this, that Christ was Himself the first Christian; that in Him was first displayed the power of that grace by which all who believed in Him were afterwards to be helped and saved. And so the life of Jesus was lived in the closest contact with His fellow-men. He was always "seeing the kingdoms of the world, and all the glory of them," so realising the highest temptations to which our nature is open; always "feeling an hungered," so entering into the lowest enticements that tell upon our human flesh. Filling ourselves with this idea, then, that the spotlessness of the Saviour's life is the pattern of the spotless life to which we must aspire—if we begin to study it, I think the first thing that strikes us about it is its positiveness. There are two ways of defending a castle: one by shutting yourself up in it, and guarding every loophole; the other by making it an open centre of operations from which all the surrounding country may be subdued. Is not the last the truest safety? Jesus was never guarding Himself, but always invading the lives of others with His holiness. His life was like an open stream that keeps the sea from flowing up into it by the eager force with which it flows down into the sea. He was so anxious that the world should be saved that therein was His salvation from the world. He laboured so to make the world pure that He never even had to try to be pure Himself. And so we see, by contrast, how many of our attempts at purity fail by their negativeness. A man knows that drink is ruining him, soul and body, and he makes up his mind that he will not drink again. How soon the empty hour grows wearisome. I do think that we break almost all our resolutions not to do wrong, while we keep a large proportion of our resolutions that we will do what is right. Habit, which is the power by which evil rules us, is only strong in a vacant life. And even if we could resist the evil by merely holding out against it, still should we

not be like castles protecting themselves, but conquering and enriching no country around their walls? All merely negative purity has something of the taint of the impurity that it resists. The effort not to be frivolous is frivolous itself. The effort not to be selfish is very apt to be only another form of selfishness. So we are sure at once, and we learn it certainly from Christ, that the true spotlessness from the world must come, not negatively, by the garments being drawn back from every worldly contact, but positively by the garments being so essentially, Divinely pure that they fling pollution off, as sunshine, hurrying on its mission to the world, flings back the darkness that tries to stop its way. And what then? Is any such purity as Christ's, so positive, so strong, possible for us? As I said, if our religion cannot help us to it, then our religion fails of its task. Now let me try to show you what the faith of Christ can do for us, if we will let it, to make us so strong that the contaminations of the world cannot affect us. I am sure that there are some of us who have come here, conscious of stains and wounds from the hard conflicts of the week, who do indeed desire to know how they can be stronger and purer. 1. In the first place, Christianity is a religion of the supernatural, and, to any one who is thoroughly in its power, it must bring the presence of a live supernaturalism, and make that the atmosphere of his life. What the poor creature needs who is standing right in the midst of the world's defilements, catching them on every side, is it not just this: the clear, sure certainty of another world, of a spiritual world with spiritual purity for its law? It is very much as if you went out of the pure, sweet, sensitive home-life in which you have been bred, into the lowest, filthiest pollution of the city. Suppose you had to live there a week, a month. What would keep you pure from its defilement? Would it not be the constant sense, the ever-present vision, of that higher realm of life that you had come from, making your present home seem dreadful to you? Would not the very knowledge that such a higher realm of life existed be your strength and protection? Nay, to alter the illustration a little, would not your presence, if you were really radiant with the purity of the better life you came from, exalt and help some poor creature there with the knowledge of the existence and the possibility of better things? And that is just the power of the Incarnation. It opened the spiritual, the supernatural, the eternal. It was as if the clouds were broken above this human valley that we live in, and men saw the Alps above them, and took courage. 2. But this is not enough. No mere sense of the supernatural ever saved a soul. Christ must come nearer to the soul than this before it can really by Him "escape the corruption that is in the world." Then there comes in all the personal relation between the soul and its Saviour. Now we must mount to think what was the purpose of the Incarnation. We must get sight of that Divine pity which saw us in our sins and came to rescue us. We must understand how clear-sighted the Creator is to see and feel the need of every one among His creatures. We must grasp the bewildering thought of a personal love for our single souls. And then all must be emphasised and condensed into the world's tragedy. We must see the Jesus of the Cross on the Cross. And what then? Do you not see? Full of profoundest gratitude the soul looks round to see what it can give to the Saviour in token of its feeling of His love. And it can find nothing. It has nothing to give. And hopeless of finding anything, it simply gives itself. It is its own no longer. It is given away to Christ. It lives His life and not its own. Can you imagine that becoming real to a man and not changing his relation to the temptations that beset him? He feels now with Christ's feeling, and corruption drops away from him as it drops away from Christ. Shame, love, hope, every good passion wakes in the soul. It walks unharmed, because it walks in this new sense of consecration. 3. When I ask somewhat more minutely into the method which Christ uses to keep His servants free from the world's corruption, I seem to come to something like this, which seems, like so much besides in the gospel, at first surprising, and then sublimely natural and reasonable, that it is by a Christlike dedication to the world that Christ really saves us from the world. Do you see what I mean? You go to your Lord, and say, "O Lord, this world is tempting me, and I fear its stains. How shall I escape it? Shall I run away from it?" And the answer comes as unmistakable as if a voice spoke out of the opened sky, "No; go up close to this world, and help it; feel for its wickedness; pity it; sacrifice yourself for it; so shall you be safest from its infection; so shall you be surest not to sacrifice yourself to it." They say the doctors and the nurses are least likely to catch the epidemic. If you have a friend who is dishonest or impure, the surest way to save yourself from him is to try to save him. More pure and more secure in purity than the Pharisee, man or woman, who draws back the spotless skirts from

the reach of the poor fallen creature who clutches at them, is the pitying man or woman who in the nearest brotherhood or sisterhood goes close to the wretched sinner and takes him by the hand to lift him. I am not surprised to hear that the man who despises the sinner and gets as far away from him as possible has become, after all, the sharer of his sin. I am surprised if the tender sympathiser who goes to the poor slave of sin, and says, "My brother, my heart bleeds for you; let me help you"—I am surprised if he is not armed by his pity against the contagion of the sin he tries to help, and if he does not save both his brother and himself together. (*Bp. Phillips Brooks.*) *Unspotted from the world*:—The figure is doubtless derived from the Jewish law; the touch of the ceremonially defiled, of a grave, a carcase, a bone, or an unclean animal, imparted pollution to a man, and he had to submit to a cleansing process before he could join in the temple services or associate with his brethren. The world is graphically pictured as a graveyard, a leper-house, a den of unclean beasts, through which the believer must pick his way so carefully and circumspectly that he may escape contact with the all-surrounding corruptions, and come forth with his purity unsullied and unstained. (*F. T. Bassett, M.A.*) *Unstained purity seen best in heaven*:—The bloom of the hawthorn looks like snow in Richmond Park, but nearer London, or by the roadsides, its virgin whiteness is sadly stained. Contact with the world has just such an effect upon our piety: we must away to the far-off Paradise to see holiness in its unsullied purity, and we must be much alone with God, if we would maintain a gracious life below. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Charity pure*:—When Charity walks into the lowest places of want, we see the beautiful purity of her garments most distinctly. *Charity and unworldliness*:—Such a rule as this demands a nobler spirit than that of the world, which is apt to sympathise with wealth rather than with poverty, with strength rather than with weakness, with success rather than with failure. And hence, by a simple logical advance, St. James, after bidding us visit orphans and widows, bids us keep ourselves unspotted from the world. (*Almoni Peloni.*)

CHAPTER II.

VERS. 1–7. **With respect of persons.**—*Respect of persons*:—I. THE SIN AGAINST WHICH THE WARNING IS DIRECTED (vers. 1–4). 1. It is stated, ver. 1. "My brethren," he begins, addressing them in a conciliatory manner, well fitted to gain their compliance. He calls on them not to hold, in a certain way, "the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is this which alike determines the state and forms the character of the really religious. It is only by believing with the whole mind and heart that we are united to the Saviour, and reap the benefits of His great redemption. "Have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ"—that is, hold it not—"with respect of persons." It is more exactly *in* than *with* respect of persons, in the practice of anything so obviously opposed to its very nature. And it is strictly "in respectings of persons," the plural being used to indicate the various ways of doing what is here forbidden. By it we are to understand partiality, favouritism, unduly preferring one before another, making a distinction among men, not on the ground of character or real worth, but of outward condition, of worldly position and possessions. 2. It is illustrated (vers. 2–4). "For"—this is what I mean, here is a specimen of the kind of thing I am warning you against—"if there come into your assembly"—that is, your congregation, or place of meeting for divine worship. It brings out the offensiveness of the proceeding, that it took place in the sanctuary, where, even more than in a court of justice, everything of the sort was most unseemly. "If there come in," he says, "a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel"—one who appeared by these marks to be a person of superior position. "With a gold ring," literally, gold-fingered, having his hands adorned probably with more than a single ring, it might be with several. "In goodly apparel"—having a splendid garment, as the word signifies, bright, shining, glittering, either from its colour or its ornaments. But another enters, and what a contrast! "And there come in also a poor man in vile raiment." Here is one of mean condition, as shown by his attire, the dirt and rags with which he is covered. "And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing," marking the deference paid to him by saying, "Sit thou here in a good place"—sit here, near the speaker, in the midst of the

assembly, in a comfortable and honourable seat; while your language to the poor is, "Stand thou there"—stand, that is suitable and sufficient for you; and stand there, away at a distance, behind the others, it may be in some remote corner, some inconvenient position; or, "Sit thou here under my footstool"; if you sit at all among us let it be on the ground beneath, at my feet, in a mean, low situation of that kind. Supposing them to act in such a manner, he asks (ver. 4), "Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?" "Are ye not partial in yourselves?" do ye not make distinctions among yourselves, or are ye not at issue with yourselves? Is not this way of acting at variance with your principles as Christians? Is there not a wide difference between the faith you profess and the course you thus pursue? Now, what is it that he condemns? Is it showing any deference to those of larger means and higher station? Certainly not. What he condemns is honouring the rich at the expense of the poor—cringing to the one and trampling on the other, and doing this, besides, in the house of God, in the Church of Christ, where all should meet on the same footing, should be viewed as standing on a common level. Favour is still shown to the rich man, where it is neither his right nor his interest to have any, but to rank along with the poorest of his brethren. This is done at times by softening down or keeping back the truth from fear of offending certain influential classes or parties. We have a noble example of the opposite in the case of Howe when acting as one of Cromwell's chaplains. He found that a fanatical and dangerous notion regarding answers to prayer prevailed at court, and was held strongly by the Protector himself—a notion which some who knew better did their utmost to encourage. Regarding it with abhorrence, Howe thought himself bound, when next called to preach before Cromwell, to expose the fallacies on which it rested, and the pernicious consequences to which it led. "This accordingly he did, doubtless to the no small surprise and chagrin of his audience. During his discourse, Cromwell was observed to pay marked attention; but as his custom was, when displeased, frequently knit his brows, and manifested other symptoms of uneasiness. Even the terrors of Cromwell's eye, however, could not make Howe quail in the performance of an undoubted duty; and he proceeded in a strain of calm and cogent reasoning to fulfil his honourable but difficult task. When he had finished, a person of distinction came up and asked whether he knew what he had done? at the same time expressing his apprehension that he had irretrievably lost the Protector's favour. Howe coolly replied that he had discharged what he considered a duty, and could leave the issue with God. This was worthy of his sacred office, and his own noble character. The same thing is frequently done in the way of pursuing a subservient course of conduct toward the rich with the view of gaining their favour. II. THE REASONS BY WHICH THE WARNING IS ENFORCED. 1. The poor are the special objects of the Divine regard (ver. 5). "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith?" He has chosen them in His eternal decree; and in pursuance of this, chosen them by separating them to Himself, through the effectual operation of the Holy Ghost. And whom has He thus chosen? "The poor of this world"—the poor in respect of it, in the things of it, the poor temporally. They constitute the class to which the man in vile raiment belonged. "Rich in faith"—that is, God has chosen them to be this—He has destined them to it, and made them it by His election. "And heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him." The Christian is rich at present. He has large possessions, and these belong to the domain of faith. But he has also glorious prospects. Already he is a son, but he is also an heir. His inheritance is a kingdom, than which there is nothing greater, nobler, more coveted here below. 2. The rich had shown themselves the great enemies of Christ's people and person. He appeals to his readers, "Do not rich men oppress you?" lord it over you, exercise their power against you—"and draw you," drag you; for it implies force, violence—"before the judgment-seats." They did so by vexatious law-suits, by false charges, by persecuting measures. Not only so, he asks, "Do they not blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?" The reference is not to the lives of inconsistent Christians, but to the foul-mouthed charges and curses of avowed enemies of the gospel. The worthy or honourable name intended is that of Christ. What title, then, had this class to such a preference? Did their relation to the Church, either in its members or its Head, call for any special favour at the hands of believers? Quite the reverse. (*John Adam.*) *A comprehensive admonition*:—I. Observe—A RELATIONSHIP. The apostle addresses them as his "brethren." 1. So they were, nationally; they were Jews as well as himself.

2. They were his "brethren" naturally partaking of the same humanity with him. 3. They were his "brethren" graciously. Here a nobler relation is gendered, and this comprehends all that "worship God in the Spirit, who rejoice in Christ Jesus, and who have no confidence in the flesh." 4. They were His "brethren" impartially, without any distinction; that is, He was regardless of everything that might seem to render them unworthy the privilege as to conditions, or gifts, or office. II. Here is A CHARACTER. "The Lord of glory." You well know to whom this belongs; and this is not the only place where this title is given; for Paul, speaking of the princes of this world, said, "None of them knew, for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." Isaiah (xxxiii. 21) makes use of a similar term as applied to the blessed God Himself. The radical idea of glory is brilliancy; the second idea is excellency displayed; and there are three ways in which this character will apply to our Lord and Saviour. 1. He is "the Lord of glory" because of His personal excellencies. "He is fairer than the children of men; He is the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely." All the glory of creatures, whether in earth or in heaven, in their aggregate, is nothing more to His glory than a drop to the ocean, or a beam to the sun. 2. He is called "the Lord of glory," because He produces and confers all the excellencies possessed by creatures. "By Him kings reign, and princes decree justice." "When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." 3. There is a world made up entirely of excellencies and glory, when nothing else is to be found, and of that world He is the only Sovereign, the only Disposer. III. A PECULIAR ENDOWMENT. "The faith of our Lord Jesus Christ." Not that we have this faith in equal possession and exercise with Him. No, in all things He had the pre-eminence. He received the Spirit without measure, and in every one of its graces He excelled. 1. But the apostle does not speak here of the faith He possessed and exercised, but of that faith, first, of which He was the Author. He is called, "The Author and the Finisher of faith," and this is as true of the graces of faith as of the doctrine of faith. 2. When the apostle speaks of the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, he means, secondly, that of which He is the Object. Therefore, they that believe are said to believe in Him. IV. A PROHIBITION. "Have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with respect to persons." This regards, not its character, but its perversion; its abuse, and not its nature. "Have it not," says James; that is, let it never be so seen in you, let it never be so exercised in you. Here, however, it will be necessary to observe that there is a lawful respect of persons, and there is an unlawful one. The thing, therefore, is not forbidden in every instance, and in every measure and degree. For, in the first place, it is impossible to respect some persons. You will never feel towards a Nero as you would towards a Howard. And if it were possible, it would be improper. The Scripture justifies the distinctions and inequalities of life, and rank and office are to be regarded. But the meaning here is that other things being equal, you should not show more regard to one person than to another, because of some things belonging to him which have no relation to cases of duty or conscience. Let us exemplify the thing four ways. 1. The first is judicially. In a case of this kind pending, how very improper it would be to be lenient to the rich and severe to the poor! 2. The second class we call ministerial. If God blesses the labours of a minister to your soul, you will esteem such; but you are not to make an idol of straw. You should regard all the servants of God as equal; you are to view them in reference to their Master—in reference to their commission—in reference to their place and office—as all respectable, and equally regarded by God. 3. The third class we call ecclesiastical. Here we might refer to the terms of admission into the Church of God, and to the table of the Lord. These ought not to be rigid and severe, but whatever they may be, they ought to be equally applied to the high and the low, to the rich and to the poor. 4. The last class we call denominational. All should belong to some Christian community; but you should never suppose that the party you have joined have all the truth, and that nothing is to be done without them. Let us never forbid others because they walk not with us. To conclude, let us learn then to judge of men regardless of adventitious circumstances. Let our inquiry be, What are they morally? what are they spiritually? Thus may we resemble the citizens of Zion, of whom it is said, in their view a vile person is contemned, while those who fear the Lord are honoured. (*W. Jay.*) *Respect of persons in religious matters*:—We may be guilty of this—1. By making external things, not religion, the ground of our respect and affection. "Knowing after the flesh" (2 Cor. v. 16) is to esteem any

one out of secular and outward advantages. Says Tertullian: "We must not judge of faith by persons, but of persons by faith." 2. When we do not carry out the measure and proportion of affection according to the measures and proportions of grace, and pitch our respects there where we find the ground of love most eminent (Psa. xvi. 3). 3. When we can easily make greatness a cover for baseness, and excuse sin by honour, whereas that is the aggravation; the advantage of greatness makes sin the more notable. 4. When we yield religious respects, give testimonies to men for advantage, and, under pretence of religion, servilely addict ourselves to men for base ends (Jude 16). 5. When Church administrations are not carried on with an indifferent and even hand to rich and poor, either by way of exhortation or censure. 6. When we despise the truths of God because of the persons that bring them to us. Matheo Langi, Archbishop of Saltzburg, told every one that the reformation of the mass was needful, the liberty of meats convenient, and to be disburthened of so many commands of men just; but that a poor monk (meaning Luther) should reform all was not to be endured. So in Christ's time the question was common, "Do any of the rulers believe in Him?" Thus you see we are apt to despise excellent things, because of the despicableness of the instrument. The same words have a different acceptation, because of the different esteem and value of the persons engaged in them. Erasmus observed that what was accounted orthodox in the fathers, was condemned as heretical in Luther. (*T. Manton.*)

Respect of persons:—I. The persons whom St. James admonished here are THE BRETHREN to whom he giveth this attribute, which thing he doth very conveniently, inasmuch as in the discourse he is to admonish them of a duty of love, whereunto they ought to be the more prompt. The saints of God may well here be called brethren—1. Because they have one spiritual and Heavenly Father, which is God, who is Father of us all, of whom are all things, and we in Him. 2. As because we have one spiritual Father we are brethren, so because we have one spiritual mother, we are brethren also. Now, as God is our spiritual Father, so is the Church our mystical mother, which hath brought us forth by a new birth, in whose sweet bosom we are nursed, into whose happy lap we are gathered, and bringeth us up under the most wholesome discipline of Jesus Christ, that we might be holy and blameless before Him through love. 3. Neither that only, but they are also begotten with one seed of their new birth and regeneration, which is the immortal seed of the Word. 4. If Christ vouchsafe us the name of brethren, and so we have Him as a common brother, then are we therefore also brethren by right among ourselves. 5. Finally, inasmuch as the saints divide the same inheritance among them, therefore are they called brethren; for brethren they are as Aristotle writeth, among whom the same inheritance is divided; yea, they which divide the same lands, living, patrimony, possession. The sons and saints of God communicate the same inheritance, divide the same kingdom of their Heavenly Father among them, participate the same good things which are above as coheirs and joint-heirs of the heavenly patrimony, eternal life; therefore are they brethren. II. The saints whom He calleth brethren, being the persons whom He admonisheth, in the next place cometh THE THING ITSELF, WHEREOF THEY ARE ADMONISHED to be considered that they have not the faith of Christ in respect of persons, wherewith true love, true charity, true religion, cannot stand or consist. 1. What is here meant by faith? Christian religion, the true service of Christ, the profession of the gospel, whereunto respect of persons is contrary, for if pure religion and undefiled before God be this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their adversities, and to regard the poor in their miseries, as before was taught us, then contrary hereunto is the contempt of the poor and preferring of the rich, which respect of persons is here condemned. 2. Christ is called the glorious Lord in this place, sometimes to like purpose is He called the Lord of glory (Psa. xxiv. 7; Acts vii. 2; 1 Cor. ii. 8). Christ may be called the Lord of glory—(1) Because He is full of majesty, power, and glory, at the right hand of God. (2) Christ is the Lord of glory because howsoever He first came in baseness and great humility, yet at His second appearing and coming He shall come in unspeakable glory. (3) Christ is a glorious Lord because He bringeth and advanceth His servants to immortal glory after His appearing in glory. 3. To have this faith of Christ our glorious Lord in respect of persons is to esteem the faith, religion, and profession of Christ by the outward appearance of men. 1. What is respect of persons? It is to respect anything besides the matter and cause itself, which only ought of us to be considered, whereby we decline from the matter to the man, from the thing to the person, and swerve from righteous judg-

ment and true estimation of things. 2. Which sin, as pernicious and perilous in all causes, in all persons, at all times, and in all places, the sacred Scripture condemneth as a thing most repugnant to equity and charity. This evil cannot stand with Christian profession, the gospel teacheth that with God is no respect of persons, but that they all which fear God and work righteousness are accepted through the joyful tidings of salvation by Jesus Christ, in whom there is neither male nor female, bond nor free, neither rich nor poor, but they are all alike unto Him. (*R. Turnbull.*) *Wrong social distinctions*:—God Himself has made a distinction among men. That one should be rich and have abundance, and another should be poor and needy, is an arrangement of the Almighty, just as it is His arrangement and appointment, that all the ears of corn should not contain the same number of grains, and that all flowers should not be arrayed in the same gay colours, and that all the stars should not shine with the same brilliancy, but one star differ from another star in glory. But we make an evil distinction when we carry that which is of value only in earthly relations, in civil and social intercourse, into a sphere where, according to the appointment of God, poverty and riches are both of the same value, or rather of no value. For let us only ask ourselves for what purpose do we assemble in the house of God on appointed days? Is it not that we may feel the importance, and attend to the concerns of another life, far different from our earthly and every-day one? Is it not that we may know and enjoy the life eternal, that we may taste the powers of the invisible world? But all the pre-eminence which riches can procure for us is as transitory as riches themselves; the rich man fades away amidst all his affluence, as completely as the poor man perishes in his state of destitution. How iniquitous is it, then, to distinguish the rich as such, and to slight the poor as such, in a place where all are on the same level before God, where all assemble with an equal need of heavenly grace and gifts, and all have a right to rejoice in the same riches, even the fulness of the Divine love in Christ. (*B. Jacobi.*) *Respect of persons in church*:—It was my custom occasionally to attend St. Mary's, and the sermons of the vicar always delighted me. But as the church was always very full, I was often obliged, though not strong in health, to stand during the whole service. Now, having observed that the persons who were best dressed were always the first to be conducted to seats, although not seat-holders, I yielded to the temptation of resorting to an artifice. I happened to possess a large and beautiful ring. One Sunday morning I put it on and repaired to church as usual. I stood for a minute or two with other people of divers classes near the door. Then, taking off my glove, I raised my hand with apparent carelessness to my ear, and immediately I was led to a comfortable seat. (*Autobiography of Bp. Gobat.*) *Without respect of persons*:—Until the last few years of his life Friend Hopper usually walked to and from his office twice a day. When the weather was very unpleasant he availed himself of the Haarlem cars. Upon one of these occasions it chanced that the long, ponderous vehicle was nearly empty. They had not proceeded far when a very respectable looking young woman beckoned for the car to stop. It did so; but when she set her foot on the step the conductor somewhat rudely pushed her back, and she turned away, evidently much mortified. Friend Hopper started up, and inquired, "Why didst thou push that woman away?" "She's coloured," was the laconic reply. "Art thou instructed by the managers of the railroad to proceed in this manner on such occasions?" inquired Friend Hopper. The man answered, "Yes." "Then let me get out," rejoined the genuine republican; "it disturbs my conscience to ride in a public conveyance where any decently behaved person is refused admittance." And though it was raining very fast, and his house was a mile off, the old veteran of seventy-five years marched through mud and wet at a pace somewhat brisker than his usual energetic step; for indignation warmed his honest and kindly heart and set the blood in motion. *No respect of persons*:—On one occasion Peter Cartwright, the Backwoods' Methodist preacher, was occupying the pulpit of a time-serving fashionable preacher at Nashville. He was in the middle of his sermon, when Andrew Jackson ("Old Hickory") entered the building and walked up the main aisle. The presence of so great a man, the President of the United States, overpowered the clergyman in charge, and bending over to Peter Cartwright, he said in an audible whisper, "General Jackson has come in; General Jackson has come in." "And who," thundered out Cartwright, "is General Jackson? If he doesn't get his soul converted, God will damn him as quick as He would a Guinea negro!" It may well be supposed that the congregation was startled, and the next day the Nashville pastor went, with abject

apologies, to the General, regretting the indignity that had been offered him. But the independence of the bold Backwoods' apostle, so far from giving offence to "Old Hickory," won his lasting regard, and the Rev. Peter was afterwards his honoured guest at the Hermitage. (*Tinling's Illustrations.*) **Your synagogue.**—The Jewish Christians at Jerusalem still frequented the temple, and those among the dispersion the synagogues; hence there is no cause for surprise in finding Christians mixed with unconverted Jews at this period in a common place of worship. The people sat in the synagogue according to their social rank or trade, and St. James fastens on this exhibition of pride on the part of the higher classes as a ground of convincing them of sin and of violation of the law which enjoined "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." A further argument that the Jewish synagogue is spoken of is that we learn from the context that strangers came in who were provided with seats that happened to be vacant. This would occur constantly in the synagogue, but in the upper chamber of the Christians it would be most unlikely that persons of wealth and eminence, as here described, should thus freely enter the congregation of the despised Nazarenes. A graphic delineation follows of the casual worshippers, for casual they must have been, as the regular comers would have their seats allotted them. The one is wealthy and proud, the other poor and lowly. The force of this contrast will appear the more when we remember that the Christian portion of the Jewish community was chiefly gathered out of the lower ranks in the social scale. The rich man is described as having a gold ring or rings on his fingers, for it was a common custom to wear a number of these ornaments; he is clad also in handsome attire, literally "shining," most likely with reference to the gloss of the texture of his raiment; and the poor man is represented as clothed in shabby attire, most probably with reference to the soil contracted in labour. (*F. T. Bassett, M.A.*) **A man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel.**—*Degrees of honour in the Church:*—This place taketh not away degrees of honour from men, neither denieth it honour or worship to be given to men of honour or worship, albeit wicked and unworthy. St. James only teacheth not to judge of the faith and religion of Christ in men by their outward appearance, neither in the public meetings of Christians to reverence or prefer the rich men of the world, being wicked, with the disdaining of the poor which are religious, as the words themselves import when to the rich man we say, "Sit here in a good and worshipful place," and to the poor, "Sit there," or "Sit under my footstool," which argueth contempt of the poor brethren; for if in spectacles and theatrical sights, in election of officers, in parliaments, in assizes and sessions, and in all well-ordered assemblies of men, there is difference of men and comeliness of persons observed, how much more in ecclesiastical meetings ought there an order to be observed! whereof the primitive Church was careful, appointing their place for the ministers, theirs for the laity, theirs for them which were to be catechised, theirs for them which were to do penance and to make open acknowledgment of their offences. The same was ratified by councils, confirmed by fathers; and for the business of the churches or the reproving of men's vices and correcting of them which fell both Tertullian and St. Ambrose writeth that there were several places for certain persons assigned. So, then, all difference and degrees of men are not here forbidden, but in Christian assemblies to respect the rich, with the contempt and disdain of the poor, is condemned. (*R. Turnbull.*) *Showing off dress in church:*—Perhaps, in the modern church worship, the greatest discouragement which the poor feel is in the dress which their rich brethren and sisters are accustomed to exhibit in the house of God. It is a shame to their poor apparel. It ought to be a shame to any well-to-do Christian woman when she wears her gayest and newest costly clothing to public worship, and appears with diamonds and other very valuable and conspicuous ornaments before the altar of her God. Cannot the Christian women of this age at length have the courage to refuse to continue to be Sunday advertisements of modistes and milliners? A lady in New York, whose pew was on one of the wall sides of the church, and who consequently had the congregation all on one side of her, suggested to her milliner that she put a certain bow on the "congregation side" of her bonnet! What a revelation was that! And was it solitary? Is not the preparation of many a worshipper made "on the congregation side"? And is not the house of the Lord thus turned into a show-room, in which those who have no special dry-goods to exhibit are neither welcome nor at home? (*C. F. Deems, D.D.*) *A gold-ringed man:*—The custom was one of the fashions of the empire, and had spread from Rome to Judæa. So Juvenal, in a portrait which unites the two forms of ostentatious luxury noted by St. James, describes one who,

though born as an Egyptian slave, appears with Tyrian robes upon his shoulders and golden rings, light or heavy, according to the season ("Sat." i. 28, 30). So in "Martial" (xi. 60) we read of one who wears six rings on every finger day and night, and even when he bathes. *(Dean Pumptre.)* *The poor to be treated equitably*:—The tutor of Cyrus instructed him, when in a controversy, where a great boy would have taken a large coat from a little boy because his own was too little for him and the other's was too big, he adjudged the great coat to the great boy. His tutor answered, "Sir, if you were made a judge of decency or fitness, you had judged well in giving the biggest to the biggest; but when you were appointed judge, not whom the coat did fit, but whose it was, you should have considered the title and the possession, who did the violence, and who made it, or who bought it." And so it must be in judgments between the rich and the poor: it is not to be considered what the poor man needs, but what is his own. *(Jeremy Taylor, D.D.)* *Bowing to an old coat*:—The rich man is like him who, walking in the market with the cast-off coat of a nobleman to which the tinsel star was still sewn, felt elated and proud—a great man truly, because all bowed and raised their hats. Reaching home, he strutted before the glass with a lord-like air, and caught sight of the star. "Aha!" cried he, blushing red with shame, "what a fool the world is to bow to an old coat!" *(H. O. Mackey.)* **Judges of evil thoughts.**—*Our judgments of others*:—I. OURS IS A CRITICAL AGE, and we, most of us, have learned how to criticise. It has been raised to a science. We can distinguish the false from the true, the impostor from the honest man. We can put the motive to everything that is done. We can estimate character, we can measure the degrees of virtue and of vice; nay, so clever have we grown in this accomplishment, that we discover things that never existed, see unkindness where none was meant, deceit and hypocrisy in the honest and the true, selfishness in some act of generosity which we cannot otherwise account for. II. JUDGE NOT. 1. Because we cannot judge aright. Even when there is no beam in our own eye to obscure our vision, and no want of charity to bias our judgment, we cannot truly judge of the motives which are at work in another. The French have a motto, that "To know everything is to forgive everything"; and if this is not literally true, at least it embodies a truth, which we are slow enough to admit, that we often judge by the outside fact and give no credit for the hidden motive. "Men who see *into* their neighbours," says an acute observer of human nature, "are very apt to be contemptuous; but men who see *through* them find something lying behind every human soul which they cannot judge and dare not sneer at." 2. It is the very worst policy possible. The man who judges harshly will be harshly judged. But he who has always a good word to say of another will find but few critics and many friends. I was much struck by a chance remark made to me by a friend not long ago. Speaking of a neighbour, he said: "He seems a good sort of man. I never heard him speak against any one; and that is the kind of man I like." 3. If you are honest with yourself, you dare not judge. To judge, you must yourself be at least free from the sin which you profess to judge (Matt. vii. 5; John viii. 7). It is God's prerogative (Rom. xiv. 4). What if the Master should judge *us* as we are so ready to judge our fellow men? What if God should take us at our word, and forgive us *as* we forgive those who trespass against us? *(A. L. Moore, M.A.)* *Evil thoughts*:—Evil thoughts, if cherished, blight virtue, destroy purity, and undermine the stablest foundations of character. They are very much like rot in timber, like rust in iron. They eat into the man. And when the process has gone on for awhile, and there comes the stress of an outward temptation, down they go into a mass of ruins. **Hath not God chosen the poor?**—*The rich and the poor*:—Let us not misunderstand St. James. He does not say or imply that the poor man is promised salvation on account of his poverty, or that his poverty is in any way meritorious. That is not the case, any more than that the wealth of the rich is a sin. But so far as God has declared any preference, it is for the poor rather than for the rich. The poor man has fewer temptations, and he is more likely to live according to God's will, and to win the blessings that are in store for those who love Him. His dependence upon God for the means of life is perpetually brought home to him, and he is spared the peril of trusting in riches, which is so terrible a snare to the wealthy. He has greater opportunities of the virtues which make man Christlike, and fewer occasions of falling into those sins which separate him most fatally from Christ. But opportunities are not virtues, and poverty is not salvation. Nevertheless, to a Christian a poor man is an object of reverence rather than of contempt. But the error of the worldly Christians

whom St. James is here rebuking does not end with dishonouring the poor whom God has honoured; they also pay special respect to the rich. Have the rich, as a class, shown that they deserve anything of the kind? Very much the reverse, as experience is constantly proving. "Do not the rich oppress you?" &c. St. James is thinking of the rich Sadducees, who at this period (A.D. 35–65) were among the worst oppressors of the poorer Jews, and of course were specially bitter against those who had become adherents of "the Way," and who seemed to them to be renegades from the faith of their forefathers. It was precisely to this kind of oppression that St. Paul devoted himself with fanatical zeal previous to his conversion (Acts ix. 1, 2; 1 Tim. i. 13; 1 Cor. xv. 9; Phil. iii. 6). "The judgment-seats" before which these wealthy Jews drag their poorer brethren may be either heathen or Jewish courts (*cf.* 1 Cor. vi. 2, 4), but are probably the Jewish courts frequently held in the synagogues. The Roman Government allowed the Jews very considerable powers of jurisdiction over their own people, not only in purely ecclesiastical matters, but in civil matters as well. The Mosaic law penetrated into almost all the relations of life, and where it was concerned it was intolerable to a Jew to be tried by heathen law. Consequently the Romans found that their control over the Jews was more secure and less provocative of rebellion when the Jews were permitted to retain a large measure of self-government. These were the times when women bought the priesthood for their husbands from Herod Agrippa II., and went to see them officiate, over carpets spread from their own door to the temple; when wealthy priests were too fastidious to kill the victims for sacrifice without first putting on silk gloves; when their kitchens were furnished with every appliance for luxurious living, and their tables with every delicacy; and when, supported by the Romans, to whom they truckled, they made war upon the poor priests, who were supported by the people. Like Hophni and Phinehas, they sent out their servants to collect what they claimed as offerings, and if payment was refused the servants took what they claimed by force. Facts like these help us to understand the strong language used here by St. James, and the still sterner words at the beginning of the fifth chapter. In such a state of society the mere possession of wealth certainly established no claims upon the reverence of a Christian congregation; and the fawning upon rich people, degrading and unchristian at all times, would seem to St. James to be specially perilous and distressing then. "Do not they blaspheme the honourable name by which ye are called?" The last clause literally means "which was called upon you"; and we need not doubt that the reference is to the name of Christ, which was invoked upon them at their baptism. That the blasphemers are not Christians is shown by the clause "which was called upon *you*." Had Christians been intended, St. James would have written, "Do not they blaspheme the honourable name which was called upon *them*?" That they blasphemed the name in which they were baptized would have been such an aggravation of their offence that he would not have failed to indicate it. These blasphemers were, no doubt, Jews; and St. James has in his mind the anathemas against Jesus Christ which were frequent utterances among the Jews, both in the synagogues and in conversation. His argument, therefore, amounts to this, that the practice of honouring the rich for their riches is (quite independently of any dishonour done to the poor) doubly reprehensible. It involves the meanness of flattering their own oppressors and the wickedness of reverencing those who blaspheme Christ. It is a servile surrender of their own rights, and base disloyalty to their Lord. But perhaps (the argument continues) some will defend this respect paid to the rich as being no disloyalty to Christ, but, on the contrary, simple fulfilment of the royal law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Be it so, that the rich as a class are unworthy of respect and honour, yet nevertheless they are our neighbours, and no misconduct on their side can cancel the obligation on our side to treat them as we should wish to be treated ourselves. We ourselves like to be respected and honoured, and therefore we pay respect and honour to them. To those who argue thus the reply is easy. Certainly, if that is your motive, ye do well. But why do you love your neighbour as yourselves if he chances to be rich, and treat him like a dog if he chances to be poor? The law of loving one's neighbour as one's self is a "royal law," as being sovereign over other laws, inasmuch as it is one of those two on which "hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. xxii. 40). Indeed, either of the two may be interpreted so as to cover the whole duty of man. Thus St. Paul says of this royal law, "The whole law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Gal. v. 14); and St. John teaches the same truth in a different way when he declares that he that loveth not his brother

whom he hath seen cannot love God whom he hath not seen (1 John iv. 20). "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all." The law is the expression of one and the same principle—love; and of one and the same will—the will of God. Therefore he who deliberately offends against any one of its enactments, however diligently he may keep all the rest, is guilty of offending against the whole. His guiding principle is not love, but selfishness—not God's will, but his own. He keeps nine-tenths of the law because he likes to do so, and he breaks one-tenth because he likes to do so. (*A. Plummer, D.D.*) *The poor chosen by God*:—1. God often chooses the poor of this world. The lion and the eagle are passed by, and the lamb and the dove chosen for sacrifice (Matt. xi. 25). This God does—(1) Partly to show the glory of His power in preserving them, and truth amongst them, that were not upheld by worldly props. (2) Partly to show the riches of His goodness. (3) Partly to discover His wisdom by making up their outward defects by this inward glory. (4) Partly that the members may be conformed to the Head, the saints to Christ, in meanness and suffering. (5) Partly because poverty is a means to keep them upright: riches are a great snare. 2. There are poor in this world, and poor in the world to come. Though here you swim and wallow in a sea of pleasures, yet there you may want a drop to cool your tongue. 3. The poor of this world may be spiritually rich (2 Cor. vi. 10). 4. Faith makes us truly rich; it is the open hand of the soul, to receive all the bounteous supplies of God. If we be empty and poor, it is not because God's hand is straitened, but ours is not opened. 5. The Lord loves only the godly poor (Matt. v. 3). 6. All God's people are heirs (Rom. viii. 17). 7. The faithful are heirs to a kingdom (Rev. i. 6). 8. Heaven is a kingdom engaged by promise. It is not only good to tempt your desires, but sure to support your hopes. 9. The promise of the kingdom is made to those that love God. Love is the effect of faith, and the ground of all duty, and so the best discovery of a spiritual estate. (*T. Manton.*) *To the poor*:—I. THE IMPORT OF THE STATEMENT. 1. Not that only the poor are chosen. 2. Not that all the poor are chosen. 3. More of the poor are chosen than of the rich. II. THE REASONS OF THE FACT. 1. It illustrates the sovereignty of God. 2. It furnishes a powerful argument for the truth of Christianity. 3. It occasions a magnificent display of the character and genius of the gospel. 4. It shows the estimate that is formed by God of the value of wealth. 5. It teaches Christians to raise their thoughts to heaven. (*G. Brooks.*) *Poverty gives opportunity for manifold virtues*:—A wise man is placed in the variety of chances, like the nave or centre of a wheel in the midst of all the circumvolutions and changes of posture, without violence or change, save that it turns gently in compliance with its changed parts, and is indifferent which part is up, and which is down; for there is some virtue or other to be exercised whatever happens, either patience or thanksgiving, love or fear, moderation or humility, charity or contentedness, and they are every one of them equally in order to his great end and immortal felicity; and beauty is not made by white or red, by black eyes, and a round face, by a straight body and a smooth skin; but by a proportion to the fancy. No rules can make amiability, our minds and apprehensions make that; and so is our felicity: and we may be reconciled to poverty and a low fortune, if we suffer contentedness and the grace of God to make the proportion. For no man is poor that doth not think himself so. But if in a full fortune with impatience he desires more, he proclaims his wants and his beggarly condition. (*Jeremy Taylor, D.D.*) *Penury not the deepest poverty*:—Life has deeper poverties than penury, because it has treasures costlier than gold. (*J. O. Dykes, D.D.*) *Poor yet good*:—Better go to heaven in rags, than to hell in embroidery. Many whom the world regards as dirt, the Lord esteems as jewels. Judge a Christian not by his coat, but by his character. *Poor yet rich*:—A poor soul may be a rich Christian, and a rich man may have a poor soul. (*J. Trapp.*) *Grateful for poverty*:—In the last will and testament of Martin Luther occurs the following remarkable passage:—"Lord God, I thank Thee that Thou hast been pleased to make me a poor and indigent man upon earth. I have neither house, nor land, nor money to leave behind me. Thou hast given me wife and children, whom I now restore to Thee. Lord, nourish, teach, and preserve them, as Thou hast me." (*K. Arvine.*) *Little happiness with rich men*:—Big bells are very apt to be poorly cast. I never heard of a bell which weighed a great many thousand pounds which, first or last, did not break. And what a sound a big bell that is broken gives! If you take these overgrown rich men and ring them, how little happiness you find in them! (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Virtue the way to honour*:—At Athens there were two temples, a temple of virtue and a temple of

honour; and there was no going into the temple of honour but through the temple of virtue; so the kingdoms of grace and glory are so joined together that we cannot go into the kingdom of glory but through the kingdom of grace. (*T. Watson.*) **Ye have despised the poor.**—*Sins of the rich against the poor*:—I. The first evil for which the profane rich men are to be held as execrable is their TYRANNY; they oppress the poor by tyranny. Men are oppressed by tyranny divers ways. 1. When they are imprisoned, afflicted, persecuted by the rich and mighty men of the world. 2. When in the trades of this life they deal hardly, deceitfully. 3. When they wring them by usury, forfeitures, exactions, impositions, and all manner of extortion. 4. When they weary and waste the bodies of the poor with toilsome labour unrewarded. II. Another and second evil for which they ought to be held accursed is their CRUELTY AND UNMERCIFULNESS; for they draw the poor before judgment seats for their profession and religion. III. The third sin in the rich men of the world wherefore they are to be held accursed IS THEIR BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE RELIGION OF CHRIST, they blaspheme the worthy name whereby ye are named. 1. When they deride, jest, scorn, and scoff at Christian religion, speaking maliciously and disdainfully against Christ and His profession. 2. As by their speech, so by their lives, men blaspheme and dishonour the gospel when they which profess religion walk not, neither live thereafter, by which means the gospel is slandered, dishonoured, and blasphemed. (*R. Turnbull.*) *The sin of neglecting the poor*:—I. GOD HAS NOT OVERLOOKED THE POOR. 1. His sovereignty has been exercised in their favour. (1) Our Lord, when He undertook man's nature, was born amongst the poor, brought up in poverty, and made acquainted with all its sufferings and privations. (2) During the personal ministry of our Lord, while the chief priests rejected Him and members of the higher classes among the Jews treated Him with scorn, "the common people heard Him gladly." (3) See 1 Cor. i. 26–28. 2. The poor are interested in God's promises. 3. They are interested in His kingdom (Luke xii. 32). As the result of all this mercy and grace, many amongst the poor are being prepared for their future inheritance. There are amongst them some who are distinguished by their faith and by their love, as well as by their position and hopes. II. THE INFLUENCE WHICH THIS TRUTH OUGHT TO HAVE UPON OUR CONDUCT, as those who wish to serve the Lord Christ. I. The poor should have the gospel preached unto them. 2. Civility and kindness should be shown towards them. 3. Active benevolence. (*W. Cadman, M.A.*) *Men who despise the poor*:—These men harden themselves in their sternness; they stand fixed in their own determination, even as on a rock. It is useless for me to place before such men that tender object of sympathy, a helpless infant, without one rag to shelter it from the blast; they will use their ample cloak to hide their faces from the very misery which that cloak would cover. It is needless to tell them that the fire in the widow's cottage never burns when they can make themselves joyful and happy in their cold stern-heartedness. For such men I can but feel unmitigated and unbounded sorrow. How truly pitiable is he who at the end of a life, perhaps of fourscore years, falls asleep without being able to call to mind one act of benevolence! (*E. West.*) *Despising the poor*:—He that's down, down with him. (*Anon.*) *Taking undue advantage of poverty*:—Men go over the hedge where it is lowest. (*J. Trapp.*) *A threefold sin*:—This is a sin against race, grace, and place. (*Ibid.*) *God honouring, men despising*:—The pronoun is emphatic, "God chose the poor, *ye* put them to shame." (*Dean Plumptre.*) *Dishonouring whom God honours*:—With Haman—like impiety ye would disgrace "the man whom the King delights to honour." (*A. Plummer, D.D.*) *Professors, yet persecutors*:—There seems, at first, a want of logical coherence. The rich man first appears as gaining undue pre-eminence in the assembly of Christians, and then as one of a class of persecutors and blasphemers. This, however, is just the point on which St. James lays stress. Men honoured the rich Christian, not because he was a Christian, but because he was rich, *i.e.*, because he was connected with a class, which, as such, had shown itself bitterly hostile to them. (*Dean Plumptre.*) *A rogue in the heart*:—Many a man has a paternoster round his neck and a rogue in his heart. (*M. Luther.*) *Tyranny of money*:—Money is now exactly what mountain promontories over public roads were in old times. The barons fought for them fairly; the strongest and cunningest got them, then fortified them and made every one who passed below pay toll. Well, capital now is exactly what crags were then. Men fight fairly (we will at least grant so much, though it is more than we ought) for their money; but once having got it, the fortified millionaire can make everybody who passes below pay toll to his million, and build another tower of his money castle. And I can tell you the poor vagrants by the roadside suffer now quite as

much from the bag-baron as ever they did from the crag-baron. Bags and crags have just the same result on rags. (*J. Ruskin.*) *Oppression:*—"Oppress you"; yea, devour you, as the greater fish do the lesser. (*J. Trapp.*)

Vers. 8, 9. **Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.**—*My neighbour:*—The good old word "neighbour" means one who, because he lives in a near dwelling or home, is specially related to us; and upon the relation which it signifies there have been builded more than one of the institutions of Anglo-Saxon civil society. From its earliest times among that people the bond between neighbours was so definite and intimate, that in the eye of the law one neighbour was held to be responsible for the security and well-being of another. If a man was murdered, the neighbours were in the first instance accounted responsible; and it was only when they had purged themselves by finding and convicting the real murderer, that they were held to be acquitted. So also in case of dispute or disagreement between any two neighbours, twelve or more of the other neighbours were summoned as an assize to determine the matter. There is no doubt that it was upon this ancient custom that our great institution of trial by jury was founded; and it is upon the same custom, the same ancient and sacred bond of neighbourhood, that what may be called the very corner-stone of our public liberty rests—that is, the right and the duty of local self-government in all matters not expressly delegated to the national power. Now, if we go back to first principles, we find that the enactment on which all human society rests is, the royal law given by God Himself and re-enacted by His Son. You will observe that love to one's neighbour is likened to love to God. Let us try, then, to get at the principle on which love to God must rest, and this will be the principle of love to our neighbour. Why, then, should we love God with heart, mind, soul, strength? It is because in God man finds the ideals which are the prototypes of all that is noble in himself, and which therefore he must love if he would be true to his own better nature and higher destiny. And the obligation of man to love his neighbour as himself lies in the fact that it is in his neighbour that man gets his clearest revelation of God—more clear than any revelation in words or works. It is in the soul of man when looked at with the eyes of neighbourliness that man gets his best vision of the majesty and beauty of God. Now in the light of these considerations, think first of the dignity and discipline that belong to society. If we take society now as we know it, the social intercourse of Christian men and women under well-known rules of politeness and good manners, we find that it has a dignity of its own that entitles it to be considered one of the loftiest results of Christian civilisation. It was not till comparatively recent times that this great commonwealth of men and women was organised in the civilised world; and even now it is only among the English-speaking peoples and their congeners that it has attained a free development. This great commonwealth has its own gentle and gracious laws; its silent tribunals which noiselessly but unerringly enforce them; its dignities, its honours, its joys, its labours, its duties, its delights, the movements of which constitute the characteristic economy of modern civilised life. Now, the discipline of it will be apparent, when it is considered that the one principle which regulates it throughout is self-sacrifice. It is a great truth that the principle of the Cross underlies all good manners. Self-denial, self-control, self-sacrifice, the very essence of Christianity, are actually put into practice in the behaviour of good society. Men must restrain their baser impulses and instincts. Selfishness, if it exist at all, must at least be dissembled or concealed. Self-assertion must be abandoned. No man can even seem to be a gentleman who does not put into practice those principles of the Cross of Christ which the gospel commends to us; and no man can really be a gentleman unless he have those principles in his heart. The discipline of polite society, therefore, is of much importance in the culture of the Christian life, since it is the actual putting into practice of its principles, which, like all principles, cannot be fully appropriated until we use them. Little need be said of the educational influence of society. To see Christian men and women at their best; to turn toward them the best side of our nature; to abjure pride; to banish self-seeking and selfishness; to follow, if only for an hour, lofty ideals; to enjoy the bright flashes of wit, the sustained delight of high converse; to think not of self but of others, and to lose one's self in gracious ministry to others—this of itself ought to be an educating, ennobling employment, which would train men for ideal pursuits, both here and hereafter. And this brings me to my next topic—the dangers which beset society. First, there is selfishness—the selfishness which is always seeking its own good, its own advancement, its own advantage, in, through,

or by means of society. This it is which so often makes society a mere vulgar competition, hospitality a mere sham and bargain, like the publicans giving merely to receive as much again. Akin to this danger, and no less base, is the frivolous or calculating worldliness which makes society a mere means of vulgar and pretentious display—a display which excludes the poor, which alienates classes, which works ruin to many a household, and which, like a dry-rot, soon makes the society where it prevails a mere sham. The last danger I shall mention is unreality. In society it is so easy to be unreal; to pretend to feel more than one does feel; to seem glad when one is not glad, and sorry when one is not sorry; to say smooth and false things, because smooth and false things are so easy to be said. What is the remedy? A return to the great first principle on which society is founded—love to one's neighbour because he is a neighbour, and because he is a man. (*Bp. S. S. Harris.*) *The royal law*:—1. The law which is here called royal is the law of love and righteousness, prescribing what duty to every one pertaineth, and it containeth that part of the law which in the second table is delivered, teaching us to love without contemning, to prefer one without disdain of another, to regard the rich without neglect of the poor brethren. 2. This law of love is therefore called the royal law—(1) Because it is from a king, not mortal but immortal: even the King of kings and Lord of lords, even from God. 3. This law, furthermore, is called royal because it is like the king's highway. So the law of God, which is the law of love, is open, plain, without turnings, of all men to be done. 4. The law of love being this royal law, and for these causes so called, it enjoineth men to love their neighbours as themselves. (1) That God's law requireth love, who readeth the Scriptures and seeth not? (2) The persons whom we must love are our neighbours, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (3) The manner how we must love is, as ourselves. And every man unfeignedly, fervently, continually loveth himself, so must we also love our neighbours. (*R. Turnbull.*) *Love to the neighbour*:—The word "neighbour" in this royal law had, through the lapse of ages, acquired a narrow meaning, mainly because men's thoughts and sympathies were less comprehensive than the Divine purpose. But Christ gave new applications to it, and a more expansive spiritual interpretation. The neighbour with Him was no longer confined to the same tribe, or to the dwellers in the same valley or nation, but became co-extensive with human suffering and misfortune throughout the vast family of mankind. "Love thy neighbour as thyself." It is easy for most persons to love themselves, and to accept what appears to be for their own advantage. It is quite right, too, for a man to love himself. But his love to himself is not to be supreme and all-absorbing. He has to love other persons. The neighbour, you will observe, is put on the same level as self. Look at the question in this way. Suppose you loved others as well as you love yourself. That might be an agreeable thing to them to possess the confidence of your love; and suppose you in return were loved by them as much as they loved themselves, that ought to be a source of comfort to you. Put in this light the royal law does not seem a hard one, does it? And if it operated universally in society, and through all circles, the effect would be very beneficent and delightful, would it not? "Yea, doubtless," say you, "but that is not where the shoe pinches. It is when we have to love others, or the neighbour who does not love us, where the gist of the difficulty lies." Men ask, "Am I to love a man who does not love me, nay, who may be utterly indifferent to me or even hate me?" In a question of this nature no arguments we might urge would dislodge the man of carnal mind from his stronghold of indifference. But to a man who accepts the teaching of Christ we must affirm His Divine testimony (Matt. v. 44–48). This interpretation of the royal law by the Master Himself settles at once, for those who acknowledge His authority, the degree and manner in which we are to love our neighbours, whether friends or enemies. Our love to our neighbour is to exhibit the same qualities, sincerity, constancy, activity, as the love which we cherish for ourselves. Attempts have been made to exclude the element of degree from the meaning of the words "as thyself," on the ground that, from the constitution of human nature, obedience to such a command is impossible. But it would need much weightier reasons to prove that this thought of degree was not intended in the terms of the royal law. What is it in our neighbour we have to love as ourselves? And this suggests another question—What is it in "thyself" that thou hast to love? In what sense and to what extent is a man to love himself? Many persons love to pamper themselves, to indulge themselves, to amuse themselves; but these are as far from loving themselves truly, as the night from the day. For a man to love himself, as the Scriptures teach, means that he loves the best that is in him. I

cannot love myself as I ought unless I keep my body, with all its powers and passions, under; unless I keep conscience and Christ enthroned in my heart. All that is false, cruel, deceptive, oppressive, slanderous, and dishonourable, I must repudiate, if I would love myself as the royal law teaches. We are not required by this royal law to love the sinful, the offensive, the evil characteristics and dispositions in our neighbour, any more than we are required to love these things in ourselves. But I am to love my neighbour in regard to things affecting his moral and spiritual well-being, and concerning his character and destiny for eternity. I am to help my neighbour to attain these higher, and holier, and better ends of his being, as certainly as I desire to help myself in the acquisition of these aims. Now briefly glance at the similarity of manner which love to self and love to the neighbour should exhibit. I ought to love myself with a sincere, active, and constant love. In like manner I am to display these same qualities in the love of my neighbour. Observe the wisdom and beauty of this saying, and how it is employed as a guide to a higher moral life. Self-love is ever present with us; inordinate self-love is the cause of most of the excesses and sins of our life. Christ takes hold of this very self-love and makes it the occasion and means of rising into a juster love of others. He appeals to the solicitude that we have regarding our own health, business reputation, and the desire to avoid self-injury, to cherish similar feelings toward others. The same motives that influence us in these things with respect to ourselves are to operate on behalf of our neighbour. If we are eagerly solicitous for our own spiritual welfare—our growth in peace, holiness, and righteousness of living, this, then, is to be the guide as to the manner and extent of our love for the spiritual good of our fellow-men. Love them in these ways as thou lovest thyself. (*D. Jackson.*)

Love of neighbour:—Every man, so far as he is a man at all, is to be loved. But you will say, "That rule, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,' is in any case an impractical and an impossible rule." It is true that "as thyself" does not define the degree, it indicates the manner. Nor does it, of course, exclude differences. "Blood is thicker than water." We must love best our nearest and dearest, our brethren and companions, our fellow countrymen, the good, the worthy, the large-hearted, the household of faith. Still even with these limitations to minds tainted by selfishness and vulgarised by custom, the commandment still appears doubtless an Utopian rule. God's saints have felt it to be the most natural thing in the world. "I could have wished myself to be anathema from Christ," says St. Paul, "on behalf of my brethren." Smaller natures have been quite shocked by the expression, yet Moses had cried long before: "Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written." Danton in the French revolution was no Christian, yet even Danton could exclaim: "Be my name branded if only France be freed"; and the mission preacher who revived religious life in England exclaimed, "Let George Whitefield perish if God be glorified." Surely even we must often enough have had the feeling that we care more for those whom we love than for ourselves. Surely for our children we must have prayed with Enoch Arden, "Save them from this, whatever comes to me." In truth this care for others more than ourselves is the one distinguishing mark which separates the ignoble from the noble life. What is it which makes the life of frivolous, godless women, and debauched sottish men so inherently contemptible? It is their selfishness: they have shifted the centre of gravity from mankind to their own paltry greedy egotism; to whom applies the stern question of Carlyle, "Art thou a vulture, then, and only carest to get for thyself so much carrion?" Love to our neighbour has been the illumination of the world: it has kindled the scholar's lamp, and nerved the reformer's courage, and supported the statesman's strength, and enabled the truth-seeker to live on in the oppression of a perpetual sitting amidst corrupt Churches and an evil world. It is love to our neighbour which has over and over again purged the slum and built the orphanage and gathered little children into schools; it has had compassion on the poor, it has given bread to the hungry, and covered the naked with a garment; it has held forth the Bible to the nations, it has launched the lifeboat, it has taken the prodigal by the right hand and opened the door of repentance to the harlot and the thief. It was love to our neighbour which burned like the fire of God upon the altar of their hearts, in a Carey, and a Livingstone, a Romilly, a Howard, a Clarkson; sent missionaries to the heathen, modified the ferocities of penal law, purified the prison, set free the slaves. It was love to our neighbour which, energising even an age of torpor and of mammon worship, sent Wesley to fan the flame amidst the dying embers of religion, and Gordon to toil among his ragged boys, and Coleridge Pattison to die by

the poisoned arrows of savages, and Father Damien to waste away at loathly Molokai, a leper among the lepers. It is a dim reflection of the love of Him who lived and died to redeem a guilty world. It differentiates the worldly life and its low aims from the noble and Christian life as ready to do good even to them which despitefully use it and persecute it. Every true life comes nearest to the life of Christ by love to its neighbour, and this love which has next to nothing to do with any form of external religiosity is the essence and epitome of all pure religion; it is the end of the commandments; it is the fulfilling of the law. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *Love the law of the kingdom*:—The doctrine which bases all the relations of employer and employed upon self-interest is a doctrine of the pit; it has been bringing hell to earth in large instalments for a great many years. You can have hell in your factory, or you can have heaven there, just as you please. If it is hell that you want, build your business on the law of hell, which is—Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost. Out of that will come fightings perennial and unrelenting. If it is heaven that you want, then build your business on the law of the kingdom of heaven, which is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." That will put you in the path of peace. *I am as good as you* v. *You are as good as I*:—James Russell Lowell touched a chord, with a master hand, when, some little time ago, he said: "The Republic has gone on far too long on the principle 'I am as good as you,' and she must now begin on the other principle, 'You are as good as I.'" These two principles illustrate, most forcibly, the respective principles of superstition and religion, of selfishness and sacrifice. Going on the principle of superstition and selfishness, the old world sickened and died, slain by its own hand. "I am as good as you," filled the earth with "demons and chimeras dire," whose chief employment it was to prey upon their authors. Christianity struck the note of fraternity, and pride gave place to humility, when the apostles went forth to declare to all men, "You are as good as I." *Love of our neighbour*:—No one loves a person whom he does not wish should be better. (*St. Gregory.*) *Love of our neighbour not to be limited by desert*:—If you fancy that your love of your neighbour is to go no further than desert, consider what your condition is like to be if God shall so deal with you; that is, according to your desert. (*Bishop Wilson.*) *The royal law*:—The law may be called "royal" or "kingly," either—1. In the sense in which Plato speaks (Minos ii. 566), of a just law as kingly or sovereign, using the same adjective as St. James, or—2. As coming from God or Christ as the true king, and forming part of the fundamental code of the kingdom. In a Greek writer the first would probably be the thought intended. In one like St. James, living in the thought of a Divine kingdom, and believing in Jesus as the King, the latter is more likely to have been prominent. (*Dean Plumptre.*) *The suffering of injustice*:—When Athens was governed by the thirty tyrants, Socrates the philosopher was summoned to the senate house, and ordered to go with some other persons they named, to seize one Leon, a man of rank and fortune, whom they determined to put out of the way, that they might enjoy his estate. This commission Socrates flatly refused, and, not satisfied therewith, added his reasons for such refusal: "I will never willingly assist an unjust act." Chericles sharply replied, "Dost thou think, Socrates, to talk always in this high style, and not to suffer?" "Far from it," added he; "I expect to suffer a thousand ills, but none so great as to do unjustly." (*K. Arvine.*) *Neighbourly consideration*:—We may think that great workers must be so absorbed as to forget others. Not so with Turner. A painter had sent in a picture to the Academy. In opposition to the rest of the hanging committee, Turner insisted, "We must find a good place for this young man's picture." "Impossible! impossible! No room!" was the decision. Turner said no more, but quietly removed one of his own pictures and hung up the other in its place. On another occasion, when his picture of Cologne was hung between two portraits, their painter complained that Turner's bright sky had thrown his pictures into the shade. At the private view, an acquaintance of Turner's, who had seen the "Cologne" in all its splendour, led some friends to see the picture. He started back in amazement. The golden sky had become dim, and the glory was gone. He ran up to the artist, "Turner, Turner! what have you been doing?" "Oh," whispered Turner, "poor Lawrence was so unhappy! It's only lampblack, it will all wash off after the exhibition." It was only a wash of lampblack over his sky; but in the doing of this deed his character was lit up with a glory all his own.

Vers. 10–13. **Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point.**—*The necessity of universal obedience*:—I. THE BREACH OF ONE PRECEPT NECESSARILY

IMPLIES, AND THEREFORE IS FAIRLY TO BE ADJUDGED, A BREACH OF THE WHOLE LAW. 1. By offence we are to understand a knowing and voluntary transgression of the law. 2. By offending in one point is meant an habitual neglect of one duty, founded on a disbelief of the necessity of our performing it: and not any single act of transgression. 3. The proposition, then, is this, that whoever knows the law, and yet denies his obedience to any one precept of it, is guilty of disobedience to the whole law. And the reason is because he subverts the authority of the whole. 4. To illustrate this farther, consider that the only principles that preserve men's reverence of God, and engage their obedience to His laws, are either fear and apprehension of His justice in their punishment, or love and the expectation of those rewards He proposes to obedience. Now all the restraint men are under from these motives is by the violation of one law broken through; and the principle which influenced their obedience has lost its efficacy on them. 5. Consider, farther, that the right our Creator has to our obedience is of so high and transcendent a nature that it can suffer no competition; His commands must have the first and governing influence on all our actions. Whoever, therefore, in any one avowed instance of sin, gives any temporal motive or principle a direction over his actions, dethrones the Deity, while he denies the Divine law that sovereign authority it ought to have over him. II. NEITHER CAN OUR OBSERVANCE OF OTHER PARTS OF OUR DUTY BE ANY ATONEMENT FOR OUR GUILT IN OFFENDING IN ONE POINT, OR ENTITLE US TO THE REWARDS OF OBEDIENCE. For it is not our performing any particular action, but our performing it in obedience to the Divine law, that renders it acceptable to God. Now whoever performs some duties required by the law, while he neglects others, cannot act from any conviction that he ought to obey, or from any regard to the authority of the legislator, which being the same in all, would equally influence his obedience to all; but the virtuous actions he performs are either—1. Purely a compliance with natural appetite; and consequently are not to be looked on as instances of obedience to a Divine law. 2. Supposing him not to be insensible of an obedience due to God Almighty, and to act with some regard to it, yet since this regard is so small, that in some instances it is manifestly inferior to a temptation, were the same temptation applied to other parts of his duty, it would by the same regular influence engage him to transgress them too. 3. It may appear not only consistent with the pursuits he is engaged in, but the profit, the reputation, or the convenience of the virtue, may recommend it, from the same inducements of pleasure and advantage by which he has been determined in the choice of his favourite vices; and so he may obey the law in one instance, from the motives that prevail on him to break it in another. But this is not serving God, but our own lusts. III. WHAT ARE THE PLEAS WHICH DELUDE SO GREAT A PART OF MANKIND, AND INDUCE THEM TO BELIEVE THAT GOD WILL BE SATISFIED WITH A PARTIAL OBEDIENCE. 1. It is urged that God Almighty is a wise and merciful Father, who knows the powers and weaknesses of our nature, and the number and difficulty of those temptations we are exposed to. And since an entire observance of the whole law is manifestly beyond our abilities, God cannot without the imputation of cruelty be supposed to require more than a partial obedience from us. But in answer to this we may observe, first, that since God has by positive precept required our obedience to every command of the law, it is a much fairer inference from His knowledge of our abilities, and His inseparable attributes of goodness and justice, to conclude that such a Being would not require impossibilities, and insult the weakness of His creatures with a delusive proposal of happiness, which He knew they could never attain. But to give a more direct answer to this plea, it must be observed that this objection proceeds upon a mistaken sense of the doctrine we assert; which is not that God requires a perfect unsinning obedience, free from particular acts of transgression: thus we acknowledge it impossible for us to obey any one law: but that every law of God is equally to be obeyed. 2. Examine whether any plea can be drawn from Scripture to excuse or to justify a partial obedience. Now it is not pretended that the Scriptures in express terms dispense with any one Divine law. (*J. Rogers, D.D.*) *Real obedience in all things*:—This is undoubtedly a "hard saying"—not one "hard to be understood," but because it is very easy to be understood. It is very plain and simple; it tells us clearly that if any one should keep the whole law of God, except one point, he would just as much be an offender against the law, as if he had broken the whole. The saying is hard, only because it is contrary to our notions. We cannot bear that so much responsibility should attach to our single actions. We are wont naturally to measure ourselves by an easy, pliant rule, making large allowances for ourselves; looking on ourselves, as what we think we

on the whole are: we shrink from looking into our actions, one by one, which might undeceive us. Against this loose, careless way, the stern peremptory voice of the text is directly opposed. It tells us that God looks upon us and our actions one by one; that we cannot be two sorts of selves, one a transgressor, the other a doer of the law; that He does not give His commandments to be dealt with in a trifling way; that He seeks at our hands a full unswerving obedience. Hard, however, as the saying may to any seem to be, the occasion upon which it was spoken makes it yet harder. For St. James is not speaking of what most would regard as being exclusively grievous sins, but of what many would think a slight instance of a slight sin. He is speaking only of an undue respect towards the rich in God's house, and a want of kindly regard to the feelings of the poor. St. James goes on to explain, in reference to the ten commandments, the ground of this truth. "For He that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill," &c. "If we love God," our Blessed Lord says, we should "keep His commandments." It matters not then thus far which commandment we break; all breaking of His commandments is a preference of our own will to His, of the creature to the Creator, of His gifts to Himself, of things earthly to heavenly. Over and above the offensiveness of any sin in itself, all sin has, in common, one offensiveness, in that it is a disregard of His authority, who forbade it. Free-will, of which men boast, is, in our corrupted nature, a perilous gift. And well may we shrink from it. Having been made members of His Son, and so entitled to have His life, through the life-giving Spirit, flow into us, and having been conformed to Him, well may we pray not to be left to our own choice, but that He by His Holy Spirit will master our spirit, direct, control, guide, impel, constrain it. that it should not be able to choose for itself, but choose or leave, as He guides it. This then is the task we have to learn through life, to prefer God and His will to everything besides Him, not to serve Him with a divided and half service. We have our choice given between the two. There can be no choice without preference. Whenever there is a choice to be made, if we choose the creature against the will of God, no matter how small it seem, we are rejecting the Creator. Nay in one way, its very smallness makes the act more grievous, in that, for a small matter, we go against the will of God. Consider, again, how God has in the good chastised, in the evil how He has punished single sins; doubtless, meaning in part to impress upon us the awfulness of single transgressions, of breaking the law in one point. One transgression of one man made the whole human race sinners, brought death into the world, and placed us all under God's wrath. One act of filial disobedience brought a curse on the whole race of Ham. One contempt of his birthright caused Esau to forfeit it altogether. One act of disobedience took away the kingdom from the house of Saul. Or, to turn to God's servants whom He chastised. One unadvised speech lost Moses the entrance into Canaan. One act of deceit made Jacob an outcast and a wanderer. For one act of disobedience was the prophet slain who had fearlessly borne faithful testimony against Jeroboam and all Israel in the very day of their rebellion. For one grievous sin did the sword never depart from the house of David, though, in all besides, "he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord." Such is the awful way in which Holy Scripture itself explains the text; such, in God's sight, is the character of single acts of sin, of which men think so lightly. Yet consider, also, how seldom sins are single! "A little leaven," Scripture saith, "leaveneth the whole lump"; a single sin will taint the whole man. Even the heathen acknowledged that virtues were bound together with a golden band, so that no one could have one virtue perfectly who had not all. Sins too are interwoven together in a sad chain, so that one sin opens the door for others. Look how sins apparently the most opposite are by a subtle band joined together; vanity, or the love of man's praise, and lying which even man despises; extravagance and covetousness; or what seem to have nothing to do with each other, as St. Paul says, idolatry was the root of lust and all that frightful list of sins, to which, he tells us, human nature was once abandoned; or, our own experience shows, how sabbath-breakers go on to drunkenness and working ill to their neighbours; or proverbs tell us in a practical way that "idleness is the parent of all sins." How often do we remark, "How excellent a person such an one would be, but for that one thing in them!" This one leprous spot of vanity, or anger, or ambition, infects all; this one seed of corruption cankers what was otherwise blossoming so fairly and with so much promise. The chain round one little limb keeps the whole man a prisoner. The failure to decide aright in one point mars all other service or puts a person altogether in a wrong

course. Thus does conscience itself, thus does our own implanted sense of right bear witness to the text; and not less our daily judgment in the things of this life. We count him a madman who, though in his senses on all points but one, is on that one point insane. We count him a bad servant who, though on other points good, has one incurable fault to which he is continually yielding. We count him a disobedient son, who on one point ever disobeys. And are we then good servants, if we, in one thing, ever neglect the commands of our Gracious Master? Yea, a man's own conscience, till it be seared, will bear witness in another way. The consciousness of one indulged sin will not allow him rest. Then also Satan, in a fearful way, bears witness to the truth. There is no more common temptation by which the accursed one would plunge man into more hopeless sin than this. He persuades them to commit the first sin by telling them it is slight; and then he perverts the apostle's truth, and tells them its heinousness, and that they may as well go in sin, and breaking other commands of God, because breaking one is enough to condemn them. There is a common proverb by which men express that if they have gone any way in what is wrong, they may as well take their fill both of the enjoyment and of the sin. They feel themselves shut out from heaven by their one sin; they have no hope beyond the grave, and so they may as well have the miserable consolation of "the pleasures of sin for a season"; if therein they may forget themselves and their doom. Yet in one more way we may see that we must strive to obey in all things, or we do not obey at all. Our trials, for the most part, consist but in a few things. If we fail continually in one or two sorts of trials, it may be that we are failing just in what forms our probation, and in what we are to be judged by. What service or what trial is it, if a person fails not when he is not tempted? if the covetous be not a waster? if the slothful be not worldly, or the worldly not slothful? if the easy-natured be not soon angry, or the passionate be not malicious? Yet thus is it that people continually deceive themselves. Must we then indeed fulfil the whole law, break no one command, or shall we at the Day of Judgment be found guilty of all? Is there no hope except in unsinning obedience through the grace given unto us? God forbid! for so should none of us have any hope. The text would stir us up to increased diligence, to examine ourselves, "to look well if there be any way of wickedness in us," and to break off what we find amiss, to dread lest even one accursed thing cleave unto us, to beware how we tamper with any one of God's enemies. Ye with whom, as yet, no one sin is habitual, see that ye let not one sin creep over you; or if any one is entangled in any sin, see that then he continue not in it. (*E. B. Pusey, D.D.*)

The defectiveness of human righteousness:—The great obstacle to the acceptance of the gospel message is the want of a deep and permanent conviction of the enormity of sin and of our actual transgression before God. I. In the words before us THE HIGHEST AND BEST POSSIBLE SUPPOSITION IS MADE WITH REFERENCE TO HUMAN OBEDIENCE. It is supposed that the individual here presented before us has kept the whole law with but one solitary exception. Dress yourself out in your best plumes, put on your most courtly array; deck yourself in your most unspotted garments; suppose the best opinion to be true, that with any degree of self-examination you can entertain of your condition, yet surely you are guilty of one sin, you have broken one commandment—then thou art guilty of the whole, "thou art weighed in the balance," and by thine own weights and measures thou art "found wanting." II. THE SLIGHTEST POSSIBLE FLAW SUPPOSED that could be supposed to exist. Now, can we make a stronger supposition in favour of human righteousness than that which he makes?—and can we refuse to admit a possible flaw to the extent he supposes it to exist, after the plain declaration of the Word of God? III. From the strongest possible supposition of human righteousness, and from the slightest possible flaw that can be supposed to exist in that righteousness, THE MOST FEARFUL CONCLUSION IS DEDUCED AS TO ITS BEARING ON US in these words, "He that shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point is guilty of all." 1. Because all the commandments of the law are inseparably connected. 2. This conclusion of the apostle rests on the unity of the commandments themselves, on the oneness of the principle on which they are founded. God reveals Himself as our Creator and Preserver, a Being to whom we are under infinite obligations; in revealing Himself in this character, all He asks of us is love. From that one feeling, He deduces the various duties we owe to Him—they are all but so many proofs of the existence of the principle of love—and on the same ground of obligation to Him, He enforces the duties we owe to our fellow-men. 3. "He who offends in one point is guilty of all," because the keeping of some command-

ments will not, by any means, atone for the violation of others. 4. The law, as law, cannot permit the slightest deviation, and here we see the folly of looking to the law for justification in the sight of God. (*W. H. Cooper.*) *Guilty of all*:—I. OFFER A FEW EXPLANATORY REMARKS. 1. By "the law" here is not meant the ceremonial, but the moral law, or the law of ten commandments. 2. It is affirmed that the most perfect obedience to the law which could possibly be found amongst sinful and erring creatures would still fall short of its requirements. 3. The conclusion in the text is, that the least defect in our obedience contains in it a virtual violation of the whole law. As the least segment of a true circle is circular, so the smallest act of sin is in the sight of God exceeding sinful. II. ESTABLISH THE LEADING SENTIMENT—that he who offends in one point is guilty of the whole law. 1. All the Divine commands make but one compact, one uniform rule of duty. As all the curtains of the tabernacle, joined together by taches and loops, made but one covering for the ark, and if any part was disjoined it became unfit for the purpose, so if one command be violated, the whole law is broken, and the compact is made void. 2. The will and authority of the Lawgiver is as much resisted and despised by transgressing any one command as by breaking the whole law. 3. That authority which is not sufficient to deter us from sin in any one particular instance would not be sufficient in any other, if suitable temptations offered. 4. The whole law is summed up in love, which is called the fulfilling of the law. Every action therefore that carries in it the want of love to God or our neighbour is a breach of the whole law; and this is the case with every sin that we commit. 5. The consequence of one sin unrepented of and unpardoned is the same as if we lived in the wilful and continued commission of all sin; it is followed with the curse. Improvement: 1. We are hereby taught the extent, purity, and spirituality of the Divine law. It forbids, reproves, and punishes all sin; the first risings of it in the heart, as well as its breakings forth in the life, sinful imaginations as well as sinful actions. 2. The folly and danger of building any hope of salvation on the ground of our own obedience, or works of righteousness that we have done. This can only arise from pride of heart, or the most culpable ignorance; ignorance both of the law and of the gospel, of God and ourselves. 3. The necessity there is for the best of men to humble themselves before God under a sense of their innumerable defects, and to be ever watchful against the commission of sin. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) *Every command to be observed*:—1. It showeth how tender we should be of every command: wilful violation amounteth to a total neglect. The least dust offendeth the eye; and so the law is a tender thing, and soon wronged. 2. Partial obedience is an argument of insincerity. 3. It is a vain deceit to excuse defects of one duty by care of another. 4. Upon any particular failing we ought to renew our peace with God. I have done that now which will make me guilty of the whole law; therefore, soul, run to thy Advocate (1 John ii. 1). 5. We must not only regard the work of duty, but all the circumstances of it; and so proportionably, not only the acts of sin, but the vicious inclinations of it. 6. Former profession will do no good in case there be a total revolt afterward. A little poison in a cup, and one leak in a ship, may ruin all. A man may ride right for a long time, but one turn in the end of the journey may bring him quite out of the way. 7. The smallness of sin is a poor excuse: it is an aggravation rather than an excuse: it is the more sad, that we should stand with God for a trifle. (*T. Manton.*) *Universal obedience*:—I. TO EXPLAIN IT. We cannot deny that there are different degrees of offence against the commands of God. It does not often happen, perhaps, that any person habitually and wilfully violates one commandment only. It is the nature of sin to bring men along from one transgression to another. We may suppose, however, a man who shall reserve to himself one sin, which he allows, and to keep the law very strictly in every other point. Surely such a man is less guilty than another, who is altogether careless about the commands of God. We feel it so; and if less guilty, his punishment will be less in proportion. Having seen what St. James does *not* mean, we will inquire what he does mean. He is censuring the Christians, to whom he writes, for a particular fault which they seem to be allowing themselves in—that of paying court to the rich, to the prejudice of those in humbler station; respecting persons, despising the poor. You will say, perhaps, "Is not this to condemn all? For who is without sin?" "In many things we all offend"; and "if we say that we have no sin, the truth is not in us." True, none are without sin; but without *deadly* sin we trust that many are. True, we all offend; but we do not all offend wilfully: we do not allow ourselves in sin. We must not if we have any well-grounded hope. The true Christian will never feel that he has loved

God with all his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength; but still he will never be satisfied with anything short of this, much less will he say, "I cannot love God so far as to part with this or that besetting sin." A man who should act thus would be guilty of all—so far guilty of all that he would be as much unforgiven of God as if he had been guilty of a breach of all the commandments. His punishment might be less severe than that of a greater and more universal profligate; but it would be no less sure. His exclusion from heaven would be as certain. Such is the explanation of the text. II. I proceed now to VINDICATE IT. You see the case. It is that of a man who is brought under some sense of the duty owed to God. He is not without the knowledge of Him or the fear of Him, but he allows himself in some practice which is contrary to his duty. While this remains so he has not altogether surrendered himself up to God; he has not given Him his heart. Some service he will not grudge; complete service he refuses to pay. In short, he reserves to himself the right of disobeying God when it would be difficult or painful to obey Him. Now, consider whether this deserves to be called obedience. How would it be among men? A parent expects to be obeyed by his child whilst under age. Has not such disobedience on one point caused many a child to be disinherited? A master expects to be obeyed by his servants. Suppose a servant to have many excellent qualities, to be very diligent, very careful, very honest, but still to offend in one point. A general expects to be obeyed by his soldiers. Suppose a man to be very brave, very sober, very punctual, but still to offend in one point. Is he not treated exactly as if he had broken all the commands of his general? Many excellent soldiers suffer death on this account alone in every campaign against an enemy. The people of every land are expected to obey the law of that land. He who offends the law in one point is as surely condemned as if he had committed many offences. These examples, I think, must prove to you that there is nothing unreasonable or hard to understand in this sentence of Scripture. III. I come now to APPLY what has been said. There are two classes of sinners in the world. There are those who acknowledge no restraint from the law of God at all, and if they do not offend in every possible way, are not hindered from offending by anything like godly fear. The thought that God has commanded this, God has forbidden that, never comes into their minds; at least, it never governs their actions. Now, the text is not addressed to them. I would only inquire, If he who keeps the whole law, and yet offends in one point, is guilty of all, what must become of those who offend in every point, who take no heed to keep even any part of the law because it is the law of God? But there are other and different persons with which this sentence of St. James has to do—those who know the law of God, and confess that it ought to be obeyed, but still allow themselves some habit of sin which they do not resolve against, or watch against, or pray against. Perhaps it is a sin of natural temper, as lust, uncharitableness, peevishness. They indulge this sin, and silence the voice of conscience by thinking within themselves, "This is my natural constitution; my disposition leads me to it. I wish it were otherwise; but nature will break out." Now, this very circumstance, that it is the natural disposition, is the reason why they should set their minds to conquer this habit. Here their probation lay. Few persons are tempted equally to all vices. This sin, then, it is their especial business to overcome; and they would make it their business if they were truly faithful. Suppose a child knew that there was one piece of duty which his father particularly required of him, would not this be the very duty which he would take especial pains to perform? I have spoken of sins which belong particularly to the temper. There are others which belong to the way of life, or bad habits to which a person has addicted himself, and which he cannot be persuaded to abandon. One of these is taking the name of God in vain. Another is excess of liquor on occasions of temptation. There are also sins of the tongue, which persons sometimes indulge without being aware of their danger. Now these which I have mentioned are all matters to which you must apply the assurance in the text. This is one test of your state. This is a serious text. Nay, we may think it awful; but I am sure we cannot deny its justice. We cannot deny that God has a right to our service, and that it is not service to disobey Him when we please. We cannot think that God will be put off with half a heart. Try and examine yourselves, then, by this text before you sleep this night. See whether you have permitted yourself in any habit of sin—if there is any such unforsaken sin, any such evil habit still allowed, that is the barrier between you and God; nay, between you and heaven. Lastly, I trust there are those who can affirm with sincerity and truth that they have forsworn all known sin, that they hold no parley, no measures, with any, but strive against

every evil thought and word and deed which Satan inclines their nature to. This must be your evidence that you are in the faith of Christ. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." (*J. B. Sumner, D.D.*) *Offending in one point:*—The justice, the necessity of what James here asserts, will appear from the following considerations: 1. Look at the law itself. It is characterised by essential, all-pervading unity. It has manifold relations. It deals with the heart and life, the thoughts, words, and actions; with men of all ages and conditions, as bound up with and owing duties to each other as members of families, of communities, of churches. But, in perfect harmony with this, it consists of one great, all-comprehensive principle. The whole obedience it demands can be expressed in a single monosyllable. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." The matter standing thus, to break it in one respect is to break it in every respect—in its entirety, its unity. You cannot trample on a single jot or tittle of it without thereby treading on the principle of which it is the expression. 2. Look at the subjects of the law. There must be a unity in them exactly corresponding to the unity in the law. Its great comprehensive demand is love, as we have seen, and by this affection or principle alone can it be fulfilled. There cannot be a failure in any respect but by a failure of this, the spring of all true submission and service. That within us, apart from which none of the Divine statutes can be honoured, is found so far lacking; and the deficiency is to be viewed, not simply in relation to the particular enactment disregarded, but to the entire code with which it is connected. The root of the tree is shown to be affected, and that tells on the stem and all the branches. 3. Look at the Author of the law. It has been given by God, and bears throughout His impress. His authority is stamped equally on every part of the statute-book. But does not this view of the matter lie open to grave objections? Does it not make all sin equal? By offending in one point we do not become guilty of all, but we may be so in varying degrees. Violations of human law, even when they are most complete, differ widely, and so there is a scale of punishments ranging from a trifling or a short imprisonment to death itself. It is not otherwise with the supreme rule of duty. Some sins in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others. To trample on even the least commandment is, in effect, to trample on the whole law; but we may do that more or less wilfully, recklessly, impiously. Again, does it not involve men equally in sin they do and do not commit? If I am held as violating the entire law, then am I not held as violating equally the part I have broken and the part I have not broken? Acts of disobedience have this universal character; but it is one thing constructively, and another thing actually, to trample on all the commandments. Offences of every kind are deadly in their nature; but we are answerable only for those we commit, and the degree of our guilt and misery depends on their number and magnitude. (*John Adam.*) *The prejudices of professing Christians:*—There are few men who would turn themselves to the commission of every crime; and if once it is imagined that the observance of one class of duties can make up for the neglect of another, there are scarcely any who will not delude themselves into the idea that they may find acceptance with God. There are two classes into which all who act with this delusion may be divided. The first consists of those who conceive that the discharge of the social and relative duties, makes up for the neglect of those higher duties we owe to the Author of existence; while the second is composed of those who satisfy themselves with the warmth of their zeal and the scrupulousness of their religious services, while they are without meekness, humility and charity. 1. The first of the prejudices to which we shall direct your attention, is that of those who conceive that if our good deeds overbalance our evil deeds, the Almighty will, in consideration of what is excellent in our conduct, overlook what is defective. The man who conceives that his sins are outnumbered by his virtues, overrates his own merits. But even admitting that any could aver that his virtues outnumbered his vices, it were erroneous to suppose that his sins must, therefore, be cancelled. His virtues are certainly deserving of the approbation of men, but never can atone for the habitual violation of any command of God. This is agreeable to those principles upon which we form our judgments of those around us. How completely our confidence in any person is destroyed, if a single dishonourable action is detected! 2. The next prejudice is nearly akin to what we have been considering, and indeed takes its rise from it. There are who maintain that their lives are chargeable with as few faults as the lives of those who make a profession of religion, and thence infer that their

prospects must be equally favourable. They look at the outward act and see imperfection cleaving to the very best, from which they themselves may happen to be free; but they see nothing at all that takes place in the inner man—nothing of the struggles between principle and passion, between grace and nature, and still less of the force of contrition, of fixed purposes of amendment. Here, then, is the difference between the two. The one sins, and hardens his heart to continue in sin; the other, when he sins, humbles himself in the dust before his God, and resolves, through His grace, to go no more astray. We see, then, the danger of satisfying ourselves with the idea that our lives are as irreproachable as those of others. The habit of measuring ourselves by others is, indeed, pernicious in another respect. It fosters a sensorious disposition, a tendency to underrate the good qualities of others. It creates a suspicion of the purity of their motives. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? In examining yourselves, look to the law by which you are to be tried. There are other prejudices to be found, to which we can only make a general illusion. 3. Some have imagined that what is revealed in Scripture does not apply to their peculiar case, and that the punishment will therefore not be inflicted. They judge of sin by its perceived consequences, and not by its own nature. One man violates the truth, but then this injures no one. Another indulges in sinful pleasure, but his excesses are hurtful to none but himself. But we are not thus to judge of sin. Independently of these consequences, God has declared from on high against all unrighteousness. 4. We now proceed to consider some of the prejudices which prevail among the class of individuals formerly referred to, those who, by the outward observance of the first table of the law, quiet their consciences for the violation of the second, and who, dashing the one table against the other, break the whole. The other mistake is that of those who conceive that the law is altogether superseded by the gospel, and that faith in Christ exempts from the performance of good works. We only remark that the believers are exempted from the curse of the law—they are not free from the obligation to obey God, as the rule of life. Nay, by the new motives Christ has given to obedience, the obligations to obedience are increased instead of diminished. There are one or two snares into which even sincere believers are in danger of falling, which I merely mention. One is, that the readiness they have experienced on the part of the Almighty to pardon them, is employed by Satan as an encouragement to sin, in the prospect of certain forgiveness. Another is, that the power of indwelling sin is never wholly overcome in the world, from which indolence takes occasion to flatter itself, as to the folly of its endeavours, as to the hopelessness of success, and the mercy of God, which is passively relied on, is made thus to increase our willingness to offend. (*D. Welsh, D.D.*) *The law of philanthropy*:—I. IT IS THE SUBSTANCE OF ALL LAW. II. IT IS INCONSISTENT WITH ALL SOCIAL WRONGS. III. IT IS THE SPIRIT OF TRUE LIBERTY. Where there is selfishness, there may be license; where there is love, there is liberty. IV. IT IS THE DETERMINER OF OUR CONDITION. By our loyalty to this law, our possession of this love, we prove that we are in the kingdom of mercy. (*U. R. Thomas.*) *On keeping God's law*:—1. Consider how wonderfully you are obliged to your infinitely good God, in that He hath, through Christ, declared Himself so exceedingly willing to pardon all sins not allowed and lived in. Can you be so foolish and ill-natured as thus to requite the Lord? 2. Consider how gracious God hath been to you in continuing His restraining grace, whereby you have been kept from scandalous sins; whereas He hath had most just provocations to leave you to yourselves, in regard of your allowance of secret ones. 3. Let the partially obedient consider what unaccountable folly and madness it is to disobey God in anything. What can you say for yourselves, why you should obey Him but just so far? 4. Consider what a glorious reward is assured to us to encourage us to obey. 5. Let it be likewise considered that, as vastly great as the reward of obedience shall be, there is no more required of us under the gospel dispensation than, all things considered, needs must. 6. Consider also that the laws which are given us, as they are most necessary, so they are not so many as that we need to be scared at them. 7. Consider that there is so close a connection between them all, that obedience to one law will enable us to obey another, and so on. And the performance of one duty will prepare us for another, and make it easy to us. And on the other hand, the breach of one law will cause carelessness in keeping other laws; and no sin goes alone. 8. I may add that there is no necessity of being very solicitous about any more than one thing, in order to our keeping God's laws; and that is the vigorously possessing our souls with the love of God. 9. What a sad thing and miserable disappointment must it needs be,

to come near to the kingdom of heaven, and yet at last fall short of it for want of going a little further? (*Edward Fowler, D.D.*) *The necessity of universal obedience*:—I. LET US FIX THE SENSE OF OUR APOSTLE'S PROPOSITION. 1. What kind of sin had St. James in view when he said this? It should seem at first, from the connection of the text with the preceding verses, that when St. James says, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all," he means by this one point benevolence. However, I cannot think the meaning ought to be thus restricted. I rather suppose that he took occasion from a particular subject to establish a general maxim, that includes all sins which come under the same description with that of which he was speaking. We acquit the apostle of the charge of preaching a melancholy, cruel morality, and we affirm, for the comfort of timorous minds, that we ought not to place among the sins here intended either momentary faults, daily frailties, or involuntary passions. (1) By daily frailties I mean those imperfections of piety which are inseparable from the conditions of inhabitants of this world, which mix themselves with the virtues of the most eminent saints. These are rather an imperfection essential to nature than a direct violation of the law. (2) We ought not to number momentary faults among the offences of which it is said, "Whosoever committeth one is guilty of a violation of the whole law." A believer falls into such sins only in those sad moments in which he is surprised unawares, and in which he loses in a manner the power of reflecting and thinking. (3) We affirm that gusts of involuntary passions ought not to be included in the number of sins of which St. James saith, "Whosoever offendeth in one point, he is guilty of all." The sins of which the apostle speaks are preceded by the judgment of the mind, accompanied with mature deliberation, and approved by conscience. 2. But in what sense may it be affirmed of any sin that he who offendeth in one point is guilty of all? It is plain St. James neither meant to establish an equality of sins nor an equality of punishments. He probably had two views—a particular and a general view. The particular design might regard the theological system of some Jews, and the general design might regard the moral system of too many Christians. Some Jews, soon after the apostle's time, and very likely in his days, affirmed that God gave a great many precepts to men, not that He intended to oblige them to the observance of all, but that they might have an opportunity of obtaining salvation by observing any one of them; and it was one of their maxims that he who diligently kept one command, was thereby freed from the necessity of observing the rest. What is still more remarkable, when the Jews choose a precept they usually choose one that gives the least check to their favourite passions, and one that is least essential to religion, as some ceremonial precept. This, perhaps, is what Jesus Christ reproves in the Pharisees and Scribes of His time (Matt. xxiii. 23). Perhaps these words of our Saviour may be parallel to those of St. James. The apostle had been recommending love, and at length he tells the Jews who, in the style of Jesus Christ, "omitted mercy," that whosoever should keep the whole law, and yet offend in this one point, would be guilty of all. But St. James did not intend to restrain what he said to love. If he had a particular view to the theological system of some Jews, he had also a general view to the morality of many Christians whose ideas of devotion are too contracted. He informs them that a virtue incomplete in its parts cannot be a true virtue. He affirms that he who resolves in his own mind to sin, and who forces his conscience to approve vice while he commits it, cannot in this manner violate one single article of the law without enervating the whole of it. II. HE WHO VIOLATES ONE PRECEPT OF THE LAW IN THE MANNER JUST NOW DESCRIBED, VIOLATES ALL. 1. He subverts, as far as in him lies, the very foundation of the law. When God gives us laws, He may be considered under either of three relations, or under all the three together, as a Sovereign, a Legislator, a Father. He saps the foundation of that obedience which is due to God considered as a Master, if he imagine he may make any reserve in his obedience; if he say, I will submit to God if He command me to be humble, but not if He command me to be chaste, and so on. He saps the foundation of that obedience which is due to God considered as a Lawgiver, if he imagine God is just in giving such and such a law, but not in prescribing such and such other laws. He subverts the foundation of obedience to God as a Father, if he suppose that God hath our happiness in view in requiring us to renounce some passions; but that He goes contrary to our interests by requiring us to sacrifice some other passions, which he may suppose can never be sacrificed without his sacrificing at the same time his pleasure and felicity. 2. The man who offends in the manner that we have described, he who in his mind

resolves to sin and endeavours to force his conscience to approve vice while he commits it, breaks all the precepts of the law, because, whether he do actually break them or not, he breaks them virtually and intentionally. III. St. James pronounces in our text A SENTENCE OF CONDEMNATION AGAINST THREE SORTS OF SINNERS. 1. They who are engaged in a way of life sinful of itself are guilty of a violation of the whole law, while they seem to offend only in one point. We every day hear merchants and traders ingenuously confess that their business cannot succeed unless they defraud the Government. 2. In the same class we put sinners who cherish a darling passion. A jealous God will accept of none of our homage while we refuse Him that of our chief love. 3. Finally, intractable minds are condemned in our text. Docility is a touchstone, by which a doubtful piety may be known to be real or apparent. (*J. Saurin.*) *The condemning power of God's law* :—It is one strong presumptive evidence in favour of the truth of that system of religion which the Bible propounds to our acceptance, that its doctrines are not calculated to attract human favour or approbation. There is no traceable indication in them of an attempt at adaptation to human prepossessions. They do not bend to human frailty: they concern themselves not with human antipathies or predilections. They present a stern and unmovable aspect. I. CONSIDER WHAT THE DECLARATION IS, AND HOW MUCH IT IMPLIES. A case is put. God has revealed in His holy Word a law for the regulation of His creatures. This law, the index of His Will, is the transcript of His own mind and character. It is therefore holy, just, and good: it is pure, perfect, and spiritual. Nothing else could proceed from Him. Has the law been transgressed (it matters not how much)? If it has been transgressed, it is to no purpose to plead in what a slight particular the transgression was committed. But the excuse is heard, that no other fault can be found, that perfect obedience has been rendered in every other particular. But why was it not fulfilled in this? justice promptly, but confoundingly demands. The offender is speechless; for the stern reply crushes in pieces his vain allegation, and shivers it to the winds. There was a young man, whose reply, when Christ rehearsed to him his duties, was, "All these have I kept from my youth." One thing he lacked, and that was deadness to the world. In one point of that law he offended, and that point was covetousness: he was living in the continual breach of the tenth commandment. Now, this is an invisible sin: it is not of a palpable and outward character like the rest; and the young man had never broken the other nine literally, or at least flagrantly; yet the text pronounces this verdict upon him, "He is guilty of all." II. BUT LET US SEE UPON WHAT PRINCIPLE THIS IS DECLARED. The principle is simply this, that the law is one and indivisible. It is true its requirements are ten in number; but the law itself is one. If you can set at naught God's authority in one particular, you can in another: no distinction can be drawn here. If one link of the chain is broken, the chain is broken. The blow that splits a mirror into two might as well shiver it into a thousand pieces. The invasion of one law of his country deprives the culprit of his liberty or his life; and justice is deaf to any such plea as that he has kept every other law. III. CONSIDER THE APPLICATION OF THIS PRINCIPLE TO OURSELVES. 1. It shuts every mouth: it stops boasting; hereby the seemingly innocent are brought in guilty. It hence appears that there are no little sins, that the slightest delinquencies are noticed; and the tendency is to open men's eyes to their guilt. The law, as thus explained, admits of no escape. 2. One other result which proceeds from this principle in its application, is the arousing men out of their careless security. This the law does by discovering to them the enormity of their guilt, because it shows to them the infinite turpitude of one transgression. It is virtually equal in magnitude with many; for "whosoever offendeth in one point is guilty of all." Thus, each sin is a boundless evil: its guilt transcends all calculation. IV. NOTICE THE MEANS OF ESCAPE FROM CONDEMNATION. 1. If there is any poor sinner, halting from his iniquities now, under the fear of consequences to which before he has been blind, I would bid such a one not despair. Look to Jesus: He has died for you. Repent truly of your sin, and apply to Him for mercy. He will not cast you out: you may be saved by believing in His name. 2. But let me address a few words to the Lord's people before I conclude. (1) In reference to your privileges. Although you have offended in one, and in more than one point of the law, yet you are no longer held to be guilty of all, or indeed of any. Your answer to all charges is this: "Who is He that condemneth? it is Christ that died; yea, rather that is risen again; who also makes intercession for us." Yes; you know that if any of you sin you have an advocate with the Father, who pleads

for you His own all-availing propitiation. Therefore you are free. (2) I would only add one word of a caution. I have said you have liberty. Yet use not this liberty as a license to transgress. See that you abuse not your privileges; neither requite God's mercies with base ingratitude. (*H. Smith, M.A.*) *Guilty of all*:—1. It cannot possibly be the apostle's meaning, that he who commits one sin does by that single fact contract the guilt of all other sins. That he who pilfers, for example, is guilty of murder and adultery; so absurd is this notion, that it may at any time be reduced to a contradiction in itself; for one and the same person may, according to this explication, at one and the same time be guilty of contraries. 2. Can the apostle be supposed to mean to destroy all difference between one sin and another; and to teach that the guilt of all sins is the same, and their malignity equal; that tattling is as execrable as blasphemy? 3. But the doctrine conveyed by the text is this. That a universal obedience to all the laws of God, without reserve, and without exception, is required from us, and cannot be supplied by a partial observance; that is by a strict observance of some, and an absolute neglect of other duties. 4. And the reasonableness of this doctrine will appear from many considerations. (1) That he who offends only in one point of the law, offends however against the Author of the whole body of laws; against that Authority upon which all other points depend, and from which they derive their force and obligation. (2) Again, he who offends in any one point of the law with presumption of toleration in that single offence, though he strictly observes the other points, does by that absurd notion of partial obedience destroy the very attributes of God. (3) Nor let the offender in one point plead his obedience in all others till he has considered of what force such a plea would be before a human tribunal. 5. But let us now consider the insecurity of partial obedience. What man can pretend to say he will continue to keep the whole law, save one point? There is self-deceit at the bottom of such a thought. The whole tribe of vices is so closely connected they unite imperceptibly with each other, nay, sometimes seem to require one another. If we complain of the difficulty of observing some laws more than others, we may be assured the fault is in ourselves; through habits wilfully contracted, want of observation and continual control of the more powerful affections, and therefore tend to aggravate our guilt from the unchecked reiteration of our offences. (*H. Usher, D.D.*) *The duty of an uniform and unreserved obedience*:—I. THE REASONABLENESS OF AN UNRESERVED AND UNIFORM OBEDIENCE TO GOD. 1. Suppose a servant should only execute his master's orders when they fell in with his own humour, but should continually disobey him when they did not suit his fancy or convenience, could such a man be said to obey his master, or only to gratify himself? 2. People are not aware what they are doing when they indulge any one vice. For any one habitual bad quality will, in process of time, as effectually destroy everything morally good in us, as even many bad qualities. When it has thoroughly got possession of your heart it will soon draw the head after it. II. THE FOLLY OF A PARTIAL OBEDIENCE. It is universally agreed that in works of art—architecture, for instance, painting and statuary—it is not one detached independent part, however ornamental, which we call beauty; it is a full result and well-proportioned union of all the several parts, which must have a noble and agreeable effect upon the whole. Thus in life it is not one single accomplishment, how excellent soever, that constitutes the beauty of a Christian life: it is the assemblage of all the moral virtues, as far as in us lies. What avails one glaring action or two, one shining quality or more, which is not of a piece with the rest of our conduct? It is but a purple patch sown upon a garment everywhere else despicably poor, and only serveth to upbraid, by its ridiculous splendour, the coarseness of all the rest. III. ANSWERS TO OBJECTIONS. Some think themselves excusable for the commission of any fault, however notorious, because nobody is free from faults. That is, because the best of men are sometimes liable to little inadvertencies, therefore they may indulge themselves in drunkenness, malice, dishonesty, &c. Nay, they have recourse to Scripture to patronise a wicked life. To as little purpose is it to allege the examples of several great men in the Old Testament in favour of vice. For either they were known sins, of which those men were guilty, or they were not. If the former, then the severity of their repentance bore proportion to the enormity of their guilt. And who would choose to catch a dangerous distemper because some of a strong constitution, after they have undergone very severe discipline, have, with much ado, recovered their former health? But if they were not known sins, such as perhaps were polygamy, concubinage, &c., what is that to us who have no title to the same plea in behalf of the favourite vice which we retain? One objec-

tion more remains to be obviated, viz., that it is inconsistent with the Divine goodness to consign any man who stands clear of all other vices to future misery for one habitual crime. To which, first, I answer that future misery is the necessary consequence of one habit of sin, since one habit of sin disqualifies us for the enjoyment of heaven. I answer further, that it is so far from being inconsistent with God's goodness to punish habitual sinners, that from this very attribute we may infer the doctrine of future punishments. For, if He be a Being of infinite goodness, He must support the cause of virtue, which cannot be done without discouraging vice as well as honouring virtue. IV. SOME PRACTICAL INFERENCES. 1. How necessary it is we should study the Scriptures and there inform ourselves what the will of our Maker is; otherwise we shall dignify with the name of reason whatever our craving inclination warmly pleads for. 2. A lame partial obedience, instead of an entire universal righteousness, is what we ought most to guard against. (*J. Seed, M.A.*) *The necessity of unreserved obedience:*—Suppose one of your neighbours to be punctual in obeying all the laws of the land with one exception, but to be obstinate in the transgression of that particular statute. He pays his taxes, in general, with honesty. But there is one particular tax which he cannot be persuaded to discharge. Suppose a soldier, regular in his general obedience to the orders of his superiors, to refuse to march upon a particular service to which he is appointed. Will you say that, because he has obeyed his officer in every other point, he is at liberty not to obey in this? Will you say that he does not deserve signal punishment? (*T. Gisborne, M.A.*) *The inviolability of the whole law:*—1. It is not merely the violation of God's law we are to regard, but the temper which leads thereto. Sinfulness is to the sinner a greater evil than the sin. The sin is something outside of himself; the sinfulness inside. He has projected the sin out of himself, to be a black fact in God's universe; the sinfulness remains in him to be the black parent of other sinful acts. If all his past sins were suddenly annihilated and still his sinfulness remained, he would be a sinner. 2. James urges the fact that each law has been enacted by the authority which makes every other law obligatory. And it may be well to note that this great principle sets every law enacted by our heavenly Father in the light of sacredness, so that it seems a solecism to speak of any sins as "little sins," and any lies as "white lies." Much less would little sins be excusable, if there were little sins. They require less resistance, while, like the little speck on the skin of the fruit, they may eat in and destroy all. 3. There is no middle ground between this principle and the surrender of all government. If a thing is permissible, a wise Ruler should not forbid it. If a thing is hurtful, a wise Father should not allow it. If, in all the whole category of laws, any one may be set aside, or the violation of any be indulged with impunity, then either God must select the law from which the Divine sanction is to be lifted, or the man who desires to sin must make the selection. If God be supposed to select, we have the extraordinary suggestion of the Father cherishing disobedience in the child, the monarch affording aid to the rebel, the only perfectly holy person in the universe sanctioning sin. But if each man is to select his pet sin to be indulged with impunity, he must do this either with or without the approbation of God. It cannot be the former, as that would be a case of God sanctioning sin, which cannot be entertained for a moment. And how are we to conceive of a man selecting a single sin for his indulgence without the permission of God? But, suppose we could take in that idea, then the following would result:—Each man would reason from the liberty of the others to a larger liberty for himself, and so the area of rebellion would be perpetually enlarging. If all selected the same sin, the terrific state of society may be imagined. Suppose, for instance, all men kept every other commandment, but all felt at liberty to violate the eighth. The absolute worthlessness of all property would immediately ensue, and the progress of civilisation come to a dead halt. Suppose all carefully obeyed every precept of the law but the sixth, and every man felt at liberty to commit homicide at any time. It is plain that all the wit and energy of each man would be concentrated on the preservation of a life which would be worthless, because it would be reduced to a mere existence, denied of every pleasure which comes from human intercourse. In this case, as well as in the case of one man selecting lying, and another adultery, and another theft, and another murder, it is plain that human society would dissolve and the moral government of the universe would collapse. This is so plainly a necessary principle of all government, that it is acknowledged in all known codes of human jurisprudence. That a man has paid every debt but one would not discharge the obligation to pay that debt. Many a

man has been hanged for a solitary act of malicious homicide. To the defence of the accused might be brought proof of a general course of even exemplary conduct. (*C. F. Deems, D.D.*) *One transgression of the law*:—One wheel broken in the machinery will render the whole inefficient; one breakage of a stave in the ladder may make it unfit for safe and full use; one piece of rail displaced on the railway may result in fearful disaster; one inch of wire cut out of the telegraph would prevent the use of all the rest, whatever its extent; one failure in any law of Nature may go on producing other failures *ad infinitum*. So the transgression of but one law of God: it is ruinous to the soul; it leads on to innumerable transgressions; it violates the whole code. *One omission injurious*:—A wealthy gentleman employed a workman to erect upon a lot in the cemetery a costly monument. After the stone had been erected, and the finishing touches put on the carving, the proud workman sent for the owner to come and inspect the work. With a smile of satisfaction the artist pointed to the monument. The owner glanced at it a moment, and turned away, saying, "You have left out one letter, which renders all the labour and anxiety you have spent on it worthless to me, and I cannot accept your work." And so in carving the monument of our Christian characters: one pet sin may render the whole structure worthless, and cause it to crumble to dust. *No little sins*:—It is as supreme a folly to talk of a little sin as it would be to talk of a small decalogue that forbids it, or a dimunitive God that hates it, or a shallow hell that will punish it. Sin is registered according to heavenly measurements of holiness and majesty. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The entirety of God's law*:—The strength of a chain is only equal to its weakest part. Snap one link, and what avails the strength of all the rest until that broken or loose link be welded again? The question of small sins is as clear as a problem of Euclid—a question of a drop of prussic acid and a vial full or a sea full. (*A. B. Grosart, LL.D.*) *Rejected for one flaw*:—A famous ruby was offered to this country. The report of the crown jeweller was that it was the finest he had ever seen or heard of, but that one of its facets was slightly fractured. The result was, that almost invisible flaw reduced its value by thousands of pounds, and it was rejected from the regalia of England. (*Ibid.*) *Convicted as transgressors*:—God's law condemneth small faults; as the sunshine showeth us atoms, moths. (*J. Trapp.*) *All sin has one root*:—Like some of those creeping weeds that lie underground and put up a little leaf here and another one there; and you dig down, fancying that their roots are short, but you find that they go creeping and tortuous below the surface, and the whole soil is full of them—so all sin holds on by one root. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Offending in one point*:—The law is one seamless garment, which is rent if you but rend a part; or a musical harmony, spoiled if there be one discordant note. (*Tirinus.*) "*Not worse than others*":—This is cold comfort and false logic. Does the judge acquit a criminal because he has only defrauded £50, while another has £5,000? Are not both guilty in the eye of the law? *Potential transgression*:—Actual transgression in one case involves potential transgression in all. (*E. H. Plumptre, D.D.*) *The broken bridge*:—Hossein said to his aged grandfather Abbas, "Oh! grandfather, why are you reading the Gospel?" Abbas made answer, "I read it, oh! my son, to find the way to heaven." Hossein, who had received some instruction in an English school, smiling, said, "The way is plain enough; worship but the one true God, and keep the commandments." The man, whose hair was silver with age, replied, "Hossein, the commandments of God are as a bridge of ten arches, by means of which the soul might once have passed to heaven. But, alas! the bridge has been broken. There is not one among us who has not broken the commands again and again." "My conscience is clear," cried Hossein, proudly, "I have kept all the commandments; at least, almost all," he added, for he felt that he had said too much. "And if one arch of the bridge give way under the traveller, doth he not surely perish in the flood, though the other nine arches be firm and strong?" *Merciful severity*:—A traveller relates that, when passing through an Austrian town, his attention was directed to a forest on a slope near the road, and he was told that death was the penalty of cutting down one of those trees. He was incredulous until he was further informed that they were the protection of the city, breaking the force of the descending avalanche which, without this natural barrier, would sweep over the homes of thousands. To transgress once is to lay the axe at the root of the tree which represents the security and peace of every loyal soul in the wide dominion of the Almighty. (*Family Treasury.*) *Danger of a single sin*:—Some time ago a party of workmen were employed in building a very tall shot-tower. In laying a corner one brick, either by accident or carelessness, was

set a little out of line. The work went on without its being noticed, but as each course of bricks was kept in line with those already laid, the tower was not put up exactly straight, and the higher they built the more insecure it became. One day, when the tower had been carried up about fifty feet, there was a tremendous crash. The building had fallen, burying the men in its ruins. All the previous work was lost, the materials wasted, and, worse still, valuable lives were sacrificed, and all this from one brick laid wrong at the start. How little the workman who laid that one brick wrong thought of the mischief he was making for the future! That one faulty brick, which the workman did not see, caused all this trouble and death.

Ver. 12. **The law of liberty.**—*The law of liberty*:—By "the law of liberty" is meant the gospel, whose principles and precepts form a rule of life now, and will be the rule of reward hereafter. It is a law, inasmuch as it prescribes a particular form of character and course of conduct with authority and sanctions; and it is a law of liberty, inasmuch as the only adequate obedience to it is one which is perfectly free, voluntary and cheerful. It is a law that has power to work in its subjects such a spirit as will render their service perfect freedom, procure from them a willing and cheerful performance of its behests, and create such a thorough coincidence between its requirements and the choice of their wills, as will rid their submission of any feeling of restraint or awe of authority. I. The gospel is a law of liberty, BY ITS TRANSFORMING EFFECT UPON THE PRINCIPLES AND DISPOSITIONS OF MEN. The gospel does not repeal or alter God's law, but republishes it with some remedial and corrective accompaniments. By these, it aims to effect relief for man in that only other way which is practicable—the rectification of his wishes and inclinations, so as to make them coincide with the behests of the law, in order that he may not be free without obedience, but free in obedience. II. The gospel is a law of liberty, IN RESPECT TO ITS MODE OF LEGISLATING FOR MEN. A free-will service is always a profuse and generous one; and as the gospel produces, expects, and accepts only a free-will service, it deals with its subjects accordingly, as with beings who will have no inclination to economise and stint their service, and dole it out in the very scantiest measures that will answer the literal terms of demand. It does not look for close construction and parsimonious obedience in its subjects, but supposes them to be inflamed with a love of duty, and directed by a spirit of liberal and affectionate loyalty. It is an evil sign of Christian people to see them always hovering on the very verge of positive impropriety and disobedience, casting a wistful eye into Satan's territory, and arguing with the world for the last inch of debatable ground between them. Oh, rather let your doings and renunciations for Christ be generous. For your sakes He became poor. In return, be willing to do much and renounce much, and with light and willing heart take up your cross and follow Him. (*R. A. Hallam, D.D.*) *The law of liberty*:—Of all the qualities which great books, and especially the Bible, have, few are more remarkable than their power of bringing out the unity of disassociated and apparently contradictory ideas. Take these two words, liberty and law. They stand over against each other. Law is the restraint of liberty. Liberty is the abrogation, the getting rid of law. Each, so far as it is absolute, implies the absence of the other. But the expression of our text suggests that by the highest standards there is no contradiction, but rather a harmony and unity, between the two; that really the highest law is liberty, the highest liberty is law; that there is such a thing as a law of liberty. I. WHAT DO WE MEAN BY LIBERTY? It is the genuine ability of a living creature to manifest its whole nature, to do and be itself most unrestrainedly. Nothing more, nothing less than that. There is no compulsion, and yet the life, by a tendency of its own educated will, sets itself towards God. 1. What a fundamental and thorough thing this law of liberty must be. It is a law which issues from the qualities of a nature going thence out into external shape and action. It is a law of constraint by which you take a crooked sapling and bend it straight and hold it violently into line. It is a law of liberty by which the inner nature of the oak itself decrees its outward form, draws out the pattern shape of every leaf, and lays the hand of an inevitable necessity on bark and bough and branch. 2. This doctrine of the law of liberty makes clear the whole order and process of Christian conversion. Laws of constraint begin conversion at the outside and work in. Laws of liberty begin their conversion at the inside and work out. Which is the true way? 3. This truth throws very striking light into one of the verses which precede our text, one of the hardest verses in the Bible to a great many people. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet

offend in one point, is guilty of all," it is said. Why? Because the consistent, habitual breakage of one point proves that the others were kept under the law of constraint, not under the law of liberty. You see the flame, and you speak of it as a whole: "The house is on fire! There is fire in the house!" Just so you see the bad fiery nature which the law constrains breaking through, and again you speak of it as a whole. What particular shingle is burning is of no consequence. "The law is broken. The one whole law is broken by the one whole bad heart!" 4. The whole truth of the law of liberty starts with the truth that goodness is just as controlling and supreme a power as badness. Virtue is as despotic over the life she really sways as vice can be over her miserable subjects. Free, yet a servant! Free from external compunctions, free from sin; yet a servant to the higher law that issues for ever from the God within him. "A God whose service is perfect freedom." Oh for such a liberty in us! Look at Christ and see it in perfection. (*Bp. Phillips Brooks.*) *The law of liberty*:—St. Paul claims as one of the distinguished blessings of the gospel that by it "the creature shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." It needs but little knowledge of ourselves to perceive that we have a biassed will, a strong natural tendency towards evil rather than good. No effort is needed for the indulgence of our natural appetites in ways forbidden by God's law: conscience may whisper to us that such indulgence is wrong, but the effort is needed not for their gratification, but for their restraint. And what is thus felt to be the law of nature is confirmed by the unconscious testimony of mankind. Transgressions of God's law are often spoken of as pleasures; acts of obedience to that law are never so described. It is this natural tendency which is spoken of in the New Testament as a state of bondage; from it Christ would deliver us; but it is obvious that we cannot be said to be completely delivered so long as it demands effort, a struggle, self-denial on our part to obey this higher law. For the very idea of liberty is the ability to do that which we wish or prefer; it is the carrying out our own plans and pursuits without interference on the part of any other, and without constraint; it is the being able to manifest our whole nature in the way we ourselves desire. It is because we are so tied and bound that we are spoken of in Holy Scripture as being "in bondage under the elements of the world." From this state we are delivered by our incorporation into Christ, by our receiving His Holy Spirit, by our being made members of His body, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. But without our co-operation such Divine gift will profit us nothing—nay, rather it will increase our guilt, because it will make us more willing instruments in the transgressions to which we are tempted. This gift from God, then, gives us the power of a free choice—of a free choice between two powers struggling for the mastery of our souls. On the one side are the influences of our corrupt nature; and, on the other hand, the moral powers left by the Fall, conscience aided by the inspirations of God's Holy Spirit. But in the warfare between these opposing powers of good and evil there are secondary influences which often seem to play a most important part in deciding the issue of the contest. We are all greatly affected by our surroundings. Education, the example of those we love, the maxims we are accustomed to hear, cannot fail to exert an influence upon our judgments of right and wrong. Sometimes these influences may cause good men to consent to actions which under other circumstances they would denounce as evil. But much more frequently the effect of these influences is seen in men professing a deference and regard for the principles and practices of religion which, in their hearts, they do not feel. It is quite clear that such a state of mind is not reconcilable with the thought of the happiness of heaven. Even upon earth there can be no real happiness in the discharge of religious duties or obligations with which we have no true hearty sympathy. We have sometimes heard of a temple of truth, in which men were compelled to speak exactly what they thought, in which, whilst they imagined that they were uttering the usual courtesies of life, the customary expressions of civility, or decorous agreement with the friend with whom they were conversing, they really gave vent to their inward feelings, to those thoughts which we are accustomed to keep secret, and which are sometimes far from being in harmony with what we say. To be compelled to say all that we feel, to show to their fullest extent the inclinations of our mind, the hidden preferences of which we are ashamed, and which we labour to keep secret, would be a grievous burden to us, and would sometimes present us in a very different light before others from that we should wish. But when we are in God's presence this must be our lot. And, moreover, we shall feel that He who knows all is our Judge, that His

power is irresistible whilst His knowledge is universal, that He is omnipotent as well as omniscient. And so we shall be compelled to set aside all seeming. We shall then be judged by the law of liberty, for our words and actions will be the true expression of what we are and what we feel—no disguise will be possible. And as we shall be judged at last by this law of liberty, it would be well for us all to test ourselves by it now in this our day of probation. We must have regard to both words and actions; for both are the expression of what we really are. Both with tongue and actions we may play a part for a time, but in spite of ourselves in time we show our true selves. And it is to this that the apostle would incite us. Let us so speak and so do as Christ has bidden us speak and do in His gospel. Let us place it before us as the one great end and aim of our life to do His will, to give effect to the promptings of His grace, to live for the next world and not for this, to copy the life of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. By His help this can be done; by depending upon Him this can be accomplished, but in no other way. (*Dean Gregory.*) *The gospel a law of liberty:*—I. To EXPLAIN THIS CHARACTER OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, that it is a "law of liberty." 1. It is evident that it is a law, that is, a revelation of the will of God to men for the direction of their lives, enforced by the sanction of rewards and punishments. Yet our condition is not rendered servile by it. We cannot in any case act without motives, but they do not make us slaves. The human nature being rational, reason does not destroy its freedom, but establish it, and is the rule of it; then only are we indeed free when we conduct ourselves with understanding. On this account principally the gospel is called the law of liberty, it restores the empire of reason in men, and rescues them from servitude to their lusts and passions. 2. Pursuant to this, Christians by the gospel have obtained a deliverance from condemnation, and therefore it may justly be called the law of liberty. 3. The gospel is a law of liberty, as it frees Christians from the burthensome rites of the Mosaic institution. 4. The gospel is a law of liberty, as it sets us free from the power and authority of men in matters of religion and conscience. II. To CONSIDER THE APOSTLE'S DIRECTION TO CHRISTIANS, that they should constantly endeavour to form their whole conduct by a respect to the future judgment, which will be dispensed according to the gospel, to the law of liberty. 1. It ought never to be imagined that the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free was intended to weaken the obligations of our duty, or take away the binding force of the Divine precepts which are indispensable. 2. It would seem by the connection of the apostle's discourse that he designed this particularly as a motive to candour and charity in all our deportment towards men. 3. There is in the exhortation of the text a designed reference to the universality of our obedience, as that only which can give us hope of being acquitted in judgment. (*J. Abernethy, M.A.*) *Amenable to the law of liberty:*—To be amenable to "the law of liberty" is a very solemn thing. It involves the question: Shall I be found by the Heart-searcher to have believed its doctrines and obeyed its rules? Many, however, there are who think—unbelieving and disobedient though they be—that, since Christianity is a "law of liberty," they themselves will be absolved. Foolish dream! perilous presumption! Yes, Christianity brings freedom in her hand, and offers it to the devil's bondslaves. But what kind of freedom? Not liberty to sin, but the emancipation of the soul from the very taste for what is wrong. And how is the freedom which she gives attained? By a moral change which these men have never undergone, and a faith which has never taken possession of their souls. Except by faith, even the blessed and generous religion of Jesus Christ delivers no one from the ban of the broken covenant of works. The apostle requires his readers "so to speak, and so to do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty." This rule, of course, implies that words as well as deeds come within the scope of that procedure which will be taken account of at the day of judgment. So Christ expressly speaks (Matt. xii. 36). And, in accordance with this principle, James dwells largely in this Epistle on the right and wrong use of the tongue. (*A. S. Patterson, D.D.*) *Law and liberty:*—Go to a cripples' hospital and see the poor creatures all about you with legs or arms tightly bound up with splints, bandages, and irons, cramped and well-nigh useless. We know well enough why their liberty is restrained like this, why they are made so uncomfortable; it is that the limbs may be brought into the proper position to be healed or straightened, so that the patients may have the free use of them when they leave the hospital. It would be a useless and stupid thing to deprive them of what little use they could make of their limbs unless there was some higher end in view. But in order to attain that higher end, the restraint, the bandages, the irons, &c., are

indispensable. So it is in our religious life. The sense of duty, moral obligations, self-denial, with their constraining and restraining influence, are like the bandages, invaluable as means to the higher end of free, loving, loyal service of God. But if we rest there, if we do not try to rise above this, we lose all the brightness and joy and peace of life; we defeat the whole purpose of God towards us, which is, that we should serve Him with the free obedience of sons, and not with the forced service of slaves. We need to see that law fails in its object, unless it leads us to Christ, unless it ends in the service of Christ. The love of Christ transforms the hard "you must" of law into the glad "I will" of liberty, and so law and liberty are reconciled. (*G. H. Fowler.*)

Ver. 13. **Judgment without mercy.**—*Judgment without mercy*:—I. THE DIRECTION WHICH IS HERE GIVEN (ver. 12). 1. They were to be judged. The thing was future, but as real and certain as if it had been past or present. The testimonies to this great event are clear, varied, and irresistible. Even apart from revelation, the evidence of it is strong and conclusive. And when we do turn to the Bible, the truth is there taught, both directly and by implication, in a large number of passages. The judgment, then, is most certain. What we have to do is to realise it, to take it home to ourselves, to live under the impressions which it is fitted to produce. 2. They were to be judged by "the law of liberty." The issue is not to turn on our natural ideas of right and wrong, on our partial, perverted, and often most erroneous views of duty. Neither is it to proceed on the maxims and customs of the world. Everything is to be done in righteousness; and here is the only complete, infallible criterion of righteousness. But mark how it is here designated. It is called "the law of liberty." We are certainly not to understand by this that it grants liberty to do anything that is evil—that it allows liberty to be taken with its own requirements and sanctions. Its object is the very reverse. It is to restrain men from the commission of sin. In common with all law, it exists for the end of being kept, not of being broken. It is the law of liberty, because, in the case of God's people, and they are spoken of here, its curse is taken away. The chains are broken and the believer walks forth emancipated; for, saith the apostle, "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." He is no longer dependent on his own fulfilment of the law for the life everlasting; through the infinite mercy of God his transgressions of it are not marked against him, and he stands on the ground, not of a personal, but of a vicarious, obedience—that of his great substitute and surety. He is to be tried by it, not apart from the gospel of salvation, but, on the contrary, as incorporated with it—not in its original covenant form, but as thus magnified by the Son of God in our nature on behalf of all the redeemed, and then given to them to be the supreme rule of their character and conduct. And thus it obtains a ready, cordial acquiescence. 3. They were to live as about to be judged by this law of liberty. "So speak ye"—that is, as a habit; let this be your constant practice. Watch over your words; keep the door of your lips; guard against all transgression of the law in this respect. Avoid whatever it condemns, not merely everything profane and impure, but everything vain and unprofitable. And, in particular, remembering what is due to your neighbour according to the commandment, and what you need yourselves at the hand of God, be considerate and charitable, be just, be tender in the language you use both to and regarding your brethren of mankind, most of all your brethren in the faith of the gospel, whatever may be their earthly condition. "And so do"—so act, adds the apostle; speak, but not that only, act also as those who are about to be judged by the law of liberty. It is not enough to make high professions, you must exhibit and maintain a corresponding practice. Fine speech will not suffice; there must be pure conduct. We must be doers of the Divine will, not hearers or talkers only. II. THE REASON BY WHICH IT IS ENFORCED (ver. 13). James speaks here as from the day of doom itself, like one looking back to the transactions of life as over, as things of the past, not of the future or the present. His statement is to the effect that those persons who show no mercy, who work none in the case of their fellow creatures, shall find none at the Divine tribunal hereafter, but be dealt with in strict justice, according to its rigid, unmitigated requirements, apart from any modifying influence or mingling element of mercy. Having acted, not in the spirit of the law of liberty, but in opposition to it, they shall reap no benefit from it themselves at the great future assize. He adds, "And mercy rejoiceth against judgment." It rejoiceth—literally, glorieth, boasteth. Well may one exclaim, "Grand word, memorable axiom!" Here we have the other side of the matter, the converse of

the foregoing statement. Some sort of collision or contest is supposed between these two—mercy and judgment. They have their respective interests and claims; and these appear to be opposed, irreconcilable. They cannot have both absolutely their own way, and the one or the other must gain the ascendency. But mercy carries the day, it prevails in the conflict. How? Is it by trampling on judgment? Is it by robbing it of any of its rights, doing violence to any of its principles? No; it is by meeting its demands, and honouring it more than had it been allowed to hold undisputed sway and reign without a rival. This has been effected by the mission and mediation of the Lord Jesus. (*John Adam.*) *Mercy finds mercy*:—1. The condition of men under the covenant of works is very miserable. They meet with justice without any temper of mercy. 2. Unmerciful men find no mercy. (1) It is a sin most unsuitable to grace. Kindness maketh us pity misery: "Thou wast a stranger, be kind to strangers." God's love to us melteth the soul, and affecteth us not only with contrition towards God, but compassion to our brethren. At Zurich, when the gospel was first preached, they gave liberty to their captives and prisoners, out of a sense of their own deliverance by Christ. (2) It is unlike to God; He giveth and forgiveth. How will you look God in the face, if you should be so contrary to Him? 3. God usually retaliates and dealeth with men according to the manner and way of their wickedness. 4. God exercises acts of mercy with delight; His mercy rejoices over justice (Micah vii. 18; Jer. xxxii. 41). 5. Mercy in us is a sign of our interest in God's mercy (Matt. v. 7). It is manifested—(1) In pitying miseries (Matt. xv. 32). (2) In relieving wants by counsel or contribution. (3) In forgiving injuries and offences (Matt. xviii. 22). (*T. Manton.*) *Judged without mercy*:—The usual mode of explaining these words is that judgment in the case of the merciless shall be merciless, yet in the case of the merciful mercy glories against judgment, so as to ward off its stroke, and deliver the merciful man, so that mercy does not fear judgment, but rather glories against it and over it. The whole lesson teaching us, in Bengel's words, that judgment shall be to every one as every one shall have been. But this exposition seems to bring in another subject, quite foreign to the writer's argument; he is not treating of mercy or the merciful man, but of the unjust man and of judgment. Surely, if the mode of deciding the verdict of the merciful man had been intended, some mention of that character would have found a place. It seems better to regard this clause as a sort of climax to the preceding statement: You are about to be judged by the law which enjoins liberty, and the judgment which will be passed by God according to that law will be unaccompanied by mercy against the man that did not show mercy, even though it is characteristic of God's mercy to glory against judgment. His mercy often spares when we deserve the blow, but it shall not be so then. You have judged and rejected others, you shall be judged and rejected yourselves. As you have sown, so shall you reap. (*F. T. Bassett, M.A.*) **Mercy rejoiceth against judgment.**—*Mercy's triumphs*:—The history of this world lies in these few words; and you might go about with this key to unlock almost all the mysteries of God's providence. Let us define the words. "Mercy" is love to the weak, the unhappy, and the bad. "Judgment" is punishment, or a severe sentence, or a condemnation. And the thought of the text is this—that in the Divine government "mercy" contends with "judgment" to overcome it, and then rejoices in her victory; and that, if it be so in God's method, so it should be with us. There are four ways in which this may be done: "Mercy" may stop "judgment"—that it shall never fall; or "mercy" may mingle itself with the "judgment"—to qualify it; or "mercy" may balance and outweigh the "judgment"; or, best of all, "mercy" may turn the "judgment" into blessing. We will glance at all four, only remembering this—the mind of God is perfect unity. There is no clashing or division. We speak of His different attributes; but His Being is one and His work one—from everlasting to everlasting. He is carrying out one object, by one plan, on one principle, to one end. We divide the "mercy" from the "judgment"; but there is no difference. For God is all love. There is, then, the "mercy" which withholds the "judgment" altogether. There must be "mercy" in heaven itself, for since God "charges His angels with folly," it is a "mercy" that He has not cast them down; and as "the heavens are not clean in His sight," it is a "mercy" that they stand and that we can call them firmament. Look at this world. The sun rises and sets; the tide flows; the seasons return; all goes on its ancient round; and all is beautiful. Thousands and thousands go about and flourish. They laugh, and are happy. Yet on what a world does that sun each day rise and set! What a pestilence of sin broods upon this whole earth! What sounds, what

sights go up to "the Lord God of Sabaoth"! And we—we know not at this moment what impending "judgments" are hanging over the head of any one of us stayed only by the hand of "mercy." Why are we all here so quiet? Why are we not in hell? "Mercy"—arresting "mercy"—"mercy" has "rejoiced against judgment." Or "mercy" may "rejoice against judgment" by tempering. And which of us could not go back to many a time when that promise came to pass to us: "In measure, when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it: He stayeth His rough wind in the day of the east wind." The mitigations of God's "judgments" are wonderful. One look, one sigh, one thought, can change all, and in a moment take away all the wrath and almost all the pain. Who could not say that never was his heavenly Father so fatherly to him as when he was chastened? And so it has been, and so it will be to the end. The "sifting" is to come; but God will make it plain. Death may come, but no terror. There will be a "valley," but no darkness. There will be solitude, but no fear. This world will pale away, but a brighter one will be opening. "If this be dying," said Bishop Beveridge, "would that I could die for ever!" So "mercy" rejoices against "judgment." Or the compensations of our "judgment" may be the method in which "mercy" triumphs. Never does God take anything away but He has something better to put in its place. The pains of the body are the medicines of the soul. Sad changes come into our families, and make deep chasms; but Christ comes and sits in the empty seat. We can count our troubles by units, our mercies by millions. But now I have yet to trace God's own, truer, far higher, better way, by which He is wont to turn the "judgment" into "mercy," till the sorrow becomes itself the joy. See it thus. He made a free, responsible creature, and the free and responsible creature, in his freeness and responsibility, chose sin, and for sin he was expelled from paradise, and doomed to die. That was the "judgment." Then "mercy" stood up, and defied the "judgment"; and mercy did her own work. And what is the result? We have lost a paradise, and find a heaven! We have lost a garden, but got glory! We have lost God's visits at certain intervals, to have His presence for ever and ever. What have we not in the Second Adam—infinitely more precious than all which we could have inherited in the First Adam? Examine any of the great "judgments" which have ever come upon this earth, and look how they issued. That great beacon, the Flood—did not mankind need that exhibition of God's power and holiness? Was not it the grand type of a flood of grace to cleanse and a flood of fire to restore and renew this earth again? And did not "mercy" more than hold its own over the Flood when Christ "went and preached to those very spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah"? And Babel's scattering—was not it to carry the knowledge of the true God, which else had remained confined to one spot, over the whole earth? and, like "the blood of martyrs" in every age, did not it become the "seed of the Church"? Or Israel's seventy years' captivity—do you not know that they went down to Babylon to unlearn, for the first time, their idolatry, that they have never been idolaters since? And their present dispersion and degradation—what a witness to truth it is to all the ages let every man see—what a testimony to prophecy, and what a preface to that grand coming chapter when their restoration shall be "as life from the dead" to the whole world! There is not a child of God who could not stand up and say that his "judgments" have been the elements which went to make his best happiness and his truest hopes. His tears have become his rainbow. And when the question goes round in heaven, "How came you here?" the greater part by far will make answer, "My sorrows! my sorrows!" So "mercy" entered the lists with "judgment," and "mercy" won the day; and far above the clouds of wrath her banner floats, and she sits on high and chants her song of victory: "Mercy reigneth and rejoiceth against judgment"! Now, what measure has been meted to you measure again. Let "mercy" have her right place in your heart. Before you begin to speak of anybody's faults, or even look at them, look at three things. Look at their good points. It is such a poor talent to see faults; it is so high and Christlike to see excellences. Use your eyelids to men's failings, and open your eyes to their virtues. Secondly, see and make all allowance for circumstances. How different their circumstances from yours! How much more tempted than you! And how much less likely to resist! and how much of their sins, after all, may be accidental and circumstantial! how much purely physical! how much irresponsible! And then how little do you know what is going on in secret, in those very hearts that you are condemning!—what struggles! what hidden misery! what prayer! what repentance! what holy earnestness! what

wrestlings with God! And above all, look at yourself. What have you done? How have you provoked God? How much heavier, if weighed in God's balance, your sin would be than anybody else's! Never look at sin but with pity. Take care that you never "smite those whom God hath not wounded." Never condemn! never speak harshly. Place yourself on the lower ground. Tell of pardon, tell of Jesus! tell of heaven, tell of mercy. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *Mercy rejoiceth against judgment*:—Far in the Empyrean heights, above the rolling spheres, is the Eternal City, the central seat of the great King. In its midst is a throne, all resplendent with celestial glories. There sits the Ancient of Days, the Creator and Ruler and Judge. Before the throne appears a personage of shining character, clothed in robes of light, celestial in her aspect, yet with bended knee, and with a tear upon her cheek. She appears there in supplication; not for herself, but for others; an intercessor for offenders. "Sire Eternal, admit Thy humble creature's utterance. Down in far distant space is a speck of dust. There dwells a creature of humble grade, composed of dust himself in part, yet having a spark of intellectual being—a germ of immortality. That creature, though formed but last of all Thy works, has sinned. O Sovereign of the universe, suffer a plea to be presented for his pardon!" While these words were being uttered another personage appeared, and approached the throne. She was shining, like the former, of heavenly mien, yet different in her aspect. She stood erect, and no tear was on her face. She came, as the other ceased, to present a counter-plea. "Sovereign Judge," she said, "the Just! the True! how can Mercy's plea be granted? Justice has claims which cannot be dispensed with. Man, having sinned, must meet the due recompense. How can Justice be turned from her right?" Mercy interposed, in her beseeching tones: "But man is frail—a creature of flesh and ignorance, a creature of a day. He is as nothing compared with Thee, O Sovereign Judge! Yet his happiness is much to him. Turn from him the tokens of Thy displeasure, and let him live!" Justice again presents her counter-plea. "True," she says, "compared with some other orders of being, man is frail; yet is he an appropriate subject of law. Insignificant, in himself, he may indeed be; yet have not his crimes given him consequence? He has knowingly transgressed, and continued to transgress. With the law in his hand—the law of universal love—he has disregarded alike its requisitions and its threatenings, and filled the world with idolatry and irreligion, corruption and crime. And has not the law threatened death to the transgressor?" But Mercy, intent on her purpose, still finds an argument to urge in reply. "Is not death," she says, "the death threatened, an evil of too great magnitude? Can any creature endure it? Will the Infinite allow Himself to award to any creature, however far from righteousness, so dreadful a doom? Is not mercy one of Thy chief glories? Wilt Thou not, then, show Thyself merciful to man?" To which Justice rejoined: "The threatened punishment is no more than sin deserves. If it is great, it is only so because sin is a great evil, is committed against a great, an infinitely perfect, an infinitely glorious God, against boundless riches of goodness—infinite, eternal, and unceasing love. Moreover, the punishment, great as it may be, grows out of the very sin committed, as its natural consequence. If man take fire into his soul, can he complain if he be left to feel it burning there?" But further Justice pleads: "Has not the Infinite declared that sin shall be thus punished? How can the utterances of Thy lips be set aside? Who will believe again that Jehovah is true? Who again will tremble at His threatening, or fear to sin? If one sinner may escape a righteous recompense, and that in violation of a solemnly uttered sentence, then may another, and another; and the government of the Infinite, the Eternal Supreme, is undermined, and passes away for ever!" So Justice reasoned. And Heaven saw and felt the cogency of her plea. Even Mercy can say no more. She bows in silence, though still sorrowing. Man is bound and delivered over to the executioner's power, and the sword of Justice is lifted over him. At this awful moment another scene arrests attention. From the light inaccessible which surrounds the throne comes forth a Personage, unseen before, partaker in the Godhead. With infinite pity He approaches the Eternal Sire, and says: "On Me be the wrong of man. On Me let Justice exact her utmost claims. By Me, descending to the world of sin, and dwelling in flesh like its lost inhabitants, and yielding up My life a sacrifice to Thee in their behalf, shall law be honoured and veracity and equity sustained, and man, accepting the proferred favour, shall live." Deep silence was in heaven. Rapt wonder and awe held its circling throngs. The Eternal Sire assented to the Son. A light, a glory shone, such as heaven itself had not before seen. Mercy and Justice

bowed together before the throne, and bowed together before the wondrous Deliverer, and owned Him for their Lord. Justice herself wept. And suddenly, bursting from all the lips of the blessed, there went up a song, in strains like the voice of many waters, and like many thunderings, and harpers harping with their harps, saying, "Alleluia!" "O the depth of the riches," &c. "Mercy and Truth are met together," &c. Thus "Mercy rejoiceth against judgment." (*L. F. Dimmick, D.D.*)

Vers. 14–26. **Though a man say he hath faith, and have not works.**—*Faith:*—The popular notion of faith is, that what a man does not deny, he believes; and that if he will maintain a doctrine in argument, he thereby proves that he believes it. Now this may not be faith in the true sense at all. The true notion of faith is, conviction in action, principles operating in the life, sentiments embodied in conduct. Faith is practically nothing so long as it is merely in the head. Head faith can save no man. This is exactly so in daily life. There is no witchery or mystery in this doctrine at all. Faith cannot save you in commerce, any more than it can save you in religion. Faith cannot save the body, any more than it can save the soul. So let us save Christianity from the supposed mistake of setting up a fanciful scheme of salvation; let us be simply just to the Son of God, by showing that He requires only the very same common-sense conditions of salvation that are required by ourselves in the common relations of our daily life. A man believes that if he puts his money into certain funds he will get back good interest with the most assured security. Yet at the end of the year he gets literally nothing. How was that? Because, though he believed it, he did not put any money into the funds. Can faith pay him? A man thoroughly believes that if he takes a certain mixture, prescribed for him by good medical authority, he will be recovered from his disease; but he gets no better; because, though he believed in the mixture, he did not take it. Can faith save him? Yet this is the very thing which people want to do with religion! They get a certain set of notions into their heads; they call those notions orthodox, and they expect that those notions will save them! It is an insult to common sense. The question is not whether those notions are in our head, but, what effect have they upon our life? Do they find their way from the head to the heart, from the heart to the hand? Fine geographical knowledge will never make a traveller. An exact knowledge of the chemical properties of water will never make a swimmer. You must bring your faith to a practical application. If I really and truly, with understanding and heart, receive the truths of the Christian religion, is there anything in them, as such, likely to move my life in a practical direction? Are they too subtle and speculative for time? As a mere matter of fact, the truths of Christianity are infinitely practical. They touch life at every point. In the morning, they are a loud call to duty; in the evening, they are a solemn judgment upon the day: when we go to business, they say, "Do unto others as ye would that others should do unto you." Here, a peculiar danger discovers itself. The man who wishes to avoid all that is most spiritual and holy in the Christian religion, inquires whether he cannot do all these duties as a mere moralist, without being what is distinctively known as a saint. He says he loves justice and mercy, benevolence and sympathy, and asks whether he cannot exercise or display them apart from what is called "saving faith in Christ." Let us consider that question. There is a conduct that is philosophical, and there is a conduct that is spiritual; that is to say, there is a conduct that is based on logic, on the so-called fitness of things, on self-protection; and there is a conduct based upon a spiritual conception of sin, upon a realisation of Divine oversight and Divine judgment; and it is undoubtedly open to us to consider the respective merits of each theory of life. I accept the spiritual, because I believe it to be fundamental; it is not a clever theory, it is a living reality; it is not a self-pleasing speculation, it is a law, a judgment, an eternal quantity. I must have a moral standard which I did not set up, and which I cannot pull down; a moral law which will harmonise with my nature, and yet for ever be above it; a law that will judge me; a law acting through all time, applying in all lands, overriding all circumstances and accidents; far above me as the sun, round about me as the light; not a guess on the part of man, but a distinct and solemn and final revelation from God. This I have in Christ Jesus; and if I accept it by a living faith, it will come out in a holy, tender, wise, and useful life, and thus I shall be saved by faith. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Faith and works:*—There is no analogy between mind and matter more remarkable than the reaction to which both are liable. Draw a pendulum, for example, over on one side; let go; obeying the law of gravitation, it seeks its centre. It does more, swings over to the other

side. Twist a cord that has a weight attached to it, and loosen: revolving rapidly on its axis, it untwines itself; does more, passes by many turns in an opposite direction. Or follow the billow, that, driven by the tempest, launches itself on an iron shore. Thundering it bursts into snowy foam; but more, like men retreating from a desperate charge, it recoils back into the deep. Even so of change of manners or opinion; how prone are men to pass from one to an opposite extreme, borne by the recoil beyond the line of truth! A danger this, that reformers, whether of Church or State, public morals or private manners, need to guard against. In this way we account for the very remarkable judgment that Luther pronounced on this Epistle of the Apostle James. He denied its Divine authority, he said it was not inspiration; and, not content with refusing it Divine authority, he spoke of it most contemptuously, calling it a "chaffing epistle." Luther fancied that he saw in the Epistle of James a discrepancy between what James taught and what Paul taught, in regard to justification by the righteousness of Jesus Christ; and believing that he saw that, he rashly rejected this Epistle, scared by a phantom, by the mere appearance of discrepancy. There is no real discrepancy. Explanation of the appearance of it lies in this, that the Epistle of James was written after the Epistles of Paul had been perverted, grossly abused, turned to the basest purposes. Men had risen up, who held that if a man had knowledge, that was enough; if he gave a cold and intellectual assent to certain doctrines, though his heart was impious and his life impure, he might be saved. It was against this pestilent heresy that honoured Christ in word, but dishonoured Him in work; it was against those that held the doctrine of a spurious faith, against these that James took pen in hand, and asked, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? Faith, if it hath not works, is dead." I. Now let me remark by way of caution that I may not be misunderstood, that notwithstanding what the apostle appears to say, and does say, that nevertheless we are saved by faith, we are saved by faith in the merits of Jesus Christ alone. James says, "Can faith save him?" I say it can—undoubtedly it can. Not the spurious faith, the false and spurious faith that is without works, and is dead, but such a faith as bringeth forth works; and how? Not by any merit of its own, for it is the gift of God, and it is the work of the Holy Spirit, and it is no more than the rope which the drowning man clutches, and by which another pulls him living to the shore. God its Author, the heart its seat, good works its fruits, Christ its object, and it saves the sinner by bringing him to the Saviour. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Saved if my faith is weak? Ay, however weak your faith is, if it is a true and living faith, it is enough. Our blessed Lord drew lessons from singing birds and gay flowers; and I have seen in the conservatory a plant from which such saints as John Bunyan's Mr. Feeble-mind might gather strength, and draw something more fragrant than its odours, and something more beautiful than its purple flowers. Climbing the trellis that it interwove with greenest verdure and flowery beauty, it sprang from the soil by a mere filament of a stem, unlike the pine of yonder mountains, unlike the sturdy oaks that are built to carry their heads, and bear the storms they have to encounter. You require to trace this upwards and downwards to believe that that living shred, that filament of a stem, could be the living sustaining, channel that carried the sap from the root to all these flowers and verdant branches. And when I looked on it I thought how like it looks to the feeble faith of some living saint; but there the likeness ceases. Roughly handled one day, that filament of a stem was broken and separated from the living root; branches and flowers withered away. II. Let me now remark, in the second place, that while it is by faith that unites us to Jesus Christ that we are saved, good works are the certain fruit of this living, saving faith. One of France's bravest marshals had in a civil war for his opponent the Prince of Condé, and in Condé he had a foeman worthy of his steel, the only man that could rival Turenne in handling troops, in moving armies, in sudden and successful attacks. Well, one night when Condé was supposed to be many leagues away, Turenne was sleeping soundly in his tent. He was suddenly aroused by shouts, and the roar of cannon and of musketry, that were to him the certain signs of a midnight assault. He hastened from his tent, he cast his eyes around him, and at once discovering by the burning houses, by the quarters of the attack, by the skill with which it was planned, by the energy with which it was executed, the genius of his only rival, he turned to his staff and said, "Condé is come." Certain men announce themselves; certain causes announce themselves: and especially in cases of sudden conversion you can almost as surely say, "Conversion is come, salvation is come, Christ is come." It

is nothing but faith that can unite us thus to Christ. Faith announces itself, but in another way. The Apostle Paul, while he says that salvation "is of faith and not of works, lest any man should boast," speaks as distinctly of works. This his subject, his trumpet utters no uncertain sound. On the contrary, while he says that salvation is not of works but of faith, "lest any man should boast"; while he says that we are cleansed through Christ from sin, in the very same passage he adds that "we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." You talk of predestination and foreordination. I say predestination and foreordination have as much to do with good works as they have to do with salvation; and good works, according to that passage of Paul, are in all cases as sure as foreordination can keep them, the natural fruit of faith. And how can it be otherwise? In every other region where it works, is not faith the grand worker in this world? In the character of God, in the Person, love, and work of Jesus Christ, in an eternal world, in the Bible with its gracious promises and its glowing prospects, faith has to do with the noblest truths, and, if any man here, not devout in heart, not holy in life, says that he has faith, he deceiveth himself. But God says, "Be not deceived, neither whoremongers, nor unclean persons, nor covetous persons, that are idolaters, have any inheritance in the kingdom of God." III. Let me now, in the third place, turn your attention briefly to this remark which follows from the former, that the hopes of salvation through faith, which are founded on a faith without works, are of necessity therefore false, and being false are therefore fatal. Last century, in my country, whatever it may have been in this or elsewhere, and I believe it is true of most—last century faith was out of fashion, unless at a communion season. The peculiar doctrines of the gospel, at least in Scotland, were in many places, and in most indeed, seldom presented before the people. "Christ and Him crucified" were thrust into a corner. Such was the state of matters then and there. Virtue and vice—the beauties of virtue and the ugliness of vice, these were the favourite topics of the ministers, and the people had so little taste that they did not fall in love with Virtue, and even some of those that were accustomed to paint her in the pulpit, had very little regard for her themselves. And strange to say, the more the people had virtue preached to them, the less they practised it. And Jesus shut out of the pulpit, the Cross taken from the preacher, the love of Jesus never heard or carried to people's hearts, there was nothing to produce good works; there was no pith in preaching, there was no straw to make bricks with, there was no seed to yield up a harvest, there was, so to speak, no backbone to support the soft parts and keep the form erect. The religion that we want is the religion that has Christ for its root, and good works in everything for its fruits. And any other religion is dead, James says. James says, "Faith if it have not works, is dead." Not dead like a stone, which, in the flashing diamond, and in the sculptured marble, may be beautiful—but dead like that lifeless body, putrid, foul, horrible in its decay. Let me now turn your attention to this—that believers are called by Christ's Word to be workers. You are called to be believers; believe. And then when you believe, you are called to be workers. "Hold to the faith, be steadfast, steady, unmovable"; But He adds now, as He added then by the voice of Paul, "Always abounding in the work of the Lord." (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *Productive faith*:—I. THE APOSTLE'S ARGUMENT. The apostle was thoroughly well aware how easy it is for the mind of man to slide into a notional possession of faith, which in itself possesses no power, and is altogether unprofitable. Persons of sanguine temperament have often wrought themselves up into a notion that they possessed faith, and they have seemed to exercise that faith towards Christ as its legitimate object; but it has been rather the sentiment of faith than faith itself, with its vitality and energy. It is possible that this delusion may be practised for a considerable time and to a great extent. And what would be amongst its immediate effects? Unsteadiness, inconsistency, want of spiritual progress, and, at length, decline from all profession. The person who is under the sentiment rather than the power of a real faith may be like the branch of a tree, cut off and planted without a root; it may be fresh and green to all appearance for a time, but there is no life in it, it is a dead branch, it is a powerless thing, it will never blossom, it will yield no fruit. II. THE ILLUSTRATION. The mind of man may be acted on by the distresses of others: there may be a kind and a degree of commiseration felt for human wretchedness; nay, there are those who will weep with emotion over a tale of fiction, and almost by the power of human sympathy realise it as if it were true, and seem ready to give up the heart at once to the deepest impression that can be made. We delight in the manifestation of human sympathy—we begin to anticipate

that it will become very profitable in its results; but still there may be the power of selfishness within, that shall at length obliterate the impressions that have been made on the sensitive nature: the emotion passes, and the step has not been taken, it may be, to alleviate that distress which is known to exist. And there is a disposition in the mind of man—a complex disposition—first to cherish images and pictures of distress that excite the emotion, and then to escape from the emotion when it has been excited. The apostle, then, puts this case, and says—"What does all this profit?" There is the naked object—he is unclothed; there is the hungry—he is unfed. Where is all this emotion, all this expressed sympathy? It has passed away like a vapour. Human sympathy, like faith, if it is to work anything, must bring out its direct results, or it is altogether an unprofitable thing. III. THE CONCLUSION of the apostle's argument. "Even so," saith he, "faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone"—or, as the margin says, "being by itself." The conclusion is inevitable. The true faith which justifies does invest the possessor of it with a power of working works acceptable to God. If there be no works acceptable to God—if there be, for instance, no power of holiness manifested in the ordinary details of the Christian professor's life—it profits nothing, it leaves the sinner as it found him; it is but a creation of his own mind, it is not that faith which brings the soul by the Spirit into union with Christ, and gives it both power and activity. "Even so, faith, if it hath not works, is a dead thing." And we ask, therefore, of the Christian professor, when he tells us he has faith, the production of his works—not simply and on the whole ground of the evidence of his faith, but in order that the works may give consistency to his profession, and proof that he has possessed the death and the life of the Lord Jesus Christ by direct investiture from God Himself. (*G. Fisk, LL.B.*) *Two kinds of faith—the spurious and the genuine:*—I. THE SPURIOUS FAITH WHICH THE TEXT CONDEMNS. "What doth it profit, though a man say he hath faith." The first point to be observed is that this faith is a faith of outward profession. We know how easily men are often persuaded to say what they do not feel, and to profess what they do not steadfastly believe and heartily embrace. This radical evil runs through the whole description given by the apostle of the kind of faith which he reprobates. It is something more talked about than felt, more boasted of than experienced, more used for self-confident display than applied to the business and practice of life. We observe, further, that there is a false faith which presumes without warrant upon its title to the favour of God and the happiness of heaven. The freeness with which the blessings of redemption are promised in the gospel has ever been the occasion—though most unjustly—with men of corrupt and insincere minds for turning the grace of God into licentiousness. This was the signal abuse which St. James found it necessary to combat, and he leaves it neither root nor branch. He first asks, with a keen sense of holy contempt for such an empty faith, "What doth it profit?" Does it make him who boasts in the possession of it a whit the better? Does it impress the slightest lineament of the Saviour's image on his mind? Or will it produce any salutary effect upon his future and eternal condition? Can this faith—this notional faith, this faith of mere profession, this faith which produces no fruit—can this faith save him? It may delude him with many hopes, it may raise him to temporary excitement and exultation, it may urge him even to meet death without fear; but can it save him? This is the only important question; and it can have no other answer than a fearful negative! Again, the apostle presses a powerful argument from analogy. He compares faith with charity or love. For any one to say he has faith without its proper fruit is the same thing as to say that he has love without its appropriate fruit. Your sympathy goes no further than words or sentimental feelings; it stops at the very point which would give evidence of its vitality, and therefore it is not true Christian love, it profiteth nothing. Apply the same reasoning to faith. If yours is a faith which produces no fruit, "if it hath not works, it is dead, being alone." A further step which the apostle takes for the detection of a spurious faith is the direct demand of evidence respecting its existence. Thou boastest of an impalpable something which thou canst not prove to have any existence whatever. Here are no signs of life, no proof that the whole of thy profession is not either hypocritical or delusive. Say what you will, there is no faith where there are no works. Is it replied, Yes, I certainly do believe in the existence of God? That may be, and yet you may be destitute of the faith which saves the soul; for even "devils believe and tremble," yet they remain devils still, and are for ever excluded from salvation! Once more, look at the examples of Scripture, the very examples quoted by St. Paul for the purpose of proving that a man is justified by

faith only. Do not the cases of Abraham and of Rahab show that this justifying faith was also a working faith? A profession of faith, accompanied though it be by the clearest convictions of the judgment, is nothing but a lifeless carcass, unless it breathes and acts in holy thoughts and holy conduct, showing forth the praises of Him who is its great Author, and who has promised eternal salvation to every one that believeth. II. THE NATURE OF THAT FAITH WHICH BY IMPLICATION IS COMMENDED IN THE TEXT. Of this faith God is the Author. It is His gift, and the most precious of all the spiritual gifts which He bestows upon man. Hence faith is not a notion, not an opinion, not a mere product of the understanding; it is a vital, efficacious principle inwrought into the soul by Divine grace. It is the very life by which we live; the might of Divine omnipotence, strengthening the weakness of a dying worm, and kindling all holy affections within the human breast. This faith accepts, without hesitation, the Divine testimony, resting with implicit confidence on the Word of God, and desiring no other and no higher authority than this for the most perfect and unlimited trust, and for the most sincere and universal obedience. Hence follows the cordial acceptance of Christ crucified as the object of our faith. It must be with a faith which unites the soul to Christ in holy bonds, which makes us one with Him and Him with us, which causes us daily to feed on Him in our hearts, and to hold sacred fellowship with Him as our Guide, Redeemer, and Friend. Finally, it must be by a faith which, while it puts away from itself all merit of works, yet brings forth abundantly those works of holy obedience which are the proper fruits of the Spirit, and which flow as legitimate effects from the holy principles which grace has implanted in the breast. III. MAKE PRACTICAL USE OF THIS DOCTRINE. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." It is adduced as an evidence of the irresistible power of Demosthenes over the minds of his hearers that, when he had finished his speech against Philip of Macedon, the assembly instantly exclaimed, "Come, let us fight against Philip!" Their resolution, however, though ardently and sincerely expressed while under the excitement produced by most thrilling eloquence, was but ill-sustained or vindicated by their future conduct. Now, the faith of Christ not only prompts to holy and energetic resolves, but ensures a practice corresponding with such resolves. It is a living faith, and the proof of its life is in its effects. And it is not bare life, but life in action—life in the discharge of holy service—life in spiritual power, which faith exhibits. The Christian is not only a living, but a fruitful, branch in the True Vine. The sap which flows from the root does not expend itself wholly in leaves—there is the bud, the blossom, and the ripened cluster. The Christian is not a paralysed member of the mystical body of Christ, but moves and acts as the Head directs, not only possessing life, but feelings its power, and consciously and cheerfully yielding to the influence of its Guide. (*John King, M.A.*) *The test of faith*:—There are two main errors in religion which it is the duty of Christ's ministers frequently and fully to point out. the one, that we can be righteous by our own deservings; the other, that whereas works are not meritorious, they may be neglected. I. THAT FAITH MUST BE PROVED BY SOME TEST; and—II. THAT THE TEST ESPECIALLY PROPOUNDED OF IT IN SCRIPTURE IS THAT OF HOLY WORKS. I. That a mere profession of belief is useless must appear very evident to any one who chooses to give the matter the slightest consideration. For there are numerous examples in Scripture of those who rightly professed, but whose heart nevertheless was not right with God. The fact is that there are various kinds of faith spoken of in Scripture, which have each its appropriate fruit, but of which one kind only leads to close union with Christ, and consequently to eternal life. 1. There is an historical faith. We read the Scripture narrative, and we credit it. As well might it be imagined that the belief in the existence of water would quench our thirst, the knowledge of a remedy would cure a disease. No: to believe in Christ in this way has no more saving virtue than to believe the record given of any other being. 2. There is another faith of which the Scripture speaks. Our Lord told His disciples that if they had faith as a grain of mustard seed, they might bid a ponderous mountain be removed, and it should move at their word (Matt. xvii. 20). And it cannot be doubted that, in the earlier days of Christianity, there were those who cast out devils in the Saviour's name, and in His name did many mighty works, who yet were not His friends, or savingly converted to Him. The faith whereby miracles are wrought has its appropriate effect. And what is this? Why, the benefit (supposing it to be cure of diseases) is to those on whom the cure is performed. It benefits not the soul of the man who works the wonder, unless you would imagine that. by the

administering of a medicine to the patient the physician therein cures also himself. 3. There is a third kind of faith which the Scriptures describe. Perhaps I should not err in calling it the faith of the passions. It is the belief which is grounded upon fear or admiration—any passing emotion of the mind. Hence it produces effects wholesome it would appear for the time, but of a most limited character. Such was the faith of Lot's wife. She believed the coming ruin of Sodom. She quitted the devoted city. But the lingering love of her ancient home returned: her faith faltered. Such a faith was that of Herod. He believed the plain truths which the prophet of the desert proclaimed to him. He began a reformation. But his faith lasted not long. As soon as lust was attacked, it summoned all its powers, quenched in the monarch's breast his feeble belief of the Baptizer's mission. And so you see there are kinds and degrees of faith which save not the soul. Is not the inference inevitable, that we must try and prove our faith and bring it to the touchstone? that we must ascertain if ours be the genuine faith of God's elect? II. Whether that which is proposed in Scripture is not the evidence of holy works. Our Lord's declaration seems precise enough: "By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" (Matt. vii. 16, 20). This test, then, we must adopt. It must be carefully observed that by good fruits, good works, I do not mean merely moral conduct. For, though where this exists not there can be no genuine faith or real religion, yet the life may be to the eye unblamable, and yet there be in the heart none of that spiritual principle or influence which God requires. Each part of Christian doctrine, if I may so speak, will be exhibited by its appropriate proof. Genuine faith, receiving the sad truth of man's corruption, will be evidenced by a real, not a merely professed, humiliation before God. Now, though certainly love may exist when it is but professed, yet surely the best proof of its existence is the actual exhibition of it. Desire is in the same way best shown by men's really making exertions to obtain that which they say they long for. Fear is most clearly exhibited when we actually shrink from that which we say we dread. If, then, the best proof of the existence of all these passions or principles be the really doing that which they, if actually felt, would naturally prompt to, so we may conclude it is in spiritual things: the best proof of repentance is an earnest endeavour to be freed from the power and punishment of that sin which we say we mourn for. And, further, genuine faith receiving the record which God has given of His Son will be manifested in an actual resorting to Christ for forgiveness and a cordial affection to His person, work, and offices. Practice is the proper fruit of every gracious affection: it is the proper proof of the true knowledge of God: "Hereby," says the apostle, "we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments" (1 John ii. 3). Practice is the proper fruit of real repentance. Hence John the Baptist required the Jews to "bring forth fruits meet for repentance." Practice is the proper evidence of genuine faith. It was by actually complying with God's command to offer up his son that Abraham showed his real belief in the Lord's word. Practice is the proper evidence of a true closing with Christ for salvation. This is evident from the different reception, as we read in the Gospels, Christ's calls met with. By some they were declined or deferred: "Suffer me first to go and bury my father." Practice is the proper evidence of real thankfulness to God. And that this test is the true one is proved by what we see to be the dealings of God with men. We find that He tries, or, as it is sometimes called in Scripture, He "tempts" men, *i.e.*, He brings them into situations where natural principles and affections run counter to the requirements of His Word. Thus Abraham was tried to see whether paternal affection would prevail over his trust in God's declarations. Thus Hezekiah was tried to see whether natural vainglory would overcome humble gratitude for God's mercy. Thus Peter was tried to see whether the fear of man were stronger than love to Jesus Christ. This test, let me further observe, is needed for the individual himself. Some mistakenly deny this. They allow that, to others, the proper proof of a man's profession is his actually walking in the fear and good ways of the Lord; but they say that he, for himself, as if by intuition, knows whether he has really laid hold on Christ, whether he really loves God. Do not these men understand that the human heart is "deceitful above all things"? Do they not remember that there is such a thing as self-deception, a persuasion of the mind that we desire, love, fear that which, on proof, we desire not, love not, fear not? David, sensible of this, entreated the Lord to examine and prove him, and to try his reins and his heart (Psa. xxvi. 2). And so every humble believer will desire. He will not be content with notions: he must have things. He is not satisfied

with a religion of the lips or of the thoughts: he must see it influencing the whole man. He relies not on any conduct as the ground of acceptance in God's sight: he does look at it for evidence whether or no he has laid hold upon the things which make for his eternal peace, whether or no he has truly come to Christ for salvation. And now, seeing these things are so, let me seriously, in concluding the subject, ask you what proof you are giving of the reality of your profession? (*J. Eyre, M.A.*) *St. James and St. Paul*:—It seems likely that St. James had seen St. Paul's epistles, for he uses the same phrases and examples (*cf.* vers. 21, 23, 25, with Rom. iv. 3; Heb. xi. 17, 31, and vers. 14, 24 with Rom. iii. 28; Gal. ii. 16). At all events, the Holy Spirit by St. James combats, not St. Paul, but those who abuse St. Paul's doctrine. (*A. R. Fausset, M.A.*) *St. Paul and St. James on faith*:—St. Paul meets the legalist; St. James the Antinomian. (*W. H. M. Aitken, M.A.*) *Opposite foes*:—They do not stand face to face fighting against each other, but back to back fighting opposite foes. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *Faith in germ and manifested*:—Plainly St. James means by works the same thing as St. Paul means by faith; only he speaks of faith in its manifested development; St. Paul speaks of it in its germ. (*A. R. Fausset, M.A.*) *Believing and doing* are blood relatives. (*S. Rutherford.*) *What doth it profit?*—Plutarch, who was a young man at the time when this Epistle was written, has the following story of Alexander the Great, in his "Apothegms of Kings and Generals": The young Alexander was not at all pleased with the successes of his father, Philip of Macedon. "My father will leave me nothing," he said. The young nobles who were brought up with him replied, "He is gaining all this for you." Almost in the words of St. James, though with a very different meaning, he answered, "What does it profit [τί ὄφελος], if I possess much and do nothing?" The future conqueror scorned to have everything done for him. In quite another spirit the Christian must remember that if he is to conquer he must not suppose that his Heavenly Father, who has done so much for him, has left him nothing to do. There is the fate of the barren fig-tree as a perpetual warning to those who are royal in their professions of faith, and paupers in good works. (*A. Plummer, D.D.*) *Religion more than intellectual assent*:—Are you any more a Christian because of all that intellectual assent to these solemn verities? Is not your lif elike some secularised monastic chamber, with holy texts carved on the walls, and saintly images looking down from glowing windows on revellers and hucksters who defile its floors? Your faith, not your creed, determines your religion. Many a "true believer" is a real infidel. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Words and deeds*:—God is too wise to be put off with words; He turns up our leaves, and looks what fruit: whereof if He will, He lays down His basket and takes up His axe (Luke xiii. 7). (*J. Trapp.*) *Faith and works*:—Two gentlemen were one day crossing the river in a ferry-boat. A dispute about faith and works arose; one saying that good works were of small importance, and that faith was everything; the other asserting the contrary. Not being able to convince each other, the ferry-man, an enlightened Christian, asked permission to give his opinion. Consent being granted, He said, "I hold in my hands two oars. That in my right hand I call 'faith'; the other, in my left, 'works.' Now, gentlemen, please to observe, I pull the oar of faith, and pull that alone. See! the boat goes round and round, and the boat makes no progress. I do the same with the oar of works, and with a precisely similar result—no advance. Mark! I pull both together, we go on apace, and in a very few minutes we shall be at our landing-place. So, in my humble opinion," he added, "faith without works, or works without faith, will not suffice. Let there be both, and the haven of eternal rest is sure to be reached." As the flower is before the fruit, so is faith before good works. Faith is the parent of works, and the children will bear a resemblance to the parent. It is not enough that the inward works of a clock are well constructed, and also the dial-plate and hands; the one must act on the other, the works must regulate the movement of the hands. (*Archbishop Whately.*) *Doing better than talking*:—Two rival architects were once consulted for the building of a certain temple at Athens. The first harangued the crowd very learnedly upon the different orders of architecture, and showed them in what manner the temple should be built; the other, who got up after him, only observed that what his brother had *spoken* he could *do*—and thus he gained the cause. **Can faith save him?**—*Faith more than creed*:—Men dwelling, as those Jews dwelt, in the midst of a heathen population, were tempted to trust for their salvation to their descent from Abraham, and to their maintaining the unity of the Godhead as against the Polytheism and idolatry of the nations. They repeated their creed, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord" (Deut. vi. 4). It entered, as our creed does, into the morning and evening services of the synagogue.

It was uttered by the dying as a passport to the gates of Paradise. It was to this that they referred the words of Habakkuk that the just should live by faith (Hab. ii. 4). St. James saw, as the Baptist had seen before him, how destructive all this was of the reality of the spiritual life, and accordingly takes this as the next topic of his letter. (*Dean Plumptre.*) *Saving faith*:—It is not every faith that saves the soul. There may be a faith in a falsehood which leads only to delusion and ends in destruction. When the Eddystone lighthouse was to be rebuilt, Winstanley, the noted engineer, contracted to rear a structure which should withstand the assaults of time and tempests. So confident was his faith in the showy structure of his own skill, that he offered to lodge in it, with the keeper, through the autumnal gales. He was true to his word. But the first tremendous tempest which caught the flimsy lighthouse in the hollow of its hand hurled both building and builder into the foaming sea. We fear that too many souls are rearing their hopes for eternity upon the sands of error; when the testing floods come and the winds beat upon their house, it will fall, and sad will be the fall thereof. There is a faith that saves; it puts us into immediate and vital union with the Son of God. Because He lives, we shall live also. When a human soul lets go of every other reliance in the wide universe, and hangs entirely upon what Jesus has done, and can do for him, then that soul "believes *on* Christ." To Him the believer entrusts himself for guidance, for pardon, for strength, and for ultimate admission into the exceeding and eternal weight of glory. 1. Faith is a very simple process. Thanks be unto God that the most vital of all acts is as easily comprehended as a baby comprehends the idea of drawing nourishment from a mother's breast and of falling asleep in a mother's arms. Jesus propounds no riddle when He invites you and me to come to Him just as the blind beggar and the penitent harlot came. 2. Faith is not only a simple, it is a sensible act. Do you consider it a sensible thing to purchase a United States Bond? Yes; because it gives you a lien on all the resources of the great Republic. So the highest exercise of the reason is to trust what the Almighty God has said and to rely on what He has promised. Infidelity plays the idiot when it rejects God, and pays the penalty. Faith is wise unto its own salvation. 3. Faith is a stooping grace. That heart-broken, self-despising woman weeping on the feet of her Lord is a beautiful picture of its lowliness and submission. Self must go down first, before we can be lifted up into Christ's favour and likeness. On the low grounds falls the fertilising rain of heaven; the bleak mountain tops are barren. God resisteth the proud and giveth His grace unto the lowly. 4. Faith is the strengthening grace. Through this channel flows in the power from on high. The impotent man had laid many a weary year by the pool of Bethesda. When Jesus inquired, "Wilt thou be made whole?" and his faith assented, the command came instantly, "Rise, take up thy bed and walk." At once the man leaps up, and a helpless bundle of nerves and muscles receives strength sufficient to walk and to carry his couch. Faith links us to Omnipotence. 5. Finally, it is the grace which completely satisfies. When a hungry soul has found this food, the aching void is filled; "Lord, evermore give me this bread." When the sting of guilt is taken away, and the load of condemnation is lifted off, then comes relief, rest, hope, joy, fellowship with the Divine. Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace. Without this faith it is impossible to please God: when it is exercised and we come, and ally ourselves with our blessed, pardoning, life-giving Saviour, He, too, beholds the happy result of His work and is satisfied. (*T. L. Cuyler, D.D.*) **Be ye warmed and filled.**—*Pretence of liberality*:—For a man to say to him, that hath purse penniless, body clotheless, scrip meatless, remaining harbourless, "Go get thee meat, go clothe thy back, go fill thy bag, go lodge thyself," maketh show only of false liberality. If a surgeon say to the wounded person, "Get thee salve, and heal thyself," yet giveth him neither salve nor plaster, nor anything whereby his sore may be healed, comforteth but slenderly. A physician bidding his cure and patient to wax strong, to recover health, to walk abroad, and yet applieth nothing, neither prescribeth anything whereby strength may be gotten, health recovered, former state restored, by bare words profiteth nothing. He that meeteth a wayfaring man, far from all path or highway, wandering, and saith, "Go aright," yet teacheth not which hand he must turn on, which way he must take, which path he must follow, helpeth the strayer nothing towards his proposed journey. So to bid the hungry go fill his belly, and yet to give him nothing, is no charity; for the surgeon to persuade the wounded man to cure himself, teaching him whereby he may do it, is no pity; for the physician to exhort his patient to recover help and health, and prescribe not whereby the sickness may be repelled, and former state

restored, is no remedy; to bid a man keep the right way, when he is altogether out, and not to set him in the path he must follow, is no courtesy. So to say to the cold, "Go warm thee," to the hungry, "Go feed yourselves," is no compassion or mercy. Thus by this similitude the apostle showeth that that is no faith which is in words only, and not accompanied with works of charity. (*R. Turnbull.*) *Cheap benevolence*:—Dr. Guthrie, in his autobiography, describes an odd character among his Scotch country parishioners at Arbirlot "who died as he lived, a curious mixture of benevolence and folly." The lawyer who drew his will, after writing down several legacies of five hundred pounds to one person, a thousand to another, and so on, at last said, "But, Mr. ——, I don't believe you have all that money to leave." "Oh!" was the reply, "I ken that as well as you; but I just want to show them my goodwill." *Mouth mercy*:—This age aboundeth with mouth-mercy, which is good cheap. But a little handful were better than a great many such mouthfuls. (*J. Trapp.*) *Words useless*:—"Be ye warmed." But what with? With a fire of word. "Be filled." But what with? With a mess of words. (*Ibid.*) **Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.**—*Works the true test of faith*:—It is a very important matter that we recognise right principles in relation to God and in relation to human life and duty; but it is still more important that the principles we recognise intellectually be embodied in actual conduct. However comprehensive the range of a man's faith or credence, if he is no better in his life for it, then plainly it is of no saving value. As far as the practical issues of his faith go, he might as well be without it. "The devils believe"; yes, and remain devils. Here is a man who professes to believe in patriotism, who can discourse ably of the nobleness of living for one's country and echo the loyal sentiments of patriot worthies; and yet he never studies one national question, and in time of national panic, suffering, or peril, he is the very last man to do one act of real patriotism. What is the value of his fine sentiments about devotion to Fatherland? Even so faith, if it hath no works, is dead, being alone. As food and light and air and warmth, and other elements of the material world, are assimilated with our physical organisation, promoting physical growth and strength and beauty, so the truth of God, relative to man's character and life, is to be assimilated with our moral and spiritual being, producing in us moral and spiritual vigour and health and symmetry. If it is not so apprehended—if it does not dwell in us as a fashioning nutritive force and inspiration, coming out in our daily life, then we have not vitally apprehended it. Look at this a little in detail. The life and teachings of Christ are the true model and standard for human life. That is a truth to which general assent is given. And what are the moral qualities which He manifested? He was meek and lowly at heart; He was painstaking with the feeble and prejudiced; He had sympathy; He had heroism; He saw the good there was in human nature, and sought to expand it. His was a Spirit of holy zeal; His was a Spirit of self-sacrifice. And His teachings harmonise with Himself. They bear the same heavenly stamp upon them. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." "Love your enemies": "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Now look out upon every-day life. Are Christ and His teachings copied and obeyed with loving and willing obedience by those who profess to recognise and revere them? That is the vital point. If, after the duties of the day, you who admit Christ to be your example, were to be asked, "Have you taken Him as your model to-day in the practical concerns of life? Have you dealt with your fellow-men as He would deal with them? Have you bought and sold as you can suppose He would buy and sell? Have you kept your motives pure, as you know He would keep His motives pure? Have you regulated your thoughts and feelings as He would regulate His?" It is very possible to have Christ in our creed—to believe in Him as an historic personage; to believe that He came forth from the Father; to give earnest thought to the mastery of His unparalleled teachings, and yet be sadly wanting in heart-homage and devotedness to Him. One little living act of obedience outweighs in value all a man's mere philosophising and intellectual credence. Christ demands actual doing (Matt. vii. 21). The future life is another truth to which general assent is given. This life is not all. It is, in relation to the magnitude and scope of our existence, but as the portal to the edifice. The life we live here is chequered and transitory, but that which is to come is everlasting. Now, the true life in relation to that great future is one of anticipation and earnest spiritual preparation. If we truly realised our citizenship to be yonder, we could not but be aliens here. Can the swallow love

the frost and snow and leaden skies of our winter? Can the home-sick emigrant forget the mother-country whence he came out? Can the man of refined taste and cultured mind be content amidst squalor and ignorance? Can the true-hearted mother be at rest while the wail of her babe in distress summons her to its cot? And if we have souls that know that their true mother-country is in a summer clime: that have been breathed into by the quickening Spirit of God, there will instinctively be a sense of alienship here; a patient waiting there may be, still a waiting for the redemption which draweth nigh. Now, what does a man's faith in the future do for him? What fruit does faith in immortality bear upon its branches? or, like the fig-tree which Christ cursed, has it nothing but leaves? The moral accountability of man to God is another generally accepted truth. Now what kind of life does a man's faith in this truth develop? That is the great question. Is it society, or is it God that he has chiefly before him, in what he is and does? Consider this in reference to the motives. Are they pure? In our intercourse with each other, very often only the actions are seen; the motives are hidden away in the secret chamber of a man's own breast. But the Lord looketh on the heart. Now, does the faith which we have in God as the Judge, who looketh down into the springs of action, make us careful to purify and rightly regulate the secret and interior life? What does faith do? Now, the faith that leads to works is just what men often lack. There are several things that are secondary, which are commonly elevated into substitutes and equivalents for obedience. Men are losing sight of the real end of life—right doing and being—and resting in these lower and intermediate stages. Some rest in a correct theology. They have true and lofty principles in their creed; but—but they keep them in that form. They are not expanded into living blossom and fruit. There is another class whose aim it is to be happy. The end of a Christian life is gained, they imagine, when they are able to glow with gladsome emotions. But your emotions are only worth anything as they inspire to right action. That is their purpose—to make us strong for obedience. Another class rest in the observance of ordinances and religious ceremonies. Churches and ordinances and Sabbath-days are intended simply to be helps. And as means of grace they are indispensable. But the means are often elevated into an end of themselves, and many a man reckons he has been religious when he has only been gathering inspiration for religion. In such externalisms do men rest, and the solemn, noble path of obedience lies before them untrodden. Can a faith that does not carry them beyond these things, that does not stir them up to any self-denials, any active form of goodness, any culture of a right manhood, save them? What the better is any one for believing in God if in his life he is practically atheistic? What does it matter that a man believes in the love of God in Christ, if there is no response of love in his own heart? What is the profit of a man every day reading his Bible, with faith in its inspiration, if he goes forth into the world forgetting all its teachings? What is the moral worth of any sort of intellectual credence that leaves the life barren of good works? Can such faith save? (*T. Hammond.*) *A living faith*:—Believing that Jesus is the Son of God, yet not to imitate His character, not to follow His precepts, not to conform to His commands, is no more acceptable faith than to speak kind words to a neighbour, and not assist his wants is acceptable and satisfactory love. Suppose, therefore, a person to profess dependence on Christ Jesus—to profess, that is, that he knows the corruption of his heart, the infirmity of his faith, and consequently, that he trusts not to his own righteousness, but to the atonement made on the Cross for the unrighteous; supposing this, we say, these are excellent words, they represent the state of the Christian's mind; But still St. James is aware how prone a man's heart is to deceive him; and knowing this, he requires a proof of this dread of God's wrath, this hatred of sin, this love of Christ in delivering us from sin. "Thou hast faith"; thou professest to believe in Christ; I would not doubt your profession, or deny that your belief; but examine yourself, prove your own soul; let me witness a proof of your faith in your life and practice; how else can it be known? "Show me thy faith without thy works." Thou canst not; it is impossible. Thou canst not show it except by works, for faith is hidden in the heart; it cannot be seen of itself—it can be only judged of by its effects. It is like the life which animates the body; we cannot see it, we cannot tell what it depends on; but this we know, if the principle of life be sound and healthy, the man will breathe with freedom and move with ease. So, if there be sound and acceptable faith, though it lie deep in the recesses of the heart, its existence there will be evident; it will freely breathe in piety towards God—it will actively work in charity towards men. Here, then, is

the reason why St. James requires us to show our faith by our works; because there can be no other proof of our having that faith at all, which will avail us in the sight of God. There may be a belief in Christ which the mind cannot resist, because the evidence of the Christian revelation is too strong to be set aside; there may be a belief in Christ which grows out of our birth and education, which we receive, like our language, from the country in which we are born; more than this, there may be a belief in Christ strong enough to disturb our conscience, and yet, it is to be feared, "a savour of death" rather than life, because it is a body without a spirit. It is not strong enough to quicken the soul with a new and vital principle —not powerful enough to "crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts"—not powerful enough to raise the heart from things below to things above, so that it shall "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," and "have its treasure in heaven." And all this is done, and must be done, by that faith which does justify a man in the sight of God. Such faith rests, indeed, upon historical truth; but it is much more than the belief of an historical fact: such faith is much more than national, though it rejoices in knowing that God hath chosen the country to which we belong as one to which His saving truth should be made known; such faith is not intellectual only, though it approves itself to the judgment of the renewed mind; such faith is not dead or inactive, but lively and energetic; it inspires laborious exertion; it breathes in love to God and man; it breaks forth in spiritual desires; it refreshes itself by spiritual meditation; it dreads what God's Word condemns—it approves what God's Word approves; it contends against the indwelling principle of sin—it aspires after the perfection of holiness, complete participation of the Divine nature. (*Abp. Sumner.*) *Faith shown by works*:—I had the privilege of opening a beautiful country church some years since in a neighbourhood surrounded almost entirely with infidels. The preacher directed my attention to a tall, vigorous man in the congregation, and said he would give me his history when the service was over. He was, it seems, a violent, passionate, close-fisted man. Not a farthing could anybody get out of him for the salvation of souls or for the elevation of humanity. "A few months ago," said the minister, "he gave his heart to Jesus. The infidels in the community said, 'Wait a little while; touch his pocket, and you will see where his religion is.' Presently," continued my friend, "I came to him with a subscription paper, and spoke of the difficulties and embarrassments under which we laboured in the neighbourhood, for want of a church. 'Well,' said the man, 'let us build a church.' 'What will you give us?' inquired the preacher. 'Fifty pounds,' was the prompt reply; and the minister passed through the community with the subscription paper, at the head of which was this amount, written in the gentleman's own handwriting, which surprised everybody. A few days afterwards the most trying circumstance of his life occurred. His dear wife trembled for him. 'Oh, my husband!' she exclaimed, 'don't go.' His reply way, 'I must go; my duty calls me there. I am perfectly cool and collected. I shall become excited, but I will not say a word, or do a thing out of the way.' He passed through the fiery ordeal without the least taint of anger upon him. The community then said, 'Surely there is something in this. You have reached his pocket, you have conquered his anger, and you have subdued the man. There is power in the gospel of Christ.'" A few weeks after my visit there I received the sad intelligence that that gentleman had been buried. He had gone out into the forest, and, unfortunately, a tree fell on him and crushed him to the earth, and yet did not entirely destroy him. They carried him to the house, and sent for a physician and the minister. He calmly asked for the Bible, and read in a clear voice a chapter in St. John's Gospel. After shutting the Bible he closed his hands upon his breast; "and such a prayer," said my ministerial brother, "I never heard from mortal lips, for his wife, for his children, for his pastor, for the Church, and for his infidel friends. In a moment or two, after saying 'Amen,' he closed his eyes and sweetly fell asleep in Jesus. The infidels said, 'There is something in religion.'" A few weeks since I met with that good pastor again. I inquired about his infidel neighbours, and he replied, "All of them but one are happily converted to God." (*The Church.*) **I will show thee my faith by my works.**—*Scriptural evidence of saving faith*:—The mode of instruction here proposed is the philosophical method of Scripture. It is to develop the character of faith by the test of experiment. It gives us the most vivid impressions of a genuine faith; it shows us what it is by its works. 1. SOME OF THE OPERATIONS OF FAITH IN VARIOUS SITUATIONS FITTED TO BRING OUT ITS NATURE. II. SOME OF ITS LEADING CHARACTERISTICS. 1. It is a belief in Divine

testimony respecting unseen things, with corresponding affections, purposes, and actions. 2. Faith is a reasonable thing. It is the perfection of reason to believe, not this false world, not the father of lies, but God; and especially to believe Him on subjects of too large grasp for our puny minds, and quite beyond the range of our senses, not excepting His declarations on the high mysteries of the Trinity and the atonement of His well-beloved Son. 3. Faith is bold and unbending. It gives inflexibility of purpose and action—not from obstinacy, ambition, or other unworthy motive—but simply because it rests on immutable truth. 4. Faith is very powerful. We have seen the proof, not in abstract reasoning, but in facts—in its actual works, exhibited by sundry devoted servants of God. Here is not theory, but experiment. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." 5. Another attribute of faith is sublimity. The scene spread out before its eye, how vast! how boundless! even the whole circle of revealed truth. 6. Another obvious characteristic of faith is its moral excellence. Learn—1. Its Divine origin. 2. Saving faith is the same in every age and nation. 3. Some of the victories which faith is called to achieve at the present day, and in the future. (*C. Yale.*) *The connection between faith and works*:—I. TRUE FAITH IS VISIBLE. The objects of faith indeed are invisible; an unseen God, an unseen Saviour, and an unseen world; but faith itself is not so; it is something that may be seen. It may not be so at all times, or in an equal degree; for as clouds are about the Divine throne, so they sometimes encompass the Christian, and hide his graces from himself and the view of others. Yet it is at all times visible to Him Whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and knows them that are His and them that are not so. He can see it, though the rank weed of unbelief growing by which overshadows it, spoils its beauty, and hinders its growth. Genuine faith produces such a change in the disposition and conduct that it may be seen. II. TRUE FAITH IS MADE VISIBLE BY ITS FRUITS. Those who partake of the benefits of Christ's death will imitate the virtues of His life: and as they hope to be with Him in heaven, so they will endeavour to be like Him on earth. This only will prove the truth of our own religion, and recommend it to others; for it is not by thinking right, but doing well, that we are to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. Neither the amiableness of our disposition, nor discernment into the mysteries of the gospel, nor flaming zeal, nor strict regard to modes of worship, though of Divine institution, will prove the reality of our religion without a sanctified heart and a holy life (1 Cor. xiii. 1–3). 1. We may observe, though works are distinct from faith, so distinct that they are frequently opposed to it, yet they always accompany it as the proper fruit and effect of saving faith, like water from the fountain, or light from the sun. 2. As good works are the concomitants, so also the touchstone of faith, and the rule by which we are to judge of its being genuine. 3. The truth of these propositions is confirmed by the examples which the apostle adduces. III. THOSE WHO PRETEND TO FAITH, AND YET ARE DESTITUTE OF GOOD WORKS, ARE AWFULLY DECEIVED. Such will one day be the scorn of men and angels, and even of God Himself. If the heart be unhumbled and the life unholy, duties neglected and corruptions unsubdued, our faith is a mere pretence, and our hope is all a delusion. That faith which leaves a man where it finds him, as much attached to the world and under the power of sin and Satan as before, is no faith at all. Hence we may learn—1. It is as impious to deny the utility and necessity of good works as it is to ascribe merit to them. They are the way to the kingdom, as one said, though not the cause of reigning. 2. All works performed before faith, or while in a state of unbelief, are no better than dead works, and cannot be acceptable with God. Works do not give value to faith, but it is faith that makes works acceptable; it is the tree that makes the fruit good, and not the fruit that makes the tree good. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) *A working faith necessary*:—If a man would have an evidence that the sun hath just risen within our hemisphere, though it be not within his view as yet, he will see it better by looking west than by looking east; for, before he can see the body of the sun, he may see the light of it shining upon some high tower or mountain; and so by looking west he will see the sun has risen, or is rising in the east. So, when the world would have an evidence of your being a believer, they will not look to your faith, but to your works, and the rays and beams that flow from faith. And to look towards your works is to look away quite contrary to your faith; for as faith and works are contrary in the matter of justification, so faith renounces all works in point of dependence, though it produces them in point of performance. Therefore, seeing the world will not look to your heart, which they cannot see, but to your life, and will not look to your faith, which God only sees, but to your works

which the world may see; Oh, take care that it be a working faith: "Show me thy faith by thy works." (*R. Erskine.*) *Good works:*—If a man offer me the root of a tree to taste, I cannot say, this is such a pear, or apple, or plum; but if I see the fruit I can. If a man pretend faith to me, I must say to him, with St. James, can his faith save him? such a faith as that the apostle declares himself to mean—a dead faith—as all faith is that is inoperative and works not. But if I see his works I proceed the right way in judicature—I judge according to my evidence, and if any man will say, those works may be hypocritical, I may say of my witness, he may be perjured; but as long as I have no particular cause to think so, it is good evidence to me as to hear that man's oath, so to see this man's works. (*J. Donne.*) *Doctrine and practice:*—A prelate, since deceased, was present whose views were not favourable to the doctrine of Election. "My lord," said he, addressing the archbishop, "it appears to me that the young clergy of the present day are more anxious to teach the people high doctrine than to enforce those practical duties which are so much required." "I have no objection," said His Grace, "to high doctrine if high practice be also insisted upon; otherwise it must, of course, be injurious." (*Life of Archbishop Whatly.*) *Faith and works:*—St. James' sign is the best: "Show me thy faith by thy works." Faith makes the merchant diligent and venturous, and that makes him rich. Ferdinando of Arragon believed the story told him by Columbus, and therefore he furnished him with ships, and got the West Indies by his faith in the undertaker. But Henry VII. of England believed him not, and therefore trusted him not with shipping, and lost all the purchase of that faith. (*Jeremy Taylor, D.D.*) *Faith a nerve-centre:*—Saving faith is the nodus or ganglion, or nerve-centre, so to speak, where the most vital lines of force converge; the point whence radiate, as from the golden milestone in the Roman Forum, roads of influence and command to the utmost extremities of the empire of the soul. (*Robt. Whyte, D.D.*) *Luther's view of faith:*—Justifying faith according to Luther was not human assent, but a powerful, vivifying thing, which immediately works a change in the man, and makes him a new creature, and leads him to an entirely new and altered mode of life and conduct. (*Proctor's Gems of Thought.*) *Faith and works:*—It appeared by the fruits it was a good land (Numb. xiii. 23). It appeared that Dorcas was a true believer by the coats she had made. (*J. Trapp.*) *Believing and working:*—A bishop of the Episcopal Church says, "When I was about entering the ministry, I was one day in conversation with an old Christian friend, who said, "You are to be ordained; when you are ordained, preach to sinners as you find them; tell them to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and they shall be as safe as if they were in heaven; and then tell them to work like horses." *Faith and its manifestation:*—We are surely not despising fruits and flowers when we insist upon the root from which they shall come. A man may take separate acts of partial goodness, as you see children in the spring-time sticking daisies on the spikes of a thorn-twig picked from the hedges. But these will die. The basis of all righteousness is faith, and the manifestation of faith is practical righteousness. "Show Me thy faith by thy works" is Christ's teaching, quite as much as it is the teaching of His sturdy servant, James. And so we are going the shortest way to enrich lives with all the beauties of possible human perfection when we say, Begin at the beginning. The longest way round is the shortest way home; trust Him with all your heart first, and that will efflorescence into whatsoever things are lovely and of good report. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *On the existence of a Deity:*—The fundamental article of Christian belief is the existence of the one only living and true God. Unless this fundamental principle be admitted, there can be no such thing as personal accountableness—no such thing as either religion or morality in the world. I. First, then, we call your attention to the infallible proofs by which we evince THE EXISTENCE OF GOD. 1. And first, we appeal to the works of God, in creation and in Providence. 2. I refer you, secondly, for proof to the Word of God, or that inspired testimony which He has granted of His mind and will. 3. This truth may be further evinced by a distinct consideration of the human structure, both in body and in mind. 4. We evince the existence of God from the consent of all nations, from the earliest period of time, in all habitable parts of the universe, down to the present hour. 5. I have only one more evidence to produce, which is this: that even Satan himself, who is the father of lies, never yet ventured to impugn the great truth for which I am contending. II. Now, secondly, let me inquire WHAT WE BELIEVE CONCERNING THIS GOD, whose being is indubitably certain. 1. First we believe that God is one. 2. Secondly, we are taught to believe that

God exists in a mode altogether unsearchable and incomprehensible; so that in the simple and undivided essence there are three distinguishable subsistences—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. 3. Again, we believe that this God is a Being of all possible excellence, and of infinite glory and blessedness; infinitely good and infinitely great; of unsearchable wisdom, of inviolable truth, of immaculate purity, of exhaustless patience, of unbending equity, of incomparable benignity, and of boundless love. 4. We believe in the relations which this high and holy God sustains towards the human family. I must believe not only what God is, but what God is to me; and therefore say, "I believe in God the Father Almighty." I believe in Him as the creating Father; as the preserving Father, whose "tender mercies are over all His works." As the redeeming Father, as the governing Father. III. THE CHARACTER AND INFLUENCE OF THAT BELIEF in the being of a God whenever it is sincere. 1. This belief must be personal. 2. This faith must be the result of knowledge, discernment, and conviction. 3. This faith must be fiducial and filial. It must be associated with complacency, love, trust—yes, and appropriation too. 4. Once more, this faith must be practical. It must issue in devotion, worship, communion, fellowship, holy fear of God, a cautious avoidance of all that will displease Him, and a conscientious performance of all that will be acceptable in His sight. It must be discovered by patient submission, and by an earnest desire after the present and everlasting enjoyment of Him as the supreme and all-satisfying Good. Conclusion: 1. I infer from this subject the folly and criminality of doubting and denying the existence of a God. 2. In the next place, we may infer the paramount duty of extending the knowledge of God, and promoting faith in His being, and government, and laws. 3. Finally, we infer the happiness of those who have the prospect of seeing God face to face, and enjoying Him as the supreme Good through eternal ages; to have the mind fixed upon Him, absorbed in Him, for ever serving and enjoying Him as the ultimate happiness! (*G. Clayton, M.A.*) **The devils also believe, and tremble.**—*The faith of Christians contrasted in its results with the faith of fallen spirits:*—I. THEY ARE ENGAGED IN A COMMON WORK. Both are believers. Neither Christians nor devils are sceptics. The Christian believes in an unseen Saviour. Devils believe in that which is the foundation of all truth, that there is "one God." The Bible also teaches that they believe in many other things common to our creed; such as the Divinity of Christ and the approaching of a terrible retribution. II. THEIR COMMON WORK PRODUCES OPPOSITE PERSONAL RESULTS. 1. The faith of Christians produces great mental happiness. (1) Gratitude. (2) Admiration. (3) Benevolence. (4) Hope. 2. The faith of devils produces great mental misery. (1) Remorse for the past. (2) Apprehension for the future. III. THE CAUSE OF THIS GREAT DIFFERENCE IN THE PERSONAL RESULTS OF FAITH. The two classes occupy different standpoints in relation to truth. Lessons: 1. Both the happiness and misery of spiritual existences are independent of material circumstances. 2. Faith in moral truth, in all worlds, must always have an influence on the emotions. 3. The faith in Divine truth which is to save must be exercised now. 4. Spiritual happiness here is the great evidence of personal Christianity. 5. Heaven and hell are mental realities. (*D. Thomas.*) *Faith and emotion* (1 Pet. i. 8):—Why believing should in one case produce "joy unspeakable," and in another convulse the spirit with paroxysms of agony. I. THE OBJECT OF FAITH IS THE SAME IN BOTH CASES. That Object is God—God as the Creator, Sustainer, and Saviour. Christians, while contemplating God, grow glad in His presence; their faith rises into rapture, "joy unspeakable and full of glory." But what of the devils? They gaze on the same object, but no cheering light flashes on their woe-worn countenance. II. IN BOTH CASES THERE IS A KNOWLEDGE OF HISTORICAL FACTS. There is one marked difference, however, in this historic knowledge—viz., the Christian has read the history, but the devil has lived it! Startling is the reflection that Satan has been the contemporary of all ages! What, then, is the result of the Satanic knowledge? Does knowledge inspire joy? Nay! As Satan stands in the solemn temple of history, he trembles under the remorseless tyranny of self-condemnation! III. IN BOTH CASES THERE IS A BELIEF IN DIVINE FAITHFULNESS. Satan never knew an instance in which the Divine faithfulness had failed! The Divine unchangeableness is a cause of terror to lost spirits. Hath God spoken, and shall He not perform? Can any suggest to Omniscience an idea which might reverse His purposes? The Divine immutability is, on the contrary, the source of the Christian's most rapturous joy! The Christian knows nothing of the suspense which fickleness would have occasioned, and which is so fatal to calmness and rapture; he rests his head on the assurances of the

eternal. IV. It still remains to be known why "believing" should be attended with results so diverse. We submit that the secret is this, viz., IN THE CASE OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IS ACCOMPANIED BY HOPE, WHEREAS IN THE CASE OF SATAN IT IS ASSOCIATED WITH UTTER HOPELESSNESS. Having cleared our way thus far, we are in a position to do two things, viz.—1. To remove certain practical errors, and —2. To explain the nature of the faith which produces "joy unspeakable and full of glory." 1. We now see that faith is not a mere intellectual exercise. 2. That faith is not a mere credence of Divine facts. 3. That faith is not a mere belief in Divine predictions. What, then, is the true faith? The faith which produces joy is the trust and confidence of the heart in the atonement and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ! It is easy to see the bearing of this argument on all efforts for the evangelisation of humanity. Let me remind you of three facts: 1. That on earth alone can joy-producing faith be exercised. 2. That the propagation of this faith is entrusted to human instrumentality. 3. That we are responsible for the propagation of this faith up to the extent of our capability. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Conviction not conversion*:—Faith begins in conviction, and there are many who halt at this stage. They have heard the evidence, examined it, and are clearly, fully persuaded of its truth. But they never get beyond that. They are like a neap-tide as you have seen it rolling in from the sea. It comes with a demonstrative rush as though it would carry everything before it, but when it reaches a certain point there it stops, and with all the ocean at its back it does not exceed the mark where it is accustomed to pause. It is possible to reach the half-way point of conviction and not be saved. Sir Noel Paton received a chrysalis as a specimen to paint in a picture. It served the purpose, was wrapped in cotton, placed in a small tin box, put by in a cabinet, and forgotten. The spring time came, summer and autumn followed with more than wonted splendour, and again it was winter, when, while Sir Noel was looking for something else, his eyes fell upon the small tin box. He opened it and found, not the chrysalis, but a dead butterfly—one beautiful wing outstretched against the polished metal, the other partially developed and still entangled among the cotton. The chrysalis had burst into a half-formed butterfly and perished. So a soul may arrive at the half-way point of a full surrender, and yet perish short of it. "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins." **Wilt thou know, O vain man.**—*Inconsideration and ignorance*:—1. From that "Wilt thou know?" Presumers are either ignorant or inconsiderate. False and mistaken faith is usually a brat of darkness: either men do not understand what faith is, or do not consider what they do. 2. From that "O vain or empty man." Temporaries are but vain men; like empty vessels, full of wind, and make the greatest sound; they are full of windy presumptions and boasting professions. (1) Full of wind, they have a little airy knowledge, such as puffeth up (2 Pet. i. 8). (2) Of a great sound and noise; can talk of grace, boast of knowledge, glory in their faith. A vain faith and a vain man are oft suited and matched. 3. Hypocrites must be roused with some asperity and sharpness. So the apostle, "O vain man"; so Christ, "O ye foolish and blind"; so John the Baptist, "O ye generation of vipers." Hypocrites are usually inconsiderate, and of a sleepy conscience, so that we must not whisper, but cry aloud. 4. An empty barren faith is a dead faith. (1) Because it may stand with a natural state, in which we are "dead in trespasses and sins." (2) Because it receiveth not the quickening influences of the Spirit. (3) Because it wanteth the effect of life, which is operation; all life is the beginning of operation, tendeth to operation, and is increased by operation; so faith is dead, like a root of a tree in the ground, when it cannot produce the ordinary effects and fruits of faith. (4) Because unavailable to eternal life, of no more use and service to you than a dead thing. Oh! pluck it off; who would suffer a dead plant in his garden? "Why cumbereth it the ground?" (Luke xiii. 7). (*T. Manton.*) "*Vain man*":—The Greek adjective is almost literally the equivalent of our "empty-headed" as a term of contempt. It answers clearly to the "Raca" of Matt. v. 22. (*Dean Plumptre.*) *Empty-headed*, empty-handed, and empty-hearted. Empty-headed, in being so deluded as to suppose that a dead faith can save; empty-handed, in being devoid of true spiritual riches; empty-hearted, in having no real love either for God or man. (*A. Plummer, D.D.*) *Faith and works*:—If I see fruit growing upon a tree, I know what tree it is upon which such fruit grows. And so if I see how a man lives, I know how he believes. (*Bp. Beveridge.*) *A barren faith* (see R.V.):—Faith is the mother who gives birth to the virtues as her children. (*M. Luther.*) **Abraham . . . justified by**

works.—*Abraham's faith and privileges:*—I. THOSE WHO WOULD HAVE ABRAHAM'S PRIVILEGES MUST LOOK TO IT THAT THEY HAVE ABRAHAM'S FAITH. He—1. Received the promises with all humility. 2. Improved them with much fidelity. II. BELIEVERS MUST SEE THAT THEY HONOUR AND JUSTIFY THEIR FAITH BY WORKS. They must—1. Be loyal to Christ. 2. Work with a spirit suiting the gospel. 3. Be prudent. 4. Be thankful. III. SERIOUS PURPOSES OF OBEDIENCE ARE ACCEPTED FOR OBEDIENCE. IV. FAITH IS NOT GENUINE UNLESS IT PRODUCES SUCH ACTIONS AS ABRAHAM'S. (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *Faith perfected by works:*—Our natural disposition with regard to spiritual exercises is a compound of indolence, coldness, and faint-heartedness; thereforo we need continually to be stirred up, chafed, and animated by the Word of God and by prayer. As water, though naturally cold, admits of a high degree of heat, but if removed from the fire will gradually become cold again, so our religious affections, to whatever fervour, liveliness, and vigour they may have been raised, will, if not kept awake and recruited by fresh matter, insensibly abate into lukewarmuess and even coldness. Though there still be latent spiritual life, its glow is only kept up by active stirring. Hence St. James says, that "through works is faith made perfect," that is, through the perpetual activity and stir of practical devotion. (*J. A. Bengel.*) **The Friend of God.**—*The friendship of God:*—I. THE FRIENDSHIP OF GOD IS CONNECTED WITH THE RICHEST COMMUNICATIONS OF PEACE AND SPIRITUAL COMFORT. 1. The consciousness that we are reconciled to the Most High, and have in Him a Father and a Friend, sheds over the mind a tranquillity which excels the excitement of worldly joy. 2. The knowledge of God supplies to the devout mind topics on which it loves to dwell, and which call forth into active exercise its purest and best emotions. 3. The imitation of the Divine character gives to the mind the lofty pleasures of benevolent feeling and action. II. THE FRIENDSHIP OF GOD INVOLVES THE ASSURANCE OF SUCCOUR IN SEASONS OF PERPLEXITY AND DANGER. His power, knowledge, wisdom, are without limit, and His ever-wakeful eye marks the interests of all who trust in Him. III. THE FRIENDSHIP OF GOD ASSURES US THAT ALL THE OCCURRENCES OF LIFE, HOWEVER VARIED AND PERPLEXING, SHALL CONTRIBUTE TO AN ULTIMATE WELFARE. Afflictions themselves are part of God's wise and gracious discipline—evidences, not of anger, but of love. IV. THE FRIENDSHIP OF GOD WILL BE THE PORTION OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT, WHEN THE SCENES OF MORTALITY ARE OVER. (*Homilist.*) *The highest friendship:*—The only true friendship is that spoken of here. In order to attain it, there must be—I. PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE. 1. Spiritual. 2. Progressive. 3. Difficult to acquire. II. TRUST. 1. Mutual. 2. Complete. 3. Founded on faith. III. UNINTERRUPTED INTERCOURSE. 1. Sameness of interests. 2. Personal communication. 3. Loving devotion. (*Ibid.*) *The Friend of God:*—I. How GOD MANIFESTED HIS FRIENDSHIP TO ABRAHAM. 1. By His love. 2. By His sympathy. 3. By His care. II. How ABRAHAM MANIFESTED HIS FRIENDSHIP TO GOD. 1. By confidence. 2. By communion. 3. By zeal and obedience. (*G. Brooks.*) *The Friend of God:*—Abraham was called the Friend of God because he was so. The title only declares a fact. The Father of the faithful was beyond all men "the Friend of God," and the head of that chosen race of believers whom Jesus calls His friends. James says not only that this was Abraham's name, but that he was called by it. Among the Jewish people Abraham was frequently spoken of as "the Friend of God." At this present moment, among the Arabs and other Mahommedans, the name of Abraham is not often mentioned, but they speak of him as *Khalil Allah*, or the "Friend of God," or more briefly as *El Khalil*, "the Friend." It is a noble title, not to be equalled by all the names of greatness which have been bestowed by princes, even if they should all meet in one. Patents of nobility are mere vanity when laid side by side with this transcendent honour. I think I hear you say, "Yes, it was indeed a high degree to which Abraham reached: so high that we cannot attain unto it." We also may be called friends of God. Jesus Himself invites us to live and act, and be His friends. Surely, none of us will neglect any gracious attainment which lies within the region of the possible. None of us will be content with a scanty measure of grace, when we may have life more abundantly. The other day there landed on the shores of France a boatful of people sodden with rain and salt-water; they had lost all their luggage, and had nothing but what they stood upright in: they were glad, indeed, to have been saved from a wreck. It was well that they landed at all; but when it is my lot again to cross to France, I trust I shall put my foot on shore in a better plight than that. I would prefer to cross the Channel in comfort, and land with pleasure. There is all this difference between being "saved so as by

fire," and having "an abundant entrance ministered unto us" into the kingdom. Let us enjoy heaven on the road to heaven. Why not? Aspire after the best gifts. Grow in grace. Increase in love to God, and in nearness of access to Him, that the Lord may at this good hour stoop down to us as our great Friend, and then lift us up to be known as His friends. I. Look at the name, "Friend of God," and regard it AS A TITLE TO BE WONDERED AT. 1. Admire and adore the condescending God who thus speaks of a man like ourselves, and calls him His friend. The heavens are not pure in His sight, and He charged His angels with folly, and yet He takes a man and sets him apart to be His friend. In this case the august Friend displays His pure love, since He has nothing to gain. You and I need friendship: we cannot always lead a self-contained and solitary life; we are refreshed by the companionship, sympathy, and advice of a like-minded comrade. No such necessity can be supposed of the All-sufficient God. We know how sweet it is to mingle the current of our life with that of some choice bosom friend. Can God have a friend? It cannot be that He is solitary: He is within Himself a whole, not only of unity, but of tri-personality—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and herein is fellowship enough. Yet, behold, in infinite condescension the Lord deigns to seek the acquaintance of His own creature, the love of man, the friendship of Abraham. Friendship cannot be all on one side. In this particular instance it is intended that we should know that while God was Abraham's Friend, this was not all; but Abraham was God's friend. He received and returned the friendship of God. Friendship creates a measure of equality between the persons concerned. When we say of two men that they are friends, we put them down in the same list; but what condescension on the Lord's part to be on terms of friendship with a man! Again, I say, no nobility is comparable to this. Parmenio was a great general, but all his fame in that direction is forgotten in the fact that he was known as the friend of Alexander. He had a great love for Alexander as a man, whereas others only cared for him as a conqueror and a monarch; and Alexander, perceiving this, placed great reliance upon Parmenio. Abraham loved God for God's sake, and followed Him fully, and so the Lord made him His confidant, and found pleasure in manifesting Himself to him, and in trusting to him His sacred oracles. O Lord, how excellent is Thy lovingkindness, that Thou shouldest make a man Thy friend! 2. I want you also to note the singular excellence of Abraham. How could he have been God's friend had not grace wrought wonderfully in him? A man is known through his friends: you cannot help judging a person by his companions. Was it not a great venture for God to call any man His friend? for we are led to judge the character of God by the character of the man whom He selects to be His friend. Yes; and, though a man with like passions with us, and subject to weaknesses which the Holy Spirit has not hesitated to record, yet Abraham was a singularly admirable character. The Spirit of God produced in him a deep sincerity, a firm principle, and a noble bearing. 3. Follow me while I note some of the points in which this Divine friendship showed itself. (1) The Lord often visited Abraham (Gen. xv. 1; xvii. 1; xviii. 1, &c.). (2) In consequence of these visits of friendship paid to Abraham, secrets were disclosed (Gen. xv. 13-16; xvii. 16-21; xviii. 17-19). Abraham, on his part, had no secrets, but laid bare his heart to the inspection of his Divine Friend. Visits were received, and secrets were made known, and thus friendship grew. (3) More than that, compacts were entered into. On certain grand occasions we read: "The Lord made a covenant with Abram." Once with solemn sacrifice a light passed between the divided portions of the victims. At another time it is written that God sware by Himself, saying, "Surely, blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee." The two friends grasped hands, and pledged their troth. (4) This friendship resulted in the bestowal of innumerable benefits. The life of Abraham was rich with mercies. He was singularly favoured in all things to which he set his hand. The Lord is a Friend who can never know a limit in blessing His friends. Having loved His own He loves them to the end. To Abraham through the grace of his Divine Friend difficulties were blessings, trials were blessings, and the sharpest test of all was the most ennobling blessing. (5) Since Abraham was God's friend, God accepted his pleadings, and was moved by his influence. Friends ever have an ear for friends. When Abraham pleaded with God for Sodom, the Lord patiently hearkened to his renewed pleadings. Lot was rescued, and Zoar was spared, in answer to that prayer; just as Ishmael had been endowed with earthly blessings in response to the pleading, "O that Ishmael might live before Thee!" and just as the household of Abimelech had been healed in answer to

Abraham's supplication. (6) There was also between these friends a mutual love and delight. Abraham rejoiced in Jehovah! He was his shield, and his exceeding great reward, and the Lord Himself delighted to commune with Abraham. (7) Observe, too, that this friendship was maintained with great constancy. The Lord never forsook Abraham: even when the patriarch erred, the Lord remembered and rescued him. He did not cast him off in old age. Constancy is also seen on the human side of this renowned friendship: Abraham did not turn aside to worship any false God. (8) More than that, the Lord kept His friendship to Abraham by favouring his posterity. The Lord styled Israel, even rebellious Israel, "The seed of Abraham My friend" (Isa. xli. 8). II. Now notice THE TITLE VINDICATED. Abraham was the Friend of God in a truthful sense. There was great propriety and fulness of meaning in the name as applied to him. 1. Abraham's trust in God was implicit. Bathing his forehead in the sunlight of Jehovah's love he dwelt beyond all questions and mistrusts. Oh, happy man, to know no scepticisms, but heroically to believe! He was a perfect child towards God, and therefore a complete man. 2. Next, there was joined to this implicit trust a practical confidence as to the accomplishment of everything that God had promised. Faith is to credit contradictions, and to believe impossibilities, when Jehovah's word is to the front. If you and I can do this, then we can enter into friendship with God, but not else; for distrust is the death of friendship. 3. Next to this, Abraham's obedience to God was unquestioning. Whatever God bade him do, he did it promptly and thoroughly. He was God's servant and yet His friend; therefore he obeyed as seeing Him that is invisible, and trusting Him whom he could not understand. 4. Abraham's desire for God's glory was uppermost at all times. He did not what others would have done, because he feared the Lord. He did not want that a petty princeling, or indeed anybody, should boast of enriching Abraham: he trusted solely in his God, and though he had a perfect right to have taken the spoils of war which were his by capture, yet he would not touch them lest the name of his God should be in the least dishonoured (Gen. xiv. 22–24). 5. Abraham's communion with God was constant. Oh, happy man, that dwelt on high while men were grovelling at his feet! Oh, that you and I may be cleansed to such a pure, holy, and noble life that we, too, may be rightly called the Friends of God! III. Regard this name as THE TITLE TO BE SOUGHT AFTER. Oh, that we may get to ourselves this good degree, this diploma, as "Friend of God"! Do you wish to be a friend of God? 1. Well, then, you must be fully reconciled to Him. Love must be created in your heart; gratitude must beget attachment, and attachment must cause delight. You must rejoice in the Lord, and maintain close intercourse with Him. 2. To be friends, we must exercise a mutual choice: the God who has chosen you must be chosen by you. Most deliberately, heartily, resolutely, undividedly, you must choose God to be your God and your Friend. But you have not gone far enough yet. 3. If we are to be the friends of God, there must be a conformity of heart, and will, and design, and character to God. Can two walk together except they be agreed? Our lives must, in the main, run in parallel lines with the life of the gracious, holy, and loving God, or else we shall be walking contrary to Him, and He will walk contrary to us. 4. If we have got as far as that, then the next thing will surely follow—there must be a continual intercourse. The friend of God must not spend a day without God, and he must undertake no work apart from his God. 5. If we are to be the friends of God we must be co-partners with Him. He gives over to us all that He has; and friendship with God will necessitate that we give to Him all that we have. 6. Friendship, if it exists, will breed mutual delight. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him. I am sure if we are God's friends our greatest joy is to draw near to God, even to God our exceeding joy. IV. THE TITLE TO BE UTILISED for practical purposes. 1. Here is a great encouragement to the people of God. See the possibility that lies within your reach—make it a reality at once. 2. Next, here is solemn thought for those who would be friends of God. A man's friend must show himself friendly, and behave with tender care for his friend. A little word from a friend will pain you much more than a fierce slander from an enemy. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Friendship with God:*—I. THE NATURE OF THAT FRIENDSHIP WHICH SUBSISTS BETWEEN GOD AND HIS PEOPLE. 1. This friendship is not such as subsists between two equals, but between persons widely different in rank and dignity—the friendship that there sometimes is between a mighty prince and one of his subjects, in the former of whom it is mere condescension and kindness, and in the latter honour and preferment. 2. This friendship with God is in consequence of a reconciliation which has taken place (Rom. v. 1).

A mere act of grace on God's part, through a Mediator; and, on their part, repentance. 3. This friendship includes—(1) Knowledge. (2) Likeness or agreement. (3) Cordial esteem and strong affection. (4) Free and delightful intercourse. (5) Mutual confidence. (6) A disposition to please, honour, and serve. II. REFLECTIONS AND INFERENCES. 1. We are hence led to form the most pleasing ideas of the great and blessed God. 2. How thankful should we be for Jesus Christ; and how ought we to love Him and rejoice in Him, through whom we can view the offended Sovereign of the universe with such complacency, and entertain the hope of His friendship. 3. The excellence and dignity of true religion—it introduces all who are possessed of it to the most exalted state of honour and happiness. 4. What ought to be the temper and conduct of those who are advanced to this high and honourable state? (1) They are bound to all the expressions of gratitude and love. (2) Let the friends of God cultivate a more lively faith and habitual confidence in Him. (3) The friends of God should consider themselves as bound to exercise love and friendship towards others. 5. The relation in which good men stand to God, highly recommends them to the esteem of all who know them. 6. We may hence judge concerning our state, whether we are interested in the Divine friendship or not. 7. We learn what we are to judge of the real character, condition, and duty of those to whom the honourable appellation in the text does not belong. Their character is, that they are the enemies of God: their condition is, that they are the objects of His displeasure; and their duty is, that they instantly seek His friendship, and become reconciled to Him through Jesus Christ. (*S. Palmer.*) *Abraham the Friend of God:*—Friendship is a theme calculated to make a deep impression upon the mind. Even philosophers, with all their austerity of disposition and stoical apathy, could expatiate on its sterling value. And Christianity, so far from discountenancing the cultivation of friendship between man and man, happily tends to promote it. I. THE GLORIOUS PRIVILEGE. Friendship with God includes—1. Freedom of access. 2. The exercise of a charitable and sympathetic disposition. 3. Confidential communications. 4. The due administration of counsel and reproof. 5. The bestowment of suitable blessings. II. THE HAPPY INDIVIDUAL UPON WHOM IT WAS CONFERRED. Abraham was called the Friend of God. If you would be numbered with the friends of God, ye must be the possessors of Abraham's faith. There is a threefold view in which this faith should be contemplated. 1. It justifies from sin. 2. It purifies the heart. 3. It regulates the life. (*Essex Remembrancer.*) *Abraham the Friend of God:*—There are two passages in the Old Testament to which the apostle may here refer, viz., 2 Chron. xx. 7; Isa. xli. 8. That any of the fallen children of Adam should be admitted to bear this title, a "Friend of God," is at once a display of the greatest condescension on the part of the glorious Jehovah, and of the efficacy of His grace in its influence on the heart. I. ABRAHAM ENTERS INTO THIS STATE OF FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD BY THE CALL OF DIVINE GRACE, AND AS A BELIEVER IN THE DIVINE WORD. This method of entering into friendship with God is graciously appointed as suited to our fallen state, and as bringing honour to God in our salvation. It shows that on no ground of our own can we claim acceptance with the Majesty of heaven. We have fallen from Him, and have forfeited His love. If we are received by Him, it must be in some way devised by His wisdom and grace, and which He discovers to us; and we must be brought to receive it as He freely and graciously presents it unto us in the testimony of His own Word, so that by the exercise of faith in that Word, and resting on what it reveals as coming from God, we are to be accepted, justified, and saved. II. AS THE FRIEND OF GOD, ABRAHAM WAS FAVOURED WITH DIVINE DIRECTION, AND IMPLICITLY FOLLOWED THAT DIVINE GUIDANCE. This has ever been the privilege and the spirit of those who have been heirs of the faith and piety of Abraham. Called out from the course of an evil world, they have become travellers towards the heavenly Canaan, have been taken under the care of their God, as the friend of their souls; and they have yielded themselves to the guidance of infinite wisdom and mercy as to all the way which they should pursue through this world. God, as their gracious Friend, has said that "the meek He will guide in judgment, and the meek He will teach His way"; by the counsels of His Word He will lead them in right paths, by the events of His providence open their path; making His way straight before their face—the way in which He would have them to go; giving to them the wisdom profitable to direct them, and inclining their hearts to walk in the path He points out. III. AS THE FRIEND OF GOD, ABRAHAM HAD INTIMATE COMMUNION WITH GOD. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant"—He will make them the men of His counsel, acquainted with His

will, and receiving the tokens of His love. He invites them to come near, He promises to commune with them off the mercy-seat; there is the gracious Intercessor to introduce them, and the Divine Spirit to aid them. Their "fellowship truly is to be with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." They are to find that it is good for them to draw nigh unto God. Through Christ they have "access by one Spirit unto the Father." They are to realise a Friend in heaven who is ready to attend to their cases—who can understand all their feelings, observe all their wants—who can sympathise with them under all their sorrows—who is ready at all times to hear their pleadings, and who "is able to do for them exceeding abundantly above all that they ask or think, according to the power that worketh in them." IV. AS THE FRIEND OF GOD, THERE WAS, IN THE CASE OF ABRAHAM, SUBMISSION AND OBEDIENCE TO THE DIVINE WILL, COMBINED WITH TRUST IN THE DIVINE PROMISES. The same word that gives the command presents the promise; we are to obey the one, and leave it with God to fulfil the other. His command must be right, His promise must be true and good; the dispensations of His providence must be wise and right, and the word of His promise must be firm as the pillars of heaven! V. AS THE FRIEND OF GOD ABRAHAM WAS LOOKING FOR HIS FULL AND FINAL HAPPINESS IN GOD. This is the case with all those who partake of the faith and piety of Abraham. Thus it was with his believing descendants. This was their language, "As for me, I shall behold Thy faith in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Thy likeness." "This God is our God for ever and ever, He will be our guide even unto death." "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory." They felt their spirits rising to God, longing to get nearer to Him. "My soul followeth hard after Thee," anticipating the complete enjoyment of His presence and love, and conformity to His image in a future state. This is to be "the inheritance of the saints in light," for which God is meetening them by the friendship they have with Him here. By way of conclusion, let us observe—1. How great the privilege, how high the honour, how enduring the happiness, to be a friend of God! 2. Then the great point of inquiry is, Are we possessors of the faith and piety by which Abraham was distinguished as "the friend of God"? (*Thos. Coleman.*) *Abraham the Friend of God*:—I. THE DISPOSITION AND CONDUCT OF GOD TOWARDS ABRAHAM. He distinguished him as His friend by—1. His large munificence. 2. His intimate communion with Abraham. 3. His affectionate confidence in Abraham. 4. His sacred fidelity to Abraham. II. ABRAHAM'S DISPOSITION AND CONDUCT TOWARDS GOD. 1. Abraham's steady faith in God. 2. Abraham's holy fellowship with God. 3. Abraham's cheerful obedience to God. III. IMPROVEMENT. 1. Learn from the subject, the true dignity of man. It is not worldly distinction, not earthly possession, not alliance with the gay and the great; but it is to be "blessed with faithful Abraham"—it is to have fellowship with heaven, and friendship with God. But do all sustain this true dignity? Are all the friends of God? Certainly not. If men were His friends, it would be evinced in their disposition and conduct; but no such evidence is universally given. The fact is too plain, that many are living the very opposite of a life of faith, of prayer, and of obedience. 2. Be thankful for the grace which you have found. Praise Him, oh, praise Him, for all His inestimable benefits. 3. Confide more implicitly and affectionately in Him who hath done so much for you. 4. Enjoy your comforts with grateful satisfaction. 5. Learn to endure trials with calm submission. 6. Beware not to offend your Friend. (*T. Kidd.*) *Friendship with God*:—I. THE UNPARALLELED MERCY OF GOD. It is a friendship which the Highest Sovereign in the universe originates—1. With the meanest of His subjects. 2. With His meanest rebellious subjects. 3. At a most tremendous sacrifice. 4. Pressed on them after repeated rejections. II. THE INCOMPARABLE PRIVILEGES OF THE SAINT. III. THE DEMONSTRATION OF PIETY. We cannot be friends of God without developing certain salient, palpable, and evidential results. 1. We shall be humble in spirit. 2. We shall resemble Him in character. 3. We shall have zeal for His honour. 4. We shall have confidence in His administration. 5. We shall love the society of His friends. 6. We shall delight to think of Him. (*D. Thomas.*) *Friendship with God*:—I. The friendship, of which the apostle speaks, like that which existed between these two noble characters to whom I have referred, was marked by MUTUAL CONFIDENCE. There must be between friends a sure, unquestioning, repose of heart upon heart—a repose, the result of mutual confidence, and knowledge of mind and character. There must be trust so simple, so full, that it cares to have no reserves and secrets; dependence so real, so implicit, as will not be shaken by a semblance of suspicion, even when there are actions on the one side

or the other, which, for the time, cannot be understood, and which must wait to be explained. II. MUTUAL COMMUNION, as in the case of the sons of Saul and Jesse, strengthens friendship; it longs for it, lives by it. And with what intimate communion, indeed, did the Lord distinguish his friend Abraham, by special and direct address, besides other divers means, and at sundry times! From the day of his call from the eastern side of the river, to the day of his death at a good old age, did He converse with him, and direct him at critical seasons of his history. The communion was intimate and friendly in an unusual degree: and as God drew near to him, he, to take the impressive description which the apostle gives of the fellowship which the Christian heart has consciously with God, he drew near to God; worship was the habit of his soul. Oh! how blessed a privilege, within the reach of the meanest, the feeblest child in spirit of his Father—of God's faithful ones! You all have secrets which you cannot tell to man—secrets which you must conceal even from your dearest friend—there are feelings so sacred, or so delicate in their nature, that they must not be spoken even to him. But there is no grief, no care of the heart, which we may not, cannot, ought not to open before our Heavenly Father. The very sigh of contrition He hears and understands—the very flow of feeling of desire towards Himself, which never passed into utterance—each silent affection of the heart is a prayer before Him. There are seasons, too, when distance forbids that access to earthly friends for which our burdened hearts do intensely yearn; but there are no seasons of separation from our Heavenly Father—no wants, no cries will ever be intrusive upon His patient audience. III. MUTUAL FIDELITY is a characteristic of friendship—fidelity which, when tried, can bear the test, and is strengthened by it. Now mark, on the one hand, the fidelity of God to His friend. It was sorely tried, but it was never shaken by the infirmity of the patriarch. It was independent of the patriarch's worthiness or unworthiness; shown, not because of merit, but because of grace; and so it varied not with the varying disposition of its object; it lived through Abraham's infirmity. Its exercise was pity, pardon, restoration; the promise failed not, though the creature thought it in his injustice. I say, this is the secret of the Divine faithfulness which never wearies, never weakens, never exhausts; this is the secret—"I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee"! Then, I observe the faithfulness of the patriarch. As on a cloudy day, the sun shines through the misty curtain which hides it, so, notwithstanding sad failures of fidelity, the friend responded to the faithfulness of God, and as eminent was his faith, so necessarily cheerful was the obedience of Abraham. (*C. P. Eyre, M.A.*) *Abraham the Friend of God*:—The following story is given by Mahometan Commentators on the passage, "God took Abraham for His friend," which occurs in the fourth chapter of the Koran, entitled "Nessa" or "Women": Abraham was the father of the poor, and in a famine he emptied his granaries to feed them. Then he sent to one of his friends, who was a great lord in Egypt, for corn. But the friend said, "We also are in danger of famine. The corn is not wanted for Abraham, but for his poor. I must keep it for our own poor." And the messengers returned with empty sacks. As they neared home they feared being mocked for their failure; so they filled their sacks with sand, and came in well laden. In private they told Abraham of his friend's refusal, and Abraham at once retired to pray. Meanwhile Sarah opened one of the sacks, and found excellent flour in it, and with this began to bake bread for the poor. When Abraham returned from prayer he asked Sarah whence she obtained the flour. "From that which your friend in Egypt has sent," she replied. "Say rather from that which the true Friend has sent, that is God; for it is He who never fails us in our need." At the moment when Abraham called God his Friend, God took Abraham also to be His friend. **By works a man is justified.**—*Justification by works, and not by faith only*:—I. Without holiness of heart and life, we cannot be in a justified state, because holiness of heart and life, with its remote consequences here and hereafter, is the very end and design of our justification. II. Without holiness of heart and life we cannot be in a justified state, because the principles implied in justification infallibly produce holiness of heart and life. III. Holiness of heart and life is the only evidence which we can give of our justification to our fellowmen and to the Church of Christ. IV. Holiness of heart and life is the only evidence of our justification that will be received at the judgment-seat of God. (*James Stark.*) *Creed and conduct* (with Rom. iii. 28):—It should be remembered that these two apostles, although writing upon the same subject, regard it from different points of view. Paul, with his metaphysical mind, had been working out the doctrine of the sinner's justification. He had shown that Jew and Gentile are

alike guilty before God, for all have sinned." Where then, he asks, is man's hope? It is in the unmerited mercy of God. Salvation is the gift of grace, and not the reward of works. By this method of gratuitous justification human boasting is excluded, and Divine love is manifested. James looks at the same subject more on its practical side. He is not so much concerned with the ground of justification as with its evidence. He asks, What is the test of personal religion? Is it enough for a man to say "I believe"? Assuredly not. Words without deeds are of little worth. They are like professions of charity without charitable acts. Nothing is easier than for a man to say "I believe"; but unless the soul actually accepts Christ as its Saviour and Lord, such words are empty and delusive. If they express a reality, it is a reality which involves nothing less than a complete transformation of the life. The man puts himself under the authority of Christ; accepts His teaching as the rule of his life. He is conscious of new motives, new aims, new joys. New spiritual forces have sprung into being in his soul. He is justified by his works, in the sense that his works prove the reality and power of his faith. We thus see that there is no real disagreement between the apostles Paul and James. One makes prominent the side of truth which the other passes over. The truths they teach make a complete gospel; a gospel of deliverance from sin itself, as well as from its punishment. From Paul we learn to renounce all self-righteous grounds of confidence, and to look for salvation through faith in Christ. From James we learn that the faith required is a faith that will manifest itself in obedience to the law of Christ, and that if this obedience be lacking it proves the absence of real living faith. The Church must still cleave to this gospel of the necessary union of faith and works. Christian belief and Christian morality have no separate and independent life. They are closely and vitally connected. They stand to each other in the relation of cause and effect. They are the necessary parts of one whole. It is possible to attach too much importance to the holding of a sound creed. A correct theology is no infallible criterion of spiritual life. Christianity is much more than a set of logical propositions. A man may have a full system of divinity in his head, and no divine light and love in his heart. On the other hand there can be no true obedience without faith. There must be the grasp of the soul upon truth, or it will not operate upon the conduct. Conventional morality is often a hollow, selfish thing; an appearance only; a painted fire, in which there is neither light nor heat. The morality that springs from Christian faith must of necessity be sincere. It is the outward expression of an inward life of goodness. The faith in which it has its root need not be formulated into a creed; but it must be none the less real and powerful. So long as it is a vital force in the soul, it matters not whether it is expressed in logical definition and syllogistic form. It is a living conviction that is required, not a lifeless dogma. No morality is so lofty, so far-reaching, and so binding as that of the New Testament. Christianity offers itself as our guide in the round of everyday life, as much as in the work and worship of the Sabbath. It seeks to make every home a sanctuary, and every man and every day holy unto the Lord. It seeks to banish from the earth all such things as lying and stealing, self-seeking and niggardliness, unfair dealing, short weights, small measures, bad tempers, and cross words. It seeks to promote justice and liberty, uprightness, consideration for others, love between man and man. If the power of this truth were duly felt, would the members of our churches content themselves with the present low standard of Christian conduct? Is there not some room for the taunt that Christianity is a failure, when its professors are sometimes found to be no purer in character, no more noble nor unselfish in life than other men? Our age is said to be sceptical. Able writers are engaged in defending by argument the citadel of truth against the assaults of error. But the mightiest argument the Church can advance is the practical embodiment of the truth she believes. Let her show her faith by her works. Let her feed the hungry and clothe the naked, teach the ignorant, rescue the fallen, devote herself, like her Divine Lord, to the removal of human suffering and human sin, showing in all things a heavenly purity and self-sacrificing love. This shall be more convincing than the reasoning of all the Paleys and the Butlers the world has seen. The power of practical piety shall accomplish that which argumentative theology has failed to achieve. The same power will be found mighty in the evangelisation of the world. The world is weary of cant and dogma. It wants reality. It looks for life. It asks contemptuously, "What do ye more than others?" Let Christian workmen be as diligent in their master's absence as in his presence. Let Christian employers be fair and just to their workmen. Let Christian tradesmen and Christian customers act according to the precepts of the New Testa-

ment. Let Christian principles prevail in the market, the shop, and the field. Men will learn the mighty power of Christ's doctrine when they see it thus exhibited in Christ-like life. (*T. Bagley.*) *Justification:*—Faith is the fountain-head, whence works proceed, and the justification of man ensues in course. Let me illustrate this by a familiar example: suppose a man to have a mill worked by a stream which ran out of one of our lakes; now it is quite clear that he owes all his water, and therefore all his prosperity on that matter, to the lake. And as the stream has no water of its own, but draws all from the lake, the truth, broadly and nakedly set forth, will be, that he is dependent on the lake only, without any water that the stream of itself supplies. Now with this statement we may compare the statement of St. Paul, that "a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law," which in themselves can avail him nothing; and it would be particularly contradictory to the assertion of all such as maintained that the man was supplied by the stream, without any reference to the lake; give the lake, and you have the stream from its overflow: so faith supposes works. But make a channel ever so broad and deep for the stream, you will have no water if there be no water in the lake: so works are nothing without faith. And so St. Paul's assertion was especially contrary to the doctrine of the Jews, who would have the Gentiles justified by works. But suppose now the owner of the mill to say, I entirely depend upon the lake, and so presuming, entirely neglected the stream, never cleaning out its channel, nor repairing its embankments, would he not shortly find out that he must look to the stream too, and that he depended both upon the lake and the stream, and not on the lake only? Such was the mistake of those with whom St. James argues, who said that they had enough in their faith, and neglected works: and accordingly St. James tells them that they must be justified by works, and not by faith only. (*R. W. Evans, B.D.*) *Good works:*—As a fruit-tree, to be worth anything, brings forth fruit, so faith, to be real, brings forth works: good acts, holy deeds, right conduct, pious living. Faith without works is as dead as a skeleton; works without faith, as lifeless as a belted tree. What God hath joined, let no one put asunder. I fear, however, that sometimes our idea of what good works are, is erroneous. We are prone to regard only something religious, or something very great or conspicuous, as a good work. If some of us could only build a church, or endow a college or a theological seminary or a great hospital, or head a popular subscription list, we might think that we were doing a good work. And so we should be; if an object is good and the motive pure, and the love of man and of Christ pervade it, the act is a good work. But it does not require the condition of size to cause a deed to be holy. Dimension is not an essential property of things spiritual. Let us take the family. We have a way of speaking of our "sacred duties," and, by these, we generally mean our religious ones; but are no duties sacred except those of the closet, or the chapel? All duty is sacred. You cannot lay the finger on a duty, or a class of duties which is not. It is just as truly a "sacred duty" that a father provide for his family, as that he contribute to the support of the external and public acts of religion. Prayer is a sacred duty, but just as truly is industry. And, in this realm of sacred duty, this field for the exercise of godly works which spring of godly faith and a love for both man and his Maker, what, pray, shall we call a gentle tone, a soft answer, a look of compassion, a touch of sympathy; what, the forethought which anticipates the wishes of others; the spirit of self-sacrifice which prefers personal inconvenience rather than to give unnecessary trouble; what, all those little things which adorn and glorify the domestic life? Are they not all in the nature of holy deeds? An act needs not to be heralded in order to be noble. The smallest good work is large. And take the social life. Any act which spares the feelings of some sensitive person; any act which shields the blunders of ignorance; anything—small or large, which recognises the brotherhood of humanity—are not these, if they come of love of God and men, in the nature of good works? In one sense they cannot be little; nothing is small that is done for God and in His Name. (*R. W. Lowrie.*) *Good works:*—The Bible, from first to last, insists upon personal righteousness. Common life, or society, teaches us also that a salvation that did not insist upon virtue would be the destruction of society in all its temporal interests. If heaven could be sustained and peopled by faith without good works, earth at least could not; it would be compelled to resort to moral lives. The doctrine of salvation by faith must therefore be so stated and held as to leave society its friend, trusting faith rather than fearing it, and must be so stated and held as to leave the other doctrines of Christianity some reason of existence. In their joy over the newly-discovered idea of salvation by the mediation of Christ, some of the divines around Luther, with

Luther himself, declared that no amount of sin would imperil the soul that should possess this marvellous faith. Thus at one stroke the doctrines of regeneration, and repentance, and sanctification, and love to man, are cut down as cumberers of the ground. The Bible is reduced to one sentence; its grateful music is silenced into one note, to be sounded evermore upon a single string. This discussion may now prepare us to hear the words of St. James, which so conflict with the Solifidian words of our creeds. Faith, indeed, will save a soul, but faith then is not rigidly a belief; it is more, it is a friendship, for the word "belief" is often wholly omitted, and for whole pages the love for Christ reigns in its stead. In St. John the word "love" quite excludes the word "faith." Faith, therefore, being a devotion to a leader, a mere belief is nothing. A man is justified by his active affections, and not by his acquiescence in some principle. Thus faith, in the biblical sense, is not a simple belief, but a mystical union with Christ, such that the works of the Master are the joy of the disciple. Works, that is, results—a new life—are the destiny of faith, the reason of its wonderful play of light upon the religious horizon. If the New Testament is to be a place where "belief" is a substitute for a moral life, then the uprightness of Job was not a shadow of our better era; but the spectacle is reversed, and we are the waning evening of a day whose purer sunlight fell thousands of years ago in the land of Uz. But we believe in no such retrograde of doctrine. We believe the righteousness of the Old Testament only a shadow of the great unfolding of the human heart, destined to issue out in the Sermon of the Mount. If the old law said, "Thou shalt not kill," it sounded only the first note in the music of a love which would do to others what it would that others should do unto it. Indeed, the gospel is a perfect overflow of justice, of honour, of kindness, of active love. Its prayer is that men may be perfect, as the Father in heaven is perfect. But this spiritual condition will not become universal, or even common, if the word "belief" is so magnified that the Church cannot see the human "righteousness" in its supreme beauty. (*D. Swing.*)

Rahab the harlot.—*Rahab*:—I. She possessed SINGULAR FAITH. 1. She received no instruction from her parents. Here we see a lone palm in the desert, a solitary life among the tombs. When in seeing inquirers I have to talk to young persons who are the only ones of the family attending the house of God at all, the only ones who make any pretensions to godliness, I feel great sympathy with them because I know they will have much to put up with, and a heavy cross to carry. Such converts are not plants in the conservatory, but flowers exposed to the winter's cold; yet it is right to add that I have often observed that these have become amongst the strongest and most decided Christians that I have ever met with. Even as Rahab, though her faith was solitary and was like a lily among thorns, yet was her faith none the less strong, but perhaps all the more unwavering. 2. She was not in a believing country. If we could have taken a bird's-eye view of the city of Jericho, and had been informed that there was one believer there, I warrant you we should not have looked to Rahab's house. She would have been about the last person that we should have supposed had been a possesser of faith in the true God. God has a people where we little dream of it, and He has chosen ones among a sort of people whom we dare not hope for. 3. Her means of knowledge were very slender; and, therefore, the food of her faith was comparatively scant. She had no book inspired of God to read; she had been instructed by no prophet; no Elias had spoken to her in the name of God: no Jonah had gone through the streets of her city warning men to repent. What information she had obtained she had gathered by odds and ends. Take heed lest in the day of judgment she should rise up against you. She believed with far less testimony, how will you be able to excuse your own persistent unbelief? 4. Perhaps the most wonderful thing about her faith was that she should be a woman of such a character. She was apparently the most unlikely person to become a believer in Jehovah. She was a harlot, a woman that was a sinner, and universally known to be such. 5. Rahab's faith was singular because the subject of it was difficult. What was it she had to believe? Was it not this? That Israel would destroy Jericho. Now, between Jericho and the tribes flowed the Jordan, and the Israelites had no means of crossing it. Only a miracle could divide that overflowing river. Did Rahab's faith expect a miracle? If so, it was remarkably strong. Around Jericho stood a gigantic wall. There was no likelihood of the assailants scaling it or making a breach in it. Did Rahab think that those walls would fall flat to the ground? Or did she leave the way of the capture with God, but firmly believe that it would be conquered? If so, she was a woman of no small faith. II. RAHAB'S FAITH WAS ACTIVE. It was not a sleeping faith, or a dead faith; it was an operative faith. 1. It was active,

first, mentally. When she believed she began to think. Some persons get converted at revivals and wild excitements, and seem to me as if they either have no brains or else their heads were never entered by grace. May we have a faith which thrills our entire manhood, moves our judgment, enlightens our understanding, and makes us decided for truth and righteousness in whatever company we may be thrown. 2. Her faith was active in her own sphere. She did not set up to be a heroine, and say, "Now I am a follower of Jehovah, I must be doing something extraordinary." She did not pack up her clothes and start off to some distant place where she could find more glittering service for Jehovah; but she stopped where she was and served God there. She minded her own guests and kept her own house. I believe that home duties are one of the very best forms of the activity of faith, especially in Christian women. Our business is not to do what we fancy, but what the Lord appoints for us. 3. And let me say that she did all this to the best of her ability, and she used her common sense. I never could see why true religion should be so often associated with stupidity, and yet I have remarked that some gracious people either affect a babyish simplicity, or else the Lord has indeed chosen the foolish things of this world. If you have faith, surely you are not therefore to act as if you had lost your reason. 4. Rahab was also active at great risk. She gladly staked all upon the truth of God, and ran all risks to save the servants of the Lord. In this being far superior to those who will not risk their employment, their situation, their good name, or even the love of a single relative for Jesus Christ's sake. III. RAHAB'S FAITH WAS MARRED WITH GROSS WEAKNESS. She lied unto the men who came to the door to seize the spies. But at the same time, please to recollect that she did not know it was wrong to lie. There were, no doubt, in her conscience indistinct glimmerings of an idea that to lie was an evil thing, but, nevertheless, her surroundings prevented her clearly knowing it as we know it. To this very day among many Orientals it is far more usual to lie than to speak the truth; in fact, a thorough-bred aboriginal eastern never does speak the truth unless by mistake, and he would be very sorry for it if he knew he had done so, even by accident. Among the Hindoos men cannot readily be believed upon their oaths in courts of justice. You must judge individuals from their own standpoint, and consider their circumstances, or you may do them an injustice. I do not want to say a word of apology for the falsehood, far from it. It is wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong, altogether wrong; but, for all that, before you condemn Rahab, be quite sure that you do not condemn yourself, and ask yourself first what you would have said, or what you would have done under the circumstances. To tell the truth is always right. Consequences are not so much to be thought of as the claims of the God of truth. IV. Rahab's was A FAITH THAT WAS NOT ABOVE THE USE OF OUTWARD SIGNS AND SEALS. She was not superstitious; she did not believe that anything mystical was in the red cord, but she put it there, because she had been told to do so. Now, the highest faith in Christ is perfectly consistent with the obedient use of Christian ordinances. V. HER FAITH WAS SAVING FAITH. I have shown how it was grievously marred, but it was effectual notwithstanding. She was saved when all the city wall went down. So true faith in Christ, despite its weakness, will save us, separate us from world, join us unto God's Israel, marry us to the true Prince of Judah, give us kinship with the Lord Jesus Christ; and what higher dignity is it possible to receive? VI. HER FAITH BECAME WITH GOD ACCEPTABLE, SO THAT SHE WAS THE MEANS OF THE SALVATION OF OTHERS. She thought of her father, and her mother, and her brothers, and her sisters. Now, wherever there is a real child of God there will be anxiety for his family. If you do not want to have your children saved, you are not saved yourself. Rahab, with all that was wrong about her, had an intense love for her kindred. But notice that, love them as she might, she could not save them unless she got them under the red flag. It will be of no use when you die to say, "Spare me, O avenging angel, my mother prayed for me, my sister agonised for my conversion." No, you must personally get into Christ yourself, and have a real faith in Him, or no prayers of others can be of any avail for you. But the mercy was that somehow Rahab was helped by God to bring all her family in. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The faith of Rahab*:—1. Many times God may choose the worst of sinners. Faith in a harlot is acceptable: "The last shall be first"; that is, those that set out late for heaven do often make more way than an early professor. The most odious and despised sinners, when they turn to God by repentance, find grace and place in Christ's heart. 2. The meanest faith must justify itself by works and gracious effects. Rahab, a Gentile convert, doth not

only profess, but preserve the spies. The smallest faith, though it be but like a grain of mustard-seed, will have some branches. 3. Believers, though they justify their profession, are still monuments of free grace. It is "Rahab, the harlot," though justified by works. The scars and marks of old sins remain, not to our dishonour, but God's glory. 4. Ordinary acts are gracious when they flow from faith and are done in obedience; as Rahab's receiving the messengers: entertainment in such a case is not civility, but religion. A carnal man performeth his religious duties for civil ends, and a godly man his civil duties for religious ends, and in offices natural and human he is spiritual. Certainly there is no chemistry like to that of grace; there brass is turned into gold, and actions of commerce made worship. A Christian is always doing his great work, whether in the shop or in the closet, obeying God and glorifying God in his respects to men. 5. The great trial of faith is in acts of self-denial. Such was Rahab's, to prefer the will of God before the safety of her own country; and such was Abraham's in the former instance. Self-denial is the first thing that must be resolved upon in Christianity (Matt. xvi. 24). No trial like that when we can part with some conveniency in sense, upon the proper and sole encouragement of faith. 6. The actions and duties of God's children are usually blemished with some notable defect; as Rahab's entertainment with Rahab's lie. "Moses smote the rock twice" (Num. xx. 11); there was anger mixed with faith. 7. God hideth His eyes from the evil that is in our good actions. Here is mention made of receiving the messengers, but no mention of the lie. He that drew Alexander, whilst he had a scar upon his face, drew him with his finger upon the scar. God putteth the finger of mercy upon our scars. (*T. Manton.*) *One faithful*:—If there be those among you who are ever disposed to complain that temptation is too strong for you, that the world around you is evil, and that your own hearts prompt to forbidden gratification, oh! think of Rahab, her conduct and its reward. There is no brighter example set before you in affirmation of the sacred truth, that where sin aboundeth, grace doth much more abound. It was but report that reached her. She listened, and was guided aright. Direct teaching is offered you. Do not suppose it enough to express your belief only, that belief must be proved sincere by your consequent conduct. She hazarded her life in the cause of God's people. Act on your convictions. Ye too, out of weakness, shall be made strong. Ye too, being made free from sin, and become servants to God, shall have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. But are you fearful? Do you dread to suffer present loss on casting in your lot with the people of God? Then are you put to shame by her who risked the loss of all things, who had been brought up with heathens, and had lived in sin, and who yet resisted unto death, and was saved with the remnant of the true Israel. Through the same faith, working by love, ye shall be accounted righteous, and in that more fearful overthrow, when the sun shall be black as sackcloth of hair, and the stars shall fall from heaven, ye shall in nowise be forgotten, but shall inherit the kingdom prepared for the blessed, even from the foundation of the world. (*F. Jackson.*) **Faith without works is dead.**—*The vital efficacy of faith*:—I. THE NECESSITY OF ITS POSSESSION. 1. It is Divinely required. 2. It is the only way of salvation. 3. It is an essential property of religion. II. THE EXCELLENCE OF ITS CHARACTER. 1. It is Divine in its author. 2. It is vigorous in its operations. 3. It is consoling in its prospects. III. THE EFFICACY OF ITS PRINCIPLE. When faith is genuine, it always promotes—1. Works of purity and holiness. 2. Works of conquest and triumph. 3. Works of love and benevolence. 4. Works of zeal and perseverance. Lessons: 1. The necessary union between faith and works. 2. The duty and importance of self-examination. 3. The peace and felicity of holding fast faith and a good conscience. (*Theological Sketch-book.*) *Living faith a working faith*:—With a view to the exposition and application of this text, we shall endeavour to exhibit—I. THE ERRORS WHICH IT OPPOSES. The covenant of mercy, although framed before the fall, was revealed after it. The Bible is not so old as sin. Error came first, and truth followed it. A daring rebel rose in a portion of the sovereign's dominions, and a force was sent to discover and destroy him; the position, magnitude, and character of the insurrection, determine the dispositions of the royal army which has been commissioned to put it down. Thus, error that sprung up on earth has determined the form of the truth that invades it from heaven. Emerging from the strife victorious, salvation appeared in the form which it got in those fires. The truth which the Bible contains was, in its essence, prior to all error and sin, for error is originally a deviation from eternal truth; but the Bible, which brings the truth to us, has been

shaped upon falsehood its foe. The same rule holds good when you descend to the specific features of revelation. Even the sayings of Jesus often took their shape from the cavils of devils or wicked men. The operation and effect of this principle may be seen in the teaching of the two apostles, James and Paul, regarding faith. Had the errors of those days been of another cast, the truth on that subject would have descended to us in a different form. More particularly the two main features of faith, as represented in the Scriptures—the two feet on which it stands secure—have been moulded in two deep pits which Satan had prepared for the destruction of men. The two errors regarding faith were contrary to each other, and yet both alike were contrary to truth. Both put asunder the two whom God has joined, and the severance is death to the severed; as well might you expect the right and left sides of a human being to live and act after they are separated by a sword. The works of the legalist are dead for want of faith; the faith of the antinomian dead for want of works. These two deep pits, so situated, give form and position to the two main pillars of the truth. As the errors are opposite, the same enunciation of truth is not fitted to subvert both. The truths that will meet and match these lies are in an important sense the opposite of each other. The errors, though opposite, are both errors, and the truths, though in a subordinate sense opposite, are both truths. Two separate witnesses have been chosen and called to give evidence against these two errors, and enunciate the corresponding counteracting truths. Paul deals with one of the adversaries, and James with the other. Paul insisting on faith only, and James on works also, stand not face to face fighting against each other, but back to back fighting opposite foes: they are both on the same side, although for the time they look and strike in opposite directions. Paul divides the whole world into two: those who seek to be justified before God through faith in Christ; and those who trust in other appliances. He then tells off as on the right side those who cling to faith, and sets aside all the rest as errorists. Observe, now, it is the division whom Paul has pronounced right, and that division only, with whom James deals. He addresses not those who denied Paul's doctrine of faith, but those who accepted and professed it. Paul's test decided the soundness of the profession: James throws in among the sound another solvent which precipitates a quantity of dark and fetid grounds. His question is: Assuming that you all acknowledge faith, is your faith living or dead? II. THE DOCTRINES WHICH IT TEACHES. Here we must, in the first place, endeavour to ascertain the meaning of the remarkable figure which is employed in the text. A handle is borrowed from nature, that by its help we may more firmly grasp this spiritual and unseen thing. In the structure of the analogy body corresponds to faith, and spirit to works. The question here lies not between faith and obedience, but between a true and spurious faith; works are put forward, not as a substitute for faith, but as a test of its genuineness. It is an application to this particular case of the Lord's own rule, By their fruits ye shall known them. 1. Ver. 1: James as well as Paul starts with faith in Jesus as the first and chief; but he proceeds to explain what fruits it ought to bear. He proposes certain lovely virtues, such as humility, self-sacrifice, and brotherly love, not as substitutes, but as companions for faith. 2. Ver. 14: Here he does not say that faith is profitless; but that it is profitless for a man to "say" he has faith, while his conduct shows that his profession is false. 3. Ver. 20: It is here neither expressed nor implied that works will justify the doer, while faith will not justify the believer; he only reiterates the former assertion that barren faith is dead, and dead faith is worthless. 4. Ver. 24: A faith that stands alone does not justify, for it is a dead faith. III. PRACTICAL LESSONS. Both in its doctrinal and its practical aspect the text is obviously and emphatically one-sided: it does not give all the doctrines and all the precepts which bear a relation to the subject. It is not a treatise on theology, but a vigorous stroke for actual holiness. It is the sudden, self-forgetting rush of a good soldier of Jesus Christ, not directly against the opposing ranks of the enemy to drive them in, but against the diverging columns of his own friends, to direct their line of march into the path of safety. The main lesson is, An orthodox profession will not save an unconverted, unsanctified man. A correct opinion will not waft to heaven a carnal mind. When a breeze blows on a bed of growing willows, all heads bend gracefully; not one resists. But it costs the willows nothing to yield; and when the wind changes, you may see them all pointing the other way. Behold the picture of smooth, hollow, unreal faith! We learn regarding a certain ancient Church, from the testimony of the "true Witness," that they had a name that they lived while they were dead; and the same species of

Christianity abounds in the present day. The outward frame of faith, although correct and complete, is a body dead, if it have not love within, and break not forth in righteousness. In nature, the higher animal organisations are, as a general rule, more noisome in death than the lower. The more perfect the body is while living, the more vile it becomes when it is dead. Faith—the system of revealed truth taken from the Bible, and lying accepted in a human understanding—is a glorious body; but this body dead is in God's sight most loathsome. There is no sight on this world so displeasing to the Holy One as the profession of trust in Christ without a panting and straining after conformity to His image. (*W. Arnot.*) *Faith without works is dead*:—The use of the body, we all know, is to communicate between the soul and the external world—it interposes between the spirit of man and the objects of nature, and is a means of communication between both—conveying to the mind images and impressions, and being again the instrument by which the mind acts upon matter. The eye, the bodily organ, is nothing more than a medium by which the ideas of form and colour are derived from objects of nature. So long as it effects this purpose, it partakes of life—it is a means of linking soul to soul, and man to the world; but when it has ceased to perform such an office, when the spirit has withdrawn from the body to which it belongs, then, although the organ still remains with all the beauty of its admirable mechanism, it no longer partakes of life, for there is no living principle with which it is connected, and for which it serves as a medium of communication. Consider faith as a new principle, or a new sense in the soul, having for its office to give notice of the things belonging to the other world, and you will see that there is great propriety in pronouncing it to be dead, if it be not accompanied by works. You have all, perhaps, had opportunities of witnessing what is termed a dead hand or arm; and what is it to which you apply such a name? It is to a member upon which impressions hurtful to the body may be made, and yet no such intimation conveyed to the mind as would cause the danger to be avoided. And if a man say that he has faith, and yet do not refrain from things that may hurt the soul—if he present himself thoughtlessly in the way of spiritual dangers, and do not manifest by watchfulness and prayer a sense of the temptations to which he is exposed, how can we suppose that the faith which is so inoperative in producing that salutary fear and trembling, in which salvation is to be worked out, can have more life in it than the withered hand from which power and sensation have withdrawn, and which is, in consequence, no longer an agent between the soul of man and the external world. This doctrine that faith may be dead is a very important truth to have communicated, because it has a directly practical tendency. If faith as well as other qualities may decay, it, as well as others, requires exercise to keep its influence alive. We know perfectly well that everything human languishes and decays if suffered to remain in a state of inaction; we know that strength of body and strength of mind both require exercise for their continuance; we know that every sense we possess, by judicious exercise acquires increased power, and that when unexercised its power invariably declines—the doctrine of my text informs us that it is thus with faith also. Let us suppose that there is lodged in the heart of a man a true faith in Christ—the natural result would be that his works should correspond with his belief, and that he will deny his appetites, and moderate his desires, and regulate all his affections in such a manner as to make his life an illustration of his principles. Now, it is evident, that the power of his faith will be increasing, according as it is thus successfully exercised. Every victory it gains over some darling affection, or some tempting sin—every triumph it wins over any sordid or narrow interest, will add to its power—it will be gaining over gradually to its own interest and its own views all those forces in the heart of man which he had lately given as auxiliaries to the passions within him, and the temptations which continually surround him. Ask yourselves, then, are your works such as to strengthen your faith, or is your faith weak, because your works are few? Your hopes of heaven must rest upon your faith, but faith requires works for its support. What is the reason why our faith in the world where we live is so strong? Because we are continually exercised in the works of it—because our senses are impressed by its appearances, and our passions agitated by its excitements, and our minds engaged by its interests. Learn wisdom from the children of this world. Let the powers in us which belong to God derive instruction from our inferior nature, and then we shall have faith in God established within us, firm as is our faith in the world. And what are those means appointed by God to keep our faith alive, the neglect of which will cause its decay? They are the duties which devolve

upon us from the relations in which we stand towards God and towards our brethren—the duties which originate in our hopes of heaven and our station upon earth. (*M. O'Sullivan, M.A.*) *Works through faith*:—The hardest battle which Christianity has to fight in the world is not the battle against heathenism or against ignorance or against atheism. These are hard battles enough, as all who have fought them know; but the hardest of all is the battle against unreality. A missionary may convert a village, a town, a tribe, to the faith of Christ; a Christian worker may make himself a centre of Divine light and knowledge in some city den of thieves and outcasts where God was unknown before: there are Christian champions in plenty to repel the assaults of those who attack, from this side or that, the premises or the conclusions of the Christian faith. But how few are those who, not being the heralds of a new religion, lacking the stimulus of the novel or the strange, without the excitement of a controversial struggle, have taught men to be Christians inwardly; who, brought face to face with professing believers, have persuaded them not to be content with a religion of formulas and congregations and a conventional morality, but have brought it home to them that that is not all of Christianity; that Christianity is not simply a system of belief or of moral practice, but that in its highest embodiment it is the holiness which is born, and born necessarily, not of an assent to a creed, not of obedience to a law, but of faith in a Person. Now this battle against unreality was, in the very essence of it, the battle which Christ had to fight and did fight in His life in the world. All religious faith must have a moral as well as an intellectual element in it; and (let me insist upon it for a moment) in attacking the Judaism of His day, Christ was attacking it upon its moral rather than its intellectual side. There were three different developments of national pride in the Jews which combined to make their religion the barren tree it was. One was their pride in their descent: "We have Abraham to our father." Another pride was in their law; in their own knowledge of its requirements, and the exhaustive fashion in which some of them, at any rate, strove to fulfil them. The third kind of pride was a pride in their belief—their belief in the one God, Jehovah the God of Israel. It was to all this unmeaning belief, to this religion which was only self-satisfaction, to this faith which enlisted only the lower and more mechanical powers of the mind, and hardly touched the heart at all; it was to this that Christ came and opposed His religion. And there is nothiug, perhaps, more remarkable in His teaching than the absence of any attempt to formulate a creed, or to set forth a precise statement of doctrine. But if this comparative absence of doctrine pure and simple in Christ's teaching is remarkable, no less remarkable is its appearance, and the transcendent importance given to it, directly He is gone from the scene. What is the reason of the change? If Christ had not thought this necessary, why should His apostles introduce it? The answer is not far to seek. Christ had done His work: He had laid the foundations of the faith—laid them strong and immovable in the personal love of His followers to a personal Leader and Saviour. But something more was requisite. If His work was to have, under human conditions, a permanent influence upon generations yet unborn, it must have an abiding centre from which this influence could radiate. This centre was the Christian Church. But it would have been in vain for the Church to content herself with precepts of holiness, and to leave the truth about the Author of holiness and the way of attaining it to take care of themselves. Men will not rally round a standard the motto of which is simply goodness. They must have something more definite: something which appeals directly to the mind, upon which the reason can fasten. And so the Christian creed, which in Christ's own lifetime had remained in the background, not because it was unimportant but because it was rather taken for granted, came into a prominence that it has never lost. If we look at the history of the Christian Church since the days of its Founder, we shall see that the great crises in its career have been crises when doctrines rather than morality have been at stake. Truth can count a thousand martyrs for every one that goodness has. And if you turn to modern religious circles, the same holds good there. You know how much readier people of the professedly religious type are to condone a moral peccadillo here and there than to forgive an error in doctrine: how much easier it is to collect a multitude that will rob a church where the service offends their beliefs or their prejudices, than one that will pull down a gin-shop where souls for which Christ has died are sold daily and nightly over the counter. The enthusiasm of opinion is far commoner, far more readily roused, than the enthusiasm of right-doing. But is this precedence given to truth over goodness entirely wrong? Are we to depose faith once for all,

and enthrone morality in its place? Assuredly not. But for all that, there are two things which are of paramount importance for us to settle before we attach a supreme value to faith in a creed. One is what we include in a creed; the other is what we mean by faith. There are at the present time two opposite tendencies about creeds between which it is not wholly easy to steer. One is to regard all of them alike, as the same or nearly the same in value and authority: to "sit as God, holding no form of creed, but contemplating all." Assuredly, I do not envy the man who cannot see in the higher religions of the non-Christian world a thousand elements of what is noble and godlike. But it is one thing to allow that, and wholly another to say that the difference between Christ and these other founders, between the faith of Christ and their faiths, is only one of degree. If there is no Christian revelation, Christianity ceases to be a religion and becomes only a moral system: and if in Christ there has been a revelation, however incomplete, however limited, it is an essential part of it, as we have it—that it is the one authoritative revelation which God has made of Himself to the world. The other tendency is to go on enlarging indefinitely the area of what is held to be vital and essential in the Christian creed, to go on including in it point after point of debatable belief, until it covers almost the whole field of theology. There is nothing more dangerous than this tendency to multiply the vital elements in the Christian creed. In human belief there are three things, one of which will always vary in inverse ratio to the other two. One is the amount which men are asked to believe; the second is the number of those who will believe it; the third is the thoroughness, and by that I mean both the honesty and completeness, of their belief. If a creed is too minute in his details and too wide in its area, either people will not believe it, or they will accept it superficially or hypocritically. If we would have a universal Church, either its creed must be a simple one or there will be this half-and-half acceptance of it. If we would have a thorough and complete belief, either the creed must not be a complicated one, or we shall shut out from the Church the great mass of reasoning men. And if God has given us a revelation which confessedly leaves much unrevealed, if the utterances of the Church supplementing that revelation are on certain points but tentative and hesitating, is it a false inference to make that God meant the mind of man to exercise itself upon the great questions which concern the Divine nature and counsels, as well as upon those which concern only man and the world—to find a field, not only in all earthly knowledge, but in the science of sciences, the science of the nature of God as revealed in the history of His dealings with man? If so, the creed of a true Church will be one which has indeed a heart of rock, immovable and fast, in the great central truths of the faith, for without that it would be a mere floating island, disappearing and reappearing in a sea of doubt; and yet one which is content to leave unfixed much about which Christians will think differently as long as human reason is imperfect and the light from above but partial. And when we pass from creeds to our belief in them, from the matter of faith to faith itself, how narrow and mistaken is the common view of it! "Faith and works," cries the superficial student of God's Word, "at what opposite poles these stand!" Will men never see what the apostles saw plainly enough, that faith and works only differ as cause and effect, as the courage which moves to heroic deeds differs from the heroic deeds to which it moves us? that, to put it in another way, faith is a work of the mind and heart, works but the expression in outward act of some faith or other within? Will men never remember that deeds have no moral value in themselves apart from the motive which inspires them? When man slays man, is it the feet that are swift to shed blood, or the hands that are red with the stains of it, that are to blame? Does charity lie in the fingers that drop the coin into the alms-box, or that put the cup to the mouth of the dying? Does self-restraint reside only in the lips that close upon the angry word? Nay, there is no virtue in an act by itself—it is the motive in the heart that makes it good or bad. And it is so with the beliefs of the mind. There is no spiritual value in mere belief, even of religious truths; it is the heart with which men go to meet the truth, the honesty, the reverence, the fear with which they desire to look into it, that gives it its worth. Faith and works alike are on one side, the outcome of what is best in man towards God; on the other, they are alike His gifts, as every good gift and every perfect gift is from above. (*H. A. James, B.D.*) *Faith and works*:—Religion may be described in general terms as consisting of knowledge and practice, the first of which is no farther useful than as it tends to produce and encourage the second. The Almighty has not revealed to us the know-

ledge of Himself and His will merely for the improvement of our understanding, but for the amendment of our lives; not to entertain our minds with abstract speculations, but to govern our actions and to form our souls to virtue. Faith, indeed, is not, like the moral virtues, destroyed by a simple omission of its proper acts; yet, by continued negligence, it will imperceptibly die away, and give place to infidelity; not perhaps to open and declared infidelity, but to a secret kind, which seems to be the most prevailing sin of this age. The progress of this decay is easily traced through all its steps and degrees. By intermitting the practice of those religious duties which faith binds us to we lose all taste and affection for them; soon after they become the objects of weariness and disgust, feelings which excite us powerfully to throw them off entirely by secretly renouncing that faith which imposeth so heavy a load. The substance of faith being corrupted, there remains no more than an empty shadow, worse in the sight of God than pagan infidelity, because it is infidelity raised upon the rocks and ruins of Divine faith. It must be confessed that a habit of faith may exist in the soul without acting, but still no wise man will depend on such a faith for his justification. A thousand enemies wage eternal war against it; and when it lays aside good works, which are its only weapons of defence, it must of necessity be vanquished. Besides, if we consider faith in another view, as a supernatural grace bestowed by God, its connection with good works will still appear more evident. For, faith being given us only for action, all its virtue is reduced to this—that it is proper for raising in the soul a desire for those good things which it reveals: its only employment being to support man in the execution of his Christian duties; when it produceth nothing of this kind, the Almighty is concerned even for His own glory to withdraw it. It is thus that we may sometimes see the most sublime geniuses, the most penetrating and soaring spirits, fall into the grossest errors, and wander in utter darkness, acknowledging neither God, nor faith, nor law. Thus the neglect of good works, we see, brings on the extinction of faith; and so far, therefore, they appear absolutely necessary. But we may farther observe that good works, sincerely and fervently practised, are the only means to arrive at the perfection of faith, or to strengthen a faith that is weak and languishing; and this second truth is capable of illustration, both from reason and authority. I give a remarkable example of it, in the person of the centurion Cornelius, who, from an obscure and confused belief which he had of the mysteries of God, arrived at the clear, distinct, and perfect faith of a Christian. God had regard to the works of piety and mercy which Cornelius continually performed, and sent an apostle to instruct him, and prepare him for baptism. Let us, like him, be pious, zealous, honest, and charitable; and we shall see whether that God, who is ever faithful in His promises, will not by His Holy Spirit increase and strengthen our faith. We cannot, perhaps, at present serve God, nor fulfil His law, with that vivacity and assurance of faith which all His saints have shown; but we can interest the Almighty in our favour. By regulating our family; by doing justice to all the world; by inspiring the love of virtue among our friends; by employing other and more powerful intercessors, which are the poor and the needy; we may incline God to restore us that spirit of religion which is well-nigh lost. Every charitable action we perform, every assistance we bring to the ruined or afflicted, every prayer we breathe to Heaven, will serve to rekindle our wavering faith. We have always sufficient faith to enable us to begin this work, and sufficient to condemn us, indeed, if we begin it not. What was it inspired Cornelius with so much fervour in his prayers and his charities? He believed in a God, the rewarder of virtue and avenger of vice; and this made him conclude that, being rich, he was obliged to be charitable; that, being a father, he was obliged to teach his children the duties of religion; that, being a master, he was obliged to give good example to his domestics; that, being a man and a sinner, he was obliged to pray and to perform works of penitence. Do we not, like him, believe in a God? and, in the profoundest abysses of libertinism, do we not still preserve that ray of light which nature herself affords to point out the existence of a Deity? We have then sufficient faith for a beginning, and sufficient to engage us in the duties of piety and charity, in the accomplishment of which our faith shall be infallibly perfected. Let us then address our prayers to God, to beg His assistance in our works of faith; and, aided by Him, let us go on with increasing ardour and activity. Moved by our filial confidence, He will hearken to our prayers; our weak and cold faith shall revive within us, and we shall revive with it. By superior diligence our former losses shall be repaired, and our light grow clear in proportion to our good works. In the end we shall be found worthy of this sentence from our Judge—"As

thou hast believed, so be it unto thee." Thou hast improved the talent which was intrusted to thy care; thou hast "shown thy faith by thy works": come and receive thy reward. Thou hast trod with firm perseverance the path which thy faith traced out, and still had an eye to the recompense which it discovered to thee: come, take possession of the heavenly kingdom, and enjoy eternal felicity. (*A. Macdonald.*) *Justification, according to St. Paul and St. James*:—In the fourteenth verse we find the apostle putting a question, and asking, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works: can faith save him?" Here the important word in the question is the word "say"—though a man *say* he hath faith. The apostle does not write it thus—"What does it profit if a man have faith?" That indeed would be a direct contradiction to the whole of Scripture; for, wherever our acceptance before God is spoken of, "faith" is spoken of as the instrumental cause of that acceptance. But he asks, What good will it do a man to say he has faith, while he shows no proof that he has it in his works? Will such a faith as that (for that is the exact force of the Greek article in the original)—will such a faith as that save him? He then illustrates and explains this in the following verses, by another question, which our common sense at once answers, and by a case, of which a very child can see the force. We remark, then, that the drift of St. James's reasoning, as we have seen it hitherto, is not to affirm that our works are the ground of our acceptance and the instrumental cause of our justification, but simply that they are the evidences and fruits of that faith which justifieth. So that, while the principle of faith, being seated in the heart (for "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness") is not seen or discerned by any, but is hidden within the heart, as the living sap is hidden within the tree; yet the good works, which are the inseparable fruits of faith, and follow after justification, are evident, as the apples, leaves, and blossoms prove, though we cannot see it, that the sap of life is at work within the tree. We see that, so far from St. James being at variance with St. Paul, the two inspired apostles perfectly agree. St. James here brings forward the same passage from Gen. xv. 6, as St. Paul quotes in Rom. iv. 5; and therefore both the apostles must mean the same things, as both bring forward the same passage of the Word of God. The object of the apostle St. Paul, in that passage of his Epistle to the Romans, is to show the way in which we are accepted before God; of St. James, in this passage, to show what is the proof of our acceptance before men. St. James, however, seeing that many laid claim to this faith who had it not, saw it necessary to show that saving faith must be justified, *i.e.*, proved to be saving faith before men by works of righteousness, that, where no works of righteousness were to be seen in the life, there then could be no saving faith in the heart; and that those who talked of faith, and said they had faith when they gave no evidence of it before men in their lives, had not that faith of Abraham, who, because he trusted and believed God's word, was able to give up his son, his only son; or Rahab, who, because she believed, risked her life to receive the spies, and so found it. We see, then, that the one apostle, St. Paul, shows us that we are justified by faith alone, the other, St. James, that the faith on account of which we are justified is never alone or without works; and that, if it is alone, it is not saving faith, but the faith (if it may be called such) of devils and hypocrites. Let us remember that, though good works are not the ground of our acceptance—for that rests entirely on Christ's finished work; "and we ever look to be found in Him, not having our own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God by faith"—still they are sweet evidences of our acceptance, as they show that our "faith is the faith of God's elect"; because it is "not barren nor unfruitful": they prove that we are "trees of righteousness, which the Lord hath planted"; because they are full of sap; because they bring forth their fruit in its season; because, having been planted in the house of the Lord, they flourish in the courts of the house of our God; because they bring forth more fruit in their age; and because they have faith for their fixed, unswerving root, fastened unto Christ; drinking life and nourishment from His grace and fulness; therefore their boughs are clad with the fair fruit of "virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, loving-kindness, godliness, and charity." (*W. Weldon-Champneys, M.A.*) *A dead faith*:—1. A dead faith is that which dwells only on the tongue, not in the heart; which produces no good works, but is alone, and without holy fruits. It does not work by love, and so resembles the faith of the devils; it leads to no self-denying sacrifice; it produces no esteem for the people of God, and no willingness to cast in one's lot with them. Such are some of the marks of a dead faith, which the apostle

compares to a body without the spirit. What a striking comparison this! The body may be perfectly formed, but if there be no spirit within, no breath to animate the form, it is but a lump of clay; it wants its best part. So with faith, if without energy, love, and holiness; it may be perfect in its outward form, correct in all its lineaments, yet it evidently has no breath of the Spirit of God within; it is a dull, cold, heavy, lifeless thing. 2. Again, the body without the spirit is incapable of performing its proper functions. Speak to it, it hears you not; touch it, it feels not; weep over it, it sheds no tear of sympathy in return; rejoice over it, but its eyes sparkle not, its tongue makes no respond of joy. Then you have work to do, the work of the Christian life; it works not with you, it is motionless, insensible, dead. So with the faith which is not quickened and penetrated by the Holy Spirit: it is incapable of performing the proper functions of faith; it hears not aright the Word of God; it feels not the love of Christ; it weeps not with them that weep for sin; it cannot rejoice in spiritual joys; it works not for God; it moves not towards Him in grateful love; it is insensible as to His grace; it is a dead thing. 3. Yet, again, the body without the spirit is an offensive object. So it is with the faith, which has no spiritual life within it; it is an offensive object with God; it arrogates so high a name, it pretends to so much, it takes the place of such a better thing; and then it produces nothing but dead works and corrupt fruits, and is a loathsome thing in the sight of a holy living God. 4. And yet, once more, the body without the spirit is dead, and none but God can give it life. So with the man whose faith is a dead faith; he must be quickened by God, raised from the death of sin, experience the power and grace of a risen Saviour, or he will never see life. (*J. H. Hambleton.*) *Justification*:—We are justified freely, by grace (Rom. iii. 24); meritoriously, by Christ (Rom. v. 19); instrumentally, by faith (Rom. v. 1); evidentially, by good works (James ii. 26). (*William Marsh, D.D.*) *A child of God cannot live an ungodly life*:—Rev. J. A. Methuen once asked a labouring man what he thought of antinomianism, and whether he conceived it possible for a child of God to live an ungodly life? He received this answer: "Mr. Methuen, if I pour boiling water into a cup, it makes the outside hot as well as the inside. So, sir, when the gospel once gets into a man's heart, the life will soon show it's there." (*Sword and Trowel.*)

CHAPTER III.

VER. 1. **Be not many masters.**—*The qualifications necessary for teachers of Christianity*:—The words might have been better rendered thus, "Be not many teachers, knowing that we shall undergo a severer judgment"; and were occasioned by certain novices assuming the office of teachers when utterly unqualified for it. The meaning is, the office of a spiritual instructor is attended with great difficulty and danger, and the duties of it are hard to be discharged. Let none undertake it rashly, destitute of the gifts and graces necessary for so sacred a function; for teachers, as well as hearers, must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. God will require more from teachers than from others; and their private miscarriages, or unfaithfulness to the duties of their office, will expose them to the severest punishment. I. PERSONAL RELIGION is a necessary qualification in the Christian teacher. Those must be clean that bear the vessels of the sanctuary. Their Master is holy, their work is holy, and therefore it becomes them to be holy also. They engage in the work of the ministry, not seeking their own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved (1 Cor. x. 33). Having tasted that the Lord is gracious, they are unwilling to eat their spiritual morsels alone, and earnestly wish to have others partakers of the same grace of life. Animated by such a spirit, the pious minister is vigorous and active, diligent and unwearied, in his Master's service. Grace, in lively exercise, makes the teacher honest and impartial, bold and courageous. He will not, through a slavish dread of man, put his candle under a bushel, or withhold the truth in unrighteousness; but endeavours to keep back from his hearers nothing profitable, however distasteful, and to declare to every one of them the whole counsel of God. He is no respecter of persons; but warns every man, and teaches every man, in all wisdom, that he may present every man perfect in Christ. With sacred sincerity, what the Lord saith

that will he speak; though philosophers should call him enthusiast, the populace salute him heretic, or the statesman pronounce him mad. This integrity and uprightness preserves the minister from fainting under a prospect of outward difficulties and a sense of his own weakness. Grace, in lively exercise, not only animates the teacher to his work, but assists him in it, and greatly tends to crown it with success. It does so by disposing him to give himself to prayer, as well as to the ministry of the Word. He is a favourite at the court of heaven, and improves all his interest there for his people's good. Further, personal religion promotes knowledge of the truth and aptness to teach, both which are indispensably necessary in the spiritual instructor. And as piety thus prevents men from mistaking the duties, so it preserves them from prejudices against the doctrines of Christianity. Just as one who perceived the light and brightness of the sun would be little moved by any attempts to prove that there was nothing but darkness around him. But, above all, inward piety assists in understanding and explaining experimental religion. Those are best suited to speak a word in season to weary souls who can comfort them in their spiritual distresses with those consolations wherewith they themselves have been comforted of God. True religion will promote in ministers a pious and exemplary behaviour. II. ORTHODOXY, or soundness in the faith, is highly necessary in a spiritual instructor. Much more stress is laid upon this in the sacred writings than some seem willing to allow (1 Tim. i. 3, vi. 3, 5, 20, 21; 2 Tim. i. 13; Tit. i. 9, ii. 1, 7, 8; Jude 2). Is it either ridiculous or hurtful to judge of things as they really are? If orthodoxy, in this sense, has done evil, let its enemies bear witness of the evil; but if good, why do they reproach it? Do superstition, enthusiasm, bigotry, or persecution for conscience sake, flow from just sentiments of religion and of the proper means to promote it? or rather do they not flow from wrong sentiments of these? Truth and general utility necessarily coincide. The first produces the second. III. A TOLERABLE GENIUS AND CAPACITY, WITH A COMPETENT MEASURE OF TRUE LEARNING, are requisite to fit for the office of a spiritual instructor. Infidels may wish, as Julian the apostate did, to see learning banished from the Christian Church. And men of low education, or of selfish spirits, may think meanly or speak diminutively of a gospel ministry, as if the weakest abilities sufficed to qualify for it. But a Paul cried out, "Who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Cor. ii. 16). Elihu tells us that scarcely one of a thousand is qualified to deal with the conscience (Job xxxiii. 23). Uncommon talents are necessary to explain obscure passages of Scripture, to resolve intricate cases of conscience, and to defend the truth against gainsayers—services to which ministers have frequent calls. But, above all, one who would teach others to be religious, must himself have a clear and distinct notion of religion. We cannot avoid despising the man who is ignorant in his own profession, whatever his knowledge may be of other matters. The spiritual instructor should be mighty in the Scriptures, able not only to repeat, but to explain them, having the Word of God dwelling in him richly, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. IV. Ministers have need to be persons of PRUDENCE AND CONDUCT, and to know men as well as books. A minister should study himself. He should not only be acquainted with his own spiritual state, but with the particular turn of his genius; for our usefulness will in a great measure depend upon knowing what our gift is. A minister should study the make and frame of the human mind; for till the springs of human nature are, in a good measure, disclosed to him, and he has learned how far the bodily passions, or a disordered imagination, may either cloud genuine piety or cause a resemblance of it, he will be often at a loss what judgment to frame of religious appearances. He should know all the avenues to the soul, and study the different capacities and tempers of men, that he may be able, with becoming address, to suit himself to them all. V. A due mixture OF A STUDIOUS DISPOSITION AND OF AN ACTIVE SPIRIT is necessary in teachers of Christianity. The ministry is no idle or easy profession, but requires an almost uninterrupted series of the most painful and laborious services. (*J. Erskine, D.D.*) *Dissuasives from proud censure*:—1. The best need dissuasives from proud censuring. It is the natural disease of wit, a pleasing evil; it suiteth with pride and self-love, and feedeth conceit. It serveth vainglory, and provideth for our esteem abroad; we demolish the esteem of others, that out of the ruins of it we may raise a structure of praise to ourselves. 2. Censuring is an arrogation of mastership over others. It is a wrong to God to put myself in His room; it is a wrong to my neighbour to arrogate a power over him which God never gave me. 3. Christians should not affect this mastership over their brethren. You may admonish, reprove, warn, but

it should not be in a masterly way. How is that? (1) When we do it out of pride and self-conceit, as conceiving yourselves more just, holy, wise, &c. (2) When we do it as vaunting over their infirmities and frailties in a braving way, rather to shame than to restore them: this doth not argue hatred of the sin, but envy, malice against the person. (3) When the censure is unmerciful, and we remit nothing of extreme rigour and severity; yea, divest the action of extenuating circumstances. (4) When we infringe Christian liberty and condemn others for things merely indifferent. (5) When men do not consider what may stand with charity as well as what will agree with truth; there may be censure where there is no slander. (6) When we do it to set off ourselves, and use them as a foil to give our worth the better lustre, and by the report of their scandals to climb up and commence into a better esteem. In the whole matter we are to be actuated by love, and to aim at the Lord's glory. 4. A remedy against vain censures is to consider ourselves (Gal. vi. 1). How is it with us? Gracious hearts are always looking inward; they inquire most into themselves, are most severe against their own corruptions. (1) Most inquisitive after their own sins. (2) Most severe against themselves. 5. Rash and undue judging of others, when we are guilty ourselves, maketh us liable to the greater judgment. The apostle proceedeth upon that supposition. Sharp reprovers had need be exact, otherwise they draw a hard law upon themselves, and in judging others pronounce their own doom; their sins are sins of knowledge, and the more knowledge the more stripes. (*T. Manton.*) *Introduction into the office of religious teachers:*—Introduction into the office of religious teachers is the subject to which the admonition has reference. The unconverted Jews were vain of their privileges, and of their superiority in knowledge to the unenlightened Gentiles. This part of their character is forcibly drawn by Paul (Rom. ii. 17–20). There were some corrupters also of the gospel—mixing up its simple provisions for human salvation into a heterogeneous compound with the observances of the Mosaic ceremonial—who manifested the same propensity to become teachers of others; their character, too, is graphically touched by the same apostle (1 Tim. i. 5–7; Tit. i. 9–11). In the latter passage, the motive to which the teaching of such false doctrine is attributed—doctrine that trimmed itself to the prejudices and likings of the hearers for selfish ends—is inexpressibly base. But by various other motives besides avarice may the same desire be prompted. It may spring from vanity—from the ambitious love of distinction and fondness for pre-eminence—even when the teaching is not that of false doctrine, but of the true gospel, the doctrine of the Cross. Envy of the eminence of others, it would appear from Paul's representation, had actuated some in his day—a motive even more unworthy than the simple love of distinction for themselves (Phil. i. 15–18). What a shocking way for malice to adopt to give itself indulgence!—preaching Christ from rivalry, and under the idea that the success of such rivalry might be a new element of distress to the suffering apostle! How little such men—who judged of others by their own narrow-minded selfishness—knew of the elevation and nobleness of principle and feeling by which this servant of Christ was animated. Still further. Ill-directed zeal, where there is a deficiency of prudence, or of self-diffidence and experience, may produce, without any morally-evil motive, the same effect. This is frequently the case with new converts. Undue eagerness, then, for the office of teachers in the Church—whether thus arising from such corrupt motives as vanity, avarice, ambition, and envious rivalry, or from the less censurable ones of self-ignorance, inconsideration, and misguided zeal—the apostle seeks to repress. The meaning plainly is, that the believers should be in no haste to become public instructors, in order that the number might not be multiplied of such as, in knowledge and in character, were not suitable for the office. The ground on which James here rests his caution, is that of the specially solemn responsibility with which the office of teacher is invested: "Knowing that we" (we who are, or become, teachers namely) "shall receive greater condemnation"—we shall be subjected to "stricter judgment," as by some the words have been rendered—of which, as a necessary consequence, the result must be, when there is wilful or careless failure, or failure even from incompetency, "greater condemnation." The errors of teachers—whether arising from want of proper and sufficient investigation and study, from prejudice and partiality, or from whatever other corrupt or defective source—as they are more extensively mischievous than those of others, so are they proportionally more criminal; the obligation lying upon them being the greater to find out, by diligent search and careful discrimination of truth from falsehood, what they ought to teach and what to shun, so that they may faithfully and fully, without alteration, addition, or abate-

ment, declare "the thing that is right." And, while such considerations constitute the ground of a specially solemn account which public teachers have to render for what they teach, hasty aspirants after the office should further bear in mind that a station of public eminence exposes its occupant to observation, that the sins and failings of such a one are more marked, and are more injurious to the cause of God and of His truth than even grosser misdemeanours on the part of Christians in more private spheres; and hence, even in the present life, we need not be surprised should we observe discipline peculiarly severe dealt out by Providence to those who either, from any corrupt motive, go aside in their teaching from the Divine standard, or who, while they publish truth, fail to adorn it by their own consistent deportment. (*R. Wardlaw, D.D.*) *Shrinking from the ministerial office*:—Mark here how the apostle includes himself. He says, "We shall receive." He does so in a spirit of humility and self-distrust, which serves to bring out more forcibly the magnitude of the danger against which he is warning his readers. We find Paul writing in a similar manner (1 Cor. ix. 27). The most eminent ministers of the Church in all ages have felt this, and to such an extent that they have often shrunk back at first from the sacred office altogether. It was so with Ambrose, who, when elected Bishop of Milan, fled from the city, and had to be searched out and brought back from his place of concealment. It was so with the still more celebrated Father Augustine, who went forward to receive ordination only after the most urgent solicitations. It was so with John Knox, for he, when called to the ministry in the Castle of St. Andrews, first made an ineffectual attempt to address the congregation that had chosen him, and then, bursting into tears, rushed out of the assembly and hid himself in his own chamber. "His countenance and behaviour, from that day till the day he was compelled to present himself in the public place of preaching, did sufficiently declare the grief and trouble of his heart, for no man saw any sign of mirth from him, neither had he pleasure to accompany any man for many days together." What a lesson is here to all who either have entered on, or are looking forward to, the work of spiritual teaching! (*John Adam.*) *Respect for authority*:—When Faraday was preparing to lecture in natural science at the Royal Institution, he advertised for a retired sergeant to help him with his experiments. Being asked why he sought for a military man, he explained that some of the materials that would be used were dangerous, and that, therefore, he wanted for an assistant not one who would follow his own ignorant judgment, and blow up himself, the professor, and the audience, but one who would do exactly what he would be told, and nothing else. (*E. J. Hardy, M.A.*) *Masters—i.e.*, self-constituted censors of others. (*Calvin.*) *The itch of teaching*:—Wiesinger heads this chapter, "Against the itch of teaching." (*Ibid.*) *Inconsistent teachers*:—Words had taken the place of works. (*Huther.*) *Teachers to love their work*:—The sages of Israel had given the same caution as in the maxim: Love the work, but strive not after the honour of a teacher. (*Pirke Aboth.* i. 10.) *The teaching gift*:—It is obvious that true teachers must always be a minority. There is something seriously wrong when the majority in the community, or even a large number, are pressing forward to teach the rest. (*A. Plummer, D.D.*) *Self-assertion*:—Bishop Hall said, "There are three things which, of all others, I will never strive for: the wall, the way, and the best seat. If I deserve well, a low place cannot disparage me so much as I shall grace it; if not, the height of my place shall add to my shame, while every man shall condemn me for pride matched with unworthiness." (*H. O. Mackey.*) *Self-glorification, a disqualification for God's work*:—Dare any of us say with the French king, "L'état c'est moi"—"The State is myself"—"I am the most important person in the Church"? If so, the Holy Spirit is not likely to use such unsuitable instruments; but if we know our places, and desire to keep them with all humility, He will help us, and the Churches will flourish beneath our care. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 2. **In many things we offend all**—*No perfection in this life*:—I. How this appears. 1. From other passages of Scripture (Eccles. vii. 20; Prov. xx. 9; 2 Chron. vi. 36; 1 John i. 8, 10). 2. That none can expect to arrive at a sinless perfection in this life will appear, if we consider the many instances which are recorded in the Scripture of the sins of some of the most eminent saints and servants of God. 3. The experience of our own times confirms this same sad truth, that all have their infirmities, and in many things offend. 4. That all do and will offend in many things, will appear if we consider the extensiveness and spirituality of the law of God. 5. Natural corruption is not fully subdued in any here on

earth; therefore in many things all will offend. 6. You are here on earth in a state of temptation, and therefore will not be sinless till you leave the world. II. IN WHAT RESPECTS WE ALL OFFEND. 1. With regard to the disposition and inclination of the heart. 2. As to the internal employment of the mind. 3. In our communication. 4. In innumerable ways in the actions of life. Conclusion: 1. Here we may infer the impropriety of being saved by the covenant of works, the terms of which were unerring obedience—Do this, and live. 2. See here what infinite reason you have to bless God for the new covenant; herein is your salvation. 3. See here how highly you are concerned to seek an interest in this new covenant. 4. You must take heed that you do not take encouragement to be in the least degree more careless in your life from the miscarriages of good men. 5. Though you will never be able to keep God's commandments perfectly whilst you are in the present state, yet you should press on towards perfection. (*T. Whitty.*) *The sins of good men*:—1. None are absolutely freed and exempted from sinning (1 John i. 8; Prov. xx. 9). Well, then—(1) Walk with more caution; you carry a sinning heart about you. As long as there is fuel for temptation we cannot be secure; he that hath gunpowder about him will be afraid of sparkles. (2) Censure with the more tenderness; give every action the allowance of human frailty (Gal. vi. 1). (3) Be the more earnest with God for grace; God will keep you still dependent, and beholden to His power. (4) Magnify the love of God with the more praise. Paul groaneth under his corruptions (Rom. vii., latter end); and then admireth the happiness of those that are in Christ (Rom. viii. 1). 2. The sins of the best are many. (1) Be not altogether dismayed at the sight of failings. A godly person observed that Christians were usually to blame for three things: They seek for that in themselves which they can only find in Christ; for that in the law which shall only be had in the gospel; and that upon earth which shall only be enjoyed in heaven. We complain of sin; and when shall the earthly estate be free? You should not murmur, but run to your Advocate. (2) However, bewail these failings, the evils that abound in your hearts, in your duties, that you cannot serve God as entirely as you served Satan; your evil works were merely evil, but your good are not purely good; there your heart was poured out (Jude 11), here it is restrained; there is filthiness in your righteousness (Isa. lxiv.) 3. To be able to bridle the tongue is an argument of some growth and happy progress in grace (Prov. xviii. 21; Matt. xii. 37; Prov. xiii. 3). There were special reasons why our apostle should be so much in pressing it. (1) Because this was the sin of that age, as appeareth by the frequent dissuasions from vain boasting of themselves, and detracting from others, in the 1st and 2nd chapters; and it is a high point of grace not to be snared with the evils of our own times. (2) It is the best discovery of the heart; speech is the express image of it (Matt. xii. 34). (3) It is the hypocrites' sin; they abstain from grosser actions, but usually offend in their words, in boasting professions, and proud censures (see James i. 26). (4) All of us are apt to offend with the tongue many ways; most of a man's sins are in his words. (5) It is a sin into which we usually and easily fall, partly by reason of that quick intercourse that is between the tongue and the heart—we sin in an instant; and partly because speech is a human act which is performed without labour; and so we sin that way incogitantly, without noting or judging it. Well, then, take care, not only of your actions, but your speeches (Psa. xxxix. 1). Consider—1. Your speeches are noted. Xenophon would have all speeches written, to make men more serious. They are recorded (James ii. 12). Every idle word is brought into judgment (Matt. xii. 36): light words weigh heavy in God's balance. 2. They are punished (Psa. lxiv. 8). 3. Consider what a vile thing it is to abuse the tongue to strife, censure, or insultation. 4. It is not of small regard that God in nature would show that He hath set bounds to the tongue: He hath hedged it in with a row of teeth. For apt remedies—(1) Get a pure heart; there is the tongue's treasury and storehouse. A good man is always ready to discourse, not forced by the company, but because the law of God is in his heart (Prov. xv. 7). (2) Watch and guard speech (Prov. xxx. 32). (3) All our endeavours are nothing. Go to God (Psa. cxli. 3). (4) That you may not offend in your words, let them be often employed about holy uses (Eph. iv. 29). (*T. Manton.*) *Christian imperfection*:—I. SOME OF THOSE THINGS IN WHICH BELIEVERS OFFEND. 1. In the exercises of the heart. Many remains of the carnal mind. 2. In the communications of their lips. 3. In the actions of their lives. II. FROM WHENCE ARISE THESE IMPERFECTIONS IN THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER. 1. From the absolute purity of the Divine law. Transcript of the Divine mind. 2. From the frailty and weakness of human nature. 3. From unwatchfulness and

neglect. Not sufficiently alive to our best interests. Graces allowed to be languid, &c. III. WHAT INFLUENCE SHOULD A CONSIDERATION OF OUR IMPERFECTIONS PRODUCE UPON US? 1. Deep humility. 2. Spiritual diligence. 3. Fervent prayer. 4. Forbearance and charity to others. 5. Excite within us a longing for heaven. There we shall be sinless inhabitants of a sinless world. (*J. Burns, D.D.*) *There are none blameless*:—A gentleman of the perfectionist school of thought called to see an old Christian of his neighbourhood, and began enlarging upon that interesting topic. "Can you point to a single perfect man or woman in the Bible?" inquired the aged saint. "Yes," readily answered the other; "turn to Luke i. 6, you will there read of two—Elisabeth and Zacharias walked 'in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless.'" "Then you consider yourself a believer like Zacharias?" "Certainly I do," said the visitor. "Ah," replied the old man, "I thought you might be; and we read a few verses further on that he was struck dumb for his unbelief." *Faults*:—Bad men excuse their faults, good men will leave them. (*Johnson.*) *We all have faults*:—I have been a good deal up and down in the world, and I never did see either a perfect horse or a perfect man, and I never shall until two Sundays come together. The old saying is, "Lifeless, faultless." Of dead men we would say nothing but good, but as for the living, they are all tarred more or less with the black brush, and half an eye can see it. Every head has a soft place in it, and every heart has its black drop. Every rose has its prickles, and every day its night. Even the sun shows spots, and skies are darkened with clouds. Nobody is so wise but he has folly enough to stock a stall at Vanity Fair. Where I have not seen the fool's cap, I have, nevertheless, heard the bells jingle. As there is no sunshine without some shadow, so is all human good mixed up with more or less evil; even poor law guardians have their little failings, and parish beadles are not wholly of heavenly nature. The best wine has its lees. All men's faults are not written on their foreheads, and it's quite as well they are not, or hats would need wide brims; yet as sure as eggs are eggs, faults of some sort nestle in every man's bosom. There is no telling when a man's sins may show themselves, for hares pop out of a ditch just when you are not looking for them. A horse that is weak in the legs may not stumble for a mile or two, but it's in him, and the rider had better hold him up well. The tabby-cat is not lapping milk just now, but leave the dairy door open, and we shall see if she is not as bad a thief as the kitten. There's fire in the flint, cool as it looks; wait till the steel gets a knock at it, and you will see. Everybody can read that riddle, but it is not everybody that will remember to keep his gunpowder out of the way of the candle. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *All are deficient when tried by Divine law*:—Judgment is comparison of things with some standard. There are standard weights and measures in the Tower to which all in the country ought to conform, and if not they are condemned. So a mason judges by his plumb-line of a wall, if true to the perpendicular. If an inspector of weights and measures finds a tradesman using false ones, he takes him before a magistrate for punishment. If the builder finds the wall untrue, he orders it to be pulled down. Now God has a standard by which He judges us, viz., His holy law; and it is because we know we are deficient that the word "judgment" has such an awful sound to us, for we know that to the sinner it includes condemnation and punishment. **If any man offend not in word.**—*On the evils of speech*:—I. I SHALL BEGIN WITH MAKING SOME OBSERVATIONS UPON THE SUBJECT IN GENERAL. 1. The first general observation which occurs to us upon this subject is the difficulty of ruling the tongue. When a man looks into his own mind, the mass of thoughts of all kinds which he meets with there will amaze him. All men's ideas are much alike, and wisdom consists more in the degree of power which a man has to restrain his thoughts, and bring only such forth as are proper, than in the thoughts themselves. What renders it still more difficult to oppose this mass are the passions by which it is often agitated. These press upon it with violence, and force for themselves a passage. Temptations, too, add their pressure, unguarded moments offer, and men are almost always employed, from various motives, to draw your defence, and to draw your thoughts from you. Difficult, however, as the government of speech is, we must observe that it is not impracticable. If a man cannot restrain it completely, he has it in his power at least to moderate it. 2. The second general observation, which offers itself to us upon the government of speech, is the simplicity of it, considered as a method of governing the passions. In the most complex machines there is always one part of them which commands the rest, and a small degree of power applied there will stop their most multiplex opera-

tions. It seems in the present case to be exactly so with man. When you restrain the tongue you stop the passions at their commanding point. You do not merely drive them back into their repositories, but you destroy their motion and their force. They acquire strength from motion, and the way to keep them quiet is to restrain them at the issue. This is done easily if you apply your care at the mouth, and suppress the first expression of them. Prevent the movement of the passions and you prevent their violence. II. I COME NOW TO CONSIDER PARTICULARLY THE ABUSES OF IT IN SOCIETY, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF OBTAINING SOME SHARE AT LEAST OF DUE GOVERNMENT OVER IT. 1. To this part of the subject let me proceed by observing, first in general, that much talking of any kind is but a bad practice. It is a sure waste of time in the first place, and is apt to lead a man into a habit of trifling in the next. But the greatest disadvantage of all is, that much speaking is an enemy to much thinking. The man who talks perpetually is also constantly in danger of discovering what he should conceal, and of prejudicing, by this means, both his own affairs and those of other men. How many occasions of offence, how many breaches among friends, how many fatal enmities have arisen from this cause! The system of education adopted by the Persians was simple, but extremely rational. They taught their youth two things: to be secret, and to tell the truth. This was well adapted to inspire both the confidence and the respect of men. 2. In the second place, let me observe that the evils of speech, upon a general view of them, may be considered as arising from two sources: design and accident, and frequently also from a mixture of both. 3. I shall now mention, as shortly as possible, the most remarkable classes of vain talkers with which life is pestered, and society so often set on fire. (1) The first class whom I shall mention are your abusive talkers. These people value themselves upon nothing so much as upon putting a sober person out of countenance, and they recount their victories of this sort with as much pleasure as if they had performed some memorable achievements. What they say does not necessarily proceed from malice, and they will be friends with you next day if you desire it. But they have the misfortune to be born with violent passions, and as they have never been taught to restrain them, they have at last lost all self-command, and are under the necessity of giving vent to them. (2) The second class of talkers, or of people who offend in word, are your evil speakers. These are your people who are noted in society for a most unhappy habit of detracting from the merit, or of censuring the actions and the lives of others. (3) The last class of talkers whom I shall mention here, and who abuse the faculty of speech more than all the rest, are your plain liars. This is a most amazing set of people. They have acquired a habit which is most pernicious to society, and to their own minds. It misleads others and destroys their own principles. It is not only pernicious, but contemptible. (*John Mackenzie, D.D.*) *The use of the tongue*:—1. The use of the tongue constitutes a large portion of human business. It is by that organ that very many of the most important transactions of life are carried on. Speech has been appropriately called "the rudder that steereth human affairs, the spring that setteth the wheels of action on going." (2) Speech is the index of the mind (Psa. xxxix. 3). Thought and feeling dictate the language of the lips; and a habitually right use of speech is an indication of a habitually right condition of the mind. "Speak," said Socrates, "that I may see thee." The whirlwind of the tongue is but the outburst of the tumult of the soul. Wise, meek, and generous discourse is the counterpart of the enlightened, tranquil, and benevolent spirit which possesses "the hidden man of the heart." 3. It is a work of much difficulty rightly to regulate the tongue. On the one hand, it is a very facile member, often called, and easily roused, into active exercise; and on the other, one is apt not to associate the idea of so much guilt as is readily attributed to the sins of outward action with an ill-regulated tongue—insomuch that many who would not blasphemously say, "Our lips are our own, who is lord over us?" do not reckon themselves bound to watch, with any special diligence, over what they say. 4. As fearful evil is wont to result from the violation by the tongue of the laws of piety, truth, charity, chastity, and wisdom, so its right regulation is fraught with glorious effects to him who speaks, and, it may be, also to him who hears. (*A. S. Patterson, D.D.*) *Helpful and unhelpful speech*:—There cannot be a doubt that speech may be the most helpful or unhelpful of all the powers we possess; because it is the expression of our inward life, whatever that inward life may be. And it is not the amount of speech we are capable of which is the main consideration in the case, so much as the quality and quantity of heart which lies at the back of the tongue which determines the helpfulness or unhelpfulness of speech. A sensitive

man would about as soon his enemy came and put a dagger into his heart and finish him, as go about stabbing him behind his back with cruel words. For there are words in which the spirit of murder lurks. We may be naturally very ready of speech or very slow of speech—inconveniently candid or reticent even to niggardness; and yet our speech will be helpful or unhelpful to others according to the condition of heart which lies behind it. And so the old text, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life," controls the region covered by the word "speech." If there be envy in the heart, its tone will get into the speech. If there be hatred in the heart, the speech will betray it to all who have educated ears. If there be a settled deposit of uncharitableness in the heart, a report of it will be in the speech—not only in the matter of it, but especially in the manner of it. So that the first and chief necessity to helpful speech—that without which speech would be very unhelpful—is to keep the heart with all diligence. If we allow evil feelings to take up their abode in our hearts, speech cannot be helpful. If there be a skunk in the cellar, it will be known in every room of the house without asking the eyes to look upon the creature itself hiding away in the basement. The lovableness or lovelessness of the heart is certain to report itself in helpful or unhelpful speech. And so, in order to alter the quality of speech, if it needs altering, we must begin at the centre; we must keep the heart with all diligence, because speech is only one of the streams which issue out of it. The art of speech has been studied from Aristotle downwards. But the morals of speech, the spiritual meaning of helpful and unhelpful speech, this region has not been adequately explored. Such a subject as this—how to be a good conversationalist, interests not a few, because it suggests that this ability may be acquired. How much larger and more important than that is this; how to be under no undue restraint in speech; how to be free, easy, and at home in the use of this faculty and yet how to be always helpful and not unhelpful in the employment of it. Remembering, then, that speech is a sign, a revealer, both as to matter and manner, and that the first necessity for helpful speech is a regenerated heart—that is, a heart in which envy, hatred, and uncharitableness are not encouraged as guests; but if one or the other of them pay a short visit they are never made welcome and entertained as a guest, never supplied with bed and board—remembering this, that without an honest and good heart, continuous honest and good speech is an impossibility—we may be allowed to say that the power of helpful speech will increase in the ratio of our own self-improvement; as the result of processes of inward growth. The rational conversableness of men will come as an effect of their improved rationality. If you have read well, and looked about, and thought on what you have seen, you will show good quality in your speech, and I repeat, it is the quality in the speech which is the main thing towards its helpfulness. If your words be stumbling and broken, the matter and the meaning will redeem them from contempt. It may be sad to have nothing to say, but it is much sadder to say a great deal with nothing in it. Gilded surface easily passes in the stead of golden substance. We cannot, of course, speak helpfully or at all without words, unless we allow that the silent expression of the eye and many other signs are language; but we are not occupied with those mute organs of eloquence now; and yet words are so different from each other that they make speech this or that according to the words chosen. Some words are a blank wall; others are windows through which you see a varied landscape beyond. Real eloquence is always rich in these transparent words. Every great thinker suggests more than he says. Thought starts thinking. I am more and more convinced, however, that speech is helpful or unhelpful, according to the feeling with which it is satured. The same words uttered by two different persons produce effects in feeling, oh, how different! Have you never known what it is to feel a kind of shudder from a compliment—something intended to be sweet, but it was not satured with sweetness? In another case some one comes to you and tries to say a severe thing, attempts reproof, even satire, and the thing fails utterly because the individual has not venom enough in his nature to kill a fly. And so, if you will give attention to the matter you will find that words carry feeling quite as much as they carry intelligence. (*Reuen Thomas, D.D.*) *Offences of the tongue*:—Any one who carefully studies Scripture is often struck with this, that the sacred writers attach the most serious importance to duties of which men make but little account; so here—one who knows how lightly Christians regard the duty of not offending in word is impressed with the solemnity with which the apostle treats the obligation—looking upon the whole character as concerned in it; for he says whoever is faithful in this respect is a thorough man, strong in

self-mastery, equal to all the duties of life. He considers faithfulness or unfaithfulness in this respect as a sure indication of the presence or want of Christian principle;—yes, the surest, for it is only in unguarded hours that his character appears precisely as it is. Words flow carelessly and unthought-of from the tongue; they come from the overflowing of the heart. The apostle also calls our attention to the effect which the management of the tongue has upon the life. It is, he says, as the bit to the horse or the rudder to the vessel; it determines which way we shall go. Thus he thinks that a man's course is not only indicated, but also shaped, by his conduct in this respect. There is another view which he takes of the subject, which is new and strange to many. He says that harsh and bitter language cannot come from a good heart. But let us look a little more nearly at some of those offences of the tongue which the apostle considers so dangerous. First, there are those sharp and angry words of which we hear so many in the world. How often do we see the flashing eye and the cheek flushed with passion, and hear the most savage and bitter retorts and replies from lips which are also opened in prayer to God—how sincerely, how acceptably, we must leave it for eternity to tell! Men think very little of these things; the passion subsides, and they feel as if all was the same as before. But no. As each autumnal storm affects the foliage and hurries on the wintry desolation, so does each and every storm of passion leave much unseen injury, though perhaps few visible traces in the heart. It is impossible to overestimate the injury which is done by these hasty excesses. Human beings are connected with each other by many fine and delicate ties; and this flame of hasty anger burns them like tow. At every flash some of them snap asunder, and there is no power that can replace them. Again, there is a sort of violent language where there is not much anger, but rather malice and bitterness strongly felt and strongly expressed, and, strange as it may seem, indulged in without the least consciousness of sin. How little moral sensibility there is in relation to this appears from the manner of some who think it a crime to "smite with the fist of wickedness," but indemnify themselves for this forbearance by using the hardest terms of reproach which the language affords;—as if the bands of love bound nothing but the hands; as if, not striking with the sword, they might strike the harder with the edge of the tongue! The most painful exhibition we ever see of this kind of violent language is witnessed in the exciting times of party. To this the apostle's strong terms, "earthly, sensual, devilish," would most fitly apply. There is something appalling in this cannibal spirit, perfectly unscrupulous, perfectly hateful, in which so many indulge with perfect unconsciousness of their guilt and danger, though to a superior being who listened to their voice it would seem as if the world had broken entirely loose from the moral government of God. In the intercourse of social life there are many things which show how difficult, and yet how necessary, it is to apply religious principle to the words—difficult because we do not think what we are doing. But we ought to think, it is our duty to think, what we are doing; and the neglect of this duty is the last thing that we can plead in excuse for injurious language or any other sin. There are many who enjoy ridicule cast upon others, and many also who are ready to cast it, showing off their penetrating discernment and power of sarcasm without reflecting that they are guilty of inhumanity—that every indulgence of the kind is a sin against God and His law of love; without reflecting, too, that every indulgence of the kind is exerting a petrifying power upon their own hearts. There are many ways in which the law of love is broken in the social intercouse of life, broken by that thoughtless malice which is so common, but which, however thoughtless, is malice still. Whoever retails the floating reproach, whoever puts a bad construction on the conduct of another, whoever deals bitterly and harshly with the character of others, may do it thoughtlessly, but still he is responsible, perhaps the more so; for if he were conscientious he would reflect, and never, except in cases of necessity, say that which may injure another's feelings, reputation, or peace. There is one way in which unmeasured evil is brought into social life. It is by repeating to a friend the evil that has been said of him by another. If you produce any alienation or unkindness, you do it at your peril; and however you may say you did not think of it, the day will come when you will be obliged to think of it with a heavy heart. We may see in the conversation of social life many other things which show the wisdom and necessity of the charge to be swift to hear, but slow to speak. How many there are who talk themselves into what they call their opinions! When any subject is presented they speak without reflection, according to their impressions, or party associations,

or perhaps guided by chance alone, and what they have once happened to say becomes their opinion. They maintain it not seriously and earnestly, as they would if they had seriously formed it; but when they hear it questioned they become angry with those who differ from them, because they have thought upon the subject and deliberately make up their minds. When we consider how much our judgment of moral questions, our views of what is passing round us, our feelings towards others—indeed, how much all the interests of the mind and heart are involved in this thoughtless way of speaking, we see how important it becomes to set a guard at the door of our lips, suffering nothing to pass till we at least know what it is—till we consider whether it will go forth for good or for evil, whether it will be a blessing or a curse to mankind. (*W. B. O. Peabody, D.D.*) *The government of the tongue*:—I. IF IT BE "OUT OF THE ABUNDANCE OF THE HEART" THAT "THE MOUTH SPEAKETH," THEN THE UTTERANCE OF THE TONGUE IS ONE OF THE SUREST INDICATIONS OF THE ACTUAL STATE OF THE HEART. Falsehood, evasion, artifice, dissimulation, may for a time conceal the state of the heart, but when unmasked, they declare it as surely as the most genuine expressions of sincerity can. II. AND WHAT ARE THE MEANS WHICH THE NEW, OR "PERFECT MAN" USES, IN ORDER THAT HE MAY NOT OFFEND IN WORD? 1. First he lives in an atmosphere of prayer, and in watchfulness against every outward influence that might surprise him into the inconsistency of speaking hastily or unadvisedly with his tongue. 2. If the habit of consideration be needful at all times, it is especially needful when we are conscious of any excitement of our inward feelings, occasioned by outward circumstances beyond our control. 3. The "perfect man," the true child of God, is studiously careful for the welfare, while he respects the very feelings of others; and on this account he bridles his tongue, so that he may not, by even an inconsiderate word, injure the one, or wound the other. 4. There is another respect in which the true Christian, aiming at real consistency, is perpetually watchful. Having become aware of those subjects which most occasioned the sinful utterance of his tongue, before he received from God the power of bridling it, he now resolutely abstains altogether from these subjects. If they recur to his mind, he represses them; if unexpectedly he be drawn into them by others, and if at any time he feels tempted to speak in a way that becomes him not of others, he perhaps calls to mind what has been very wisely and truly said, "Weak and foolish minds chatter about persons; strong and wise minds converse about things." And then will come to his aid some holy admonition from the Word of God; or he will call to mind the words of David—"I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my tongue; I will keep my mouth with a bridle, when the wicked is before me." Hence he will take heed, that when provoked by the perversity of others, or when wounded by their unbridled tongue, no unchristian bitterness of retort shall escape his lips. (*G. Fisk, LL.B.*) *The government of the tongue*:—I. WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE DUE GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGUE. 1. The proper restraint of the tongue. (1) The preservation of a seasonable silence. (2) Constant care to avoid those sins of the tongue into which men are in most danger of being betrayed. Profaneness: Lying: Slander: Talebearing. 2. A proper employment of the tongue. (1) We should be ever ready to employ our tongues in contributing, as we may be able, to the interest and instruction of the social circle. (2) We must ever be ready, as occasion may call for it, to testify our regard for Christ and determined obedience to His will. (3) We should watch for and improve every occasion of using this faculty, in suggesting such hints as our own circumstances will justify us in offering, and as the cases of others may evidently require. II. THE GREAT IMPORTANCE OF THE DUE GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGUE. This will appear when we view it—1. As a criterion of our Christian character, and the extent of our religious attainments. 2. The powerful influence of speech over the human passions and conduct. 3. The solemn responsibility in which we are involved, in reference to the government of the tongue (Matt. xii. 36, 37). III. SUGGESTIONS WHICH MAY AID IN ATTAINING A DUE GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGUE. 1. Let us seek a renewed and more spiritual state of the heart and affections. 2. Let special vigilance be exerted where special danger is probable. If brought into the society of the ungodly, let us take heed, like David, that we sin not with our tongue; that we are not betrayed by the force of example or the power of ridicule into a levity or impropriety of speech we may have cause to regret. 3. Let us earnestly implore Divine assistance and Divine restraint. 4. Let us seek habitually to conduct all the intercourse of life with a more vivid impression of our accountability to God. (*Essex Remembrancer.*) *Not to offend in word, an evidence of a high pitch of virtue*:—1. A good governance of

speech is a strong evidence of a good mind; of a mind pure from vicious desires, calm from disorderly passions, void of dishonest intentions. 2. From hence, that the use of speech is itself a great ingredient into our practice, and hath a very general influence on whatever we do, may be inferred, that whoever governeth it well cannot also but well order his whole life. 3. To govern the tongue well is a matter of exceeding difficulty, requiring not only hearty goodness, but great judgment and art, together with much vigilance and circumspection; whence the doing it argues a high pitch of virtue. 4. Irregular speech hath commonly more advantages for it, and fewer checks on it, than other bad practices have: that is, a man is apt to speak ill with less dissatisfaction and regret from within; he may do it with less control and hazard from without, than he can act ill. 5. Whereas most of the enormities and troubles whereby the souls of men are defiled and their lives disquieted are the fruits of ill-governed speech, he that by well governing it preserves himself from guilt and inconvenience, must necessarily be, not only a wise and happy, but a good and worthy person. 6. His tongue also so ruled cannot but produce very good fruits of honour to God, of benefit to his neighbour, and of comfort to himself. 7. The observation how unusual this practice is, in any good degree, may strongly assure us of its excellency: for the rarer, especially in morals, any good thing is, the more noble and worthy it is; that rarity arguing somewhat of peculiar difficulty in the attainment of it. (*I. Barrow, D.D.*) *Offences of speech*:—The offences of speech are various in kind; so many as there be of thought and of action, unto which they do run parallel: accordingly they well may be distinguished from the difference of objects which they do specially respect. Whence—1. Some of them are committed against God, and confront piety; 2. Others against our neighbour, and violate justice, or charity, or peace; 3. Others against ourselves, infringing sobriety, discretion, or modesty; or, 4. Some are of a more general and abstracted nature, rambling through all matters, and crossing all the heads of duty. Now I shall confine my discourse to the first sort, the offences against piety; and even of them I shall only touch two or three, insinuating some reasons why we should eschew them. These are—1. Speaking blasphemously against God, or reproachfully concerning religion, or to the disgrace of piety, with intent to subvert men's faith in God, or to impair their reverence of Him. This of all impieties is the most prodigiously gigantic, the most signal practice of enmity towards God, and downright waging of war against heaven. Of all "weapons formed against God," the tongue most notoriously doth impugn Him; for we cannot reach heaven with our hands, or immediately assault God by our actions: other ill-practice indeed obliquely or by consequencedishonoureth God, and defameth goodness; but profane discourse is directly levelled at them. 2. To speak loosely and wantonly about holy things, to make such things the matter of sport and mockery, to play and trifle with them. 3. Rash and vain swearing in common discourse; an offence which now strangely reigns and rages in the world, passing about in a specious garb and under glorious titles, as a gentle and graceful quality, a mark of fine breeding, and a point of high gallantry. 4. Finally, consider, that as we ourselves, with all our members and powers, were chiefly designed and framed to serve and glorify our Maker, so especially our tongue and speaking faculty were given us to declare our admiration and reverence of Him, to express our love and gratitude toward Him, to celebrate His praises, to acknowledge His benefits, to promote His honour and service. (*Ibid.*) *The tongue*:—There are two thoughts in this passage distinct from each other. The first is that the tongue is an index of the character. If a man offend not in word, he will offend in no way; if he gets the mastery of that unruly member, you may rely on it he is able to control all the rest of his powers. The doctor, when called in to see a patient, asks at once, "Let me see your tongue." the man's physical condition is indicated by the state of his tongue, and, if St. James may be believed, the moral condition of every one is to be determined by the state of the tongue. What is the state of your tongue? The other idea of St. James is more extraordinary still. Not only is the tongue an index of character, it shows what a man is; but the apostle goes beyond that in the figure of the bit which guides the horse, and the helm which turns the ship. The tongue determines character; it makes character; it leads and guides and directs a man into good or bad ways. I solemnly believe this to be true. If, when one is angry, he will refrain from uttering a word, he will soon get the mastery of his temper; he is like a horse held in by the bit; but if he allow himself to begin to speak he will become more and more angry, and, like an unrestrained horse or ship, will break over all bounds, and do mischief to himself and others. It is a well-known fact that a man may tell

a lie until he comes to believe it himself, while a sort of converse of this is true that a Christian may talk so humbly of himself as unworthy that he shall greatly foster his spiritual pride. (*T. H. Pritchard, D.D.*) *Temper nine-tenths of religion:*—It was once pleaded on behalf of a man who had been criticised and condemned as unsatisfactory, that he was "a good man, all but his temper." "All but his temper!" was the not unreasonable reply, "as if temper were not nine-tenths of religion." (*A. Plummer, D.D.*) *Unserviceable because rash:*—The Adige at Verona appears to be a river quite broad and deep enough for navigation, but its current is so rapid as to make it quite unserviceable. Many men are so rash and impetuous, and at the same time so suddenly angry and excited, that their otherwise most valuable abilities are rendered useless for any good purpose. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Restraint of the tongue:*—The habit of restraint in speech was admirably illustrated by Lord Palmerston at the cutlers' feast in Sheffield, at the time of the great struggle between the North and the South in the United States. Mr. Roebuck had made a violent speech, urging England to side with the South. It was Lord Palmerston's place to reply, and a word from him might kindle the flames of war. He rose, and every eye was fixed on him. What he said, however, was merely, "I beg to propose a toast—The Ladies!" *Command of the tongue:*—Learn to hold thy tongue. Five words cost Zacharias forty weeks' silence. (*R. Fuller.*) *Control of the tongue:*—A babbler, being at table with a number of persons, among whom was one of the seven sages of Greece, expressed his astonishment that a man so wise did not utter a single word. The sage instantly replied, "A fool cannot hold his tongue." *Curbing the tongue, a difficult art:*—Some men remind one of the young man who was sent to Socrates to learn oratory. On being introduced to the philosopher, he talked so incessantly that Socrates asked for double fees. "Why charge me double?" said the young fellow. "Because," replied the orator, "I must teach you two sciences; the one how to hold your tongue, and the other how to speak." The first science is the more difficult. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Government of tongue:*—He was a wise philosopher who bound his scholars to a silence of five years, that they might not use their tongues till they knew how to govern them, nor speak till they had something to say.

Vers. 3, 4. **We put bits in the horses' mouths.**—*Similitudes:*—**1.** It is good to illustrate Divine things by similitudes taken from earthly. (1) Our knowledge is by sense; by things known we the better apprehend those that are unknown: and by an earthly matter, with which we are acquainted, we conceive of the worth of that which is heavenly and spiritual. (2) In a similitude the thing is doubly represented, and with a sweet variety; though we know the man, we delight to view the picture. 2. Nature, art, and religion show that the smallest things, wisely ordered, may be of great use. Neglect not small things; we are often snared by saying, "Is it not a little one?" (Gen. xix. 20). And we lose much advantage by "despising the day of small things" (Zech. iv. 10). 3. God's wisdom is much seen by endowing man with an ability of contrivance and rare invention. You must wait upon the Lord for skill and for success; He teacheth to tame the horse, to steer the ship. 4. From the first similitude you may observe that men, for their natural fierceness and wantonness, are like wild beasts (Psa. xxxii. 19, xlix. 12; Deut. xxxii. 15). (*T. Manton.*) **Turned about with a very small helm.**—*Christian ability:*—1. We have no capacity, under the natural laws of the soul, as a self-governing creature, to govern successfully anything, except indirectly—that is, by a process of steering. We cannot govern a bad passion or grudge by choking it down, or master a wild ambition by willing it away, or stop the trains of bad thoughts by a direct fight with them, which fight would only keep them still in mind as before—all that we can do in such matters, in the way of self-regulation, is to steer simply the mind off from its grudges, ambitions, bad thoughts, by getting it occupied with good and pure objects that work a diversion. 2. All human doings as regards the soul's regeneration, or the beginning of a new life, amount to nothing more than the right use of a power that steers it into the sphere of God's operation. And the reason why so many fail is that they undertake to do the work themselves, wearing away spasmodically to lift themselves over the unknown crises by main strength—as if seizing the ship by its mast, or the main hulk of its body, they were going to push it on through the voyage themselves. Whereas it is the work of God, and not in any other sense their own, than that, coming from God by a total trust in Him, they are to have it in God's working. Let the wind blow where it listeth—God will take care of that—they have only just to put themselves to it, and the

impossible is done. 3. Christ, as the Son of man, is that small helm put in the hand, so to speak, of our affections to bring us into God's most interior beauty and perfection, and puts us in the power of His infinite unseen character, thus to be moulded by it and fashioned to conformity with it. And so we have nothing to do but to keep His company and watch for Him in faithful adhesion to His person, in order to be kept in the very element of God's character, and have the consciousness of God, as a state of continual progressive and immovably steadfast experience. The moral power of God and God's glory is mirrored directly into us, to become a Divine glory in us. Beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory. This it is, working in our sin, that clears it all away—the power of God unto salvation. (*H. Bushnell, D.D.*)

Vers. 5, 6. **The tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things.**—*The power of the tongue*:—I. WORDS ARE THE EXPRESSIONS OF THOUGHTS. Says Max Müller, with concise truth, "The word is the thought incarnate." The Greek word translated "brotherly love" was unknown until Christianity coined it to declare a new relation revealed to men. It depended upon the Christian Church to exemplify the virtue expressed in the word "humility." Every word we speak has its history, and in its appointed time each has been added to the library of the world's thought. "Words are things," said Mirabeau, and he was right. II. WORDS, AS INCARNATE THOUGHTS, ARE REVELATIONS OF CHARACTER. The morality both of nations and men is stamped in their words. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." The speech of every Peter betrays the man. Just as the despatches of Napoleon were of "glory," while those of the Iron Duke centred in "duty," so may their respective characters be known. He whose thoughts are on noble things will never grovel in speech. The "Incarnate Word" was compelled to reach men through their own vernacular, yet the purity of His teaching is as matchless as His own Divine nature. Humanly speaking, the voice of Jacob will always be Jacob's, though he dissemble Esau. Conversation touching impurity photographs for the world an impure heart. Ecstatic language, like purling brooks, denotes shallowness of thought. Repeated quotations of others' opinions are proofs of having no substantial opinions of our own. Willingness to speak freely about others' business is proof positive that we are not attending to our own affairs. III. THIS POWER OF LANGUAGE DECLARES THE SOLEMNITY OF ITS USE. The spoken word, like an arrow from the quiver, has its mark. Said Hawthorne, "Nothing is more unaccountable than the spell that often lurks in a spoken word." A kind word has given courage to more than one despondent heart; and, struck by a cruel word, more than one gentle spirit has sobbed itself into the grave. Each word has a meaning, and the word is that meaning sent home to another—a word alive with fear, or joy, or love, or hate. It matters not as to their derivation, the words we speak mean ourselves back of them. IV. THIS POWER OF SPEECH EMPHASISES THE NECESSITY OF SELF-CONTROL. Man is at the same time a king to rule his tongue and a slave to suffer from its abuse. The school of life deals with a double danger—the arrogant assumptions of self and the oppositions experienced from without. The first is illustrated in the control of the nervous horse held in with bit and bridle; the other means the steadfastness of the ship that no tempest can turn from its course. The helmsman's duty on the tongue is no easy calling. It requires strength to hold the bits. The small rudder firmly held gives the promise of safety to the ship. V. OUR WORDS SHALL CONFRONT US AT THE JUDGMENT. We often unwittingly send them on before us, as though they were sand to be blown into the eyes of others, forgetting that they shall blind or bless ourselves. It is serious business to write a book like the "Pilgrim's Progress," or its opposite, "The Age of Reason." It is serious business to declare in speech even the gospel of Christ. It is no meaningless service to expound the Bible in the Sabbath school. It is no less serious when every word of father and mother makes its impression upon the children's lives, to see that such words are rightly spoken. (*Monday Club Sermons.*) *The lawless tongue*:—He speaks of the tongue. He compares the tongue to the helm of a ship. The helm is a little thing in itself, and still more insignificant when compared with the mighty fabric which it controls, and yet it holds the ship to her course. Let the rudder be swept away, or let any part of its gearing break, and the ship is at the mercy of the winds and the waves. Such is the power of the human tongue. Under the control of a sanctified will it keeps the man to his course, headed, as he should be, for the

harbour of eternal repose. But the power of the tongue is much more apparent when we consider the widespread mischief which it may cause. A spark will be enough, and if the fire be once started who shall stay its progress? There is hardly a more hideous sight in the world than one of the burnt districts in our Adirondack Mountains; and the saddest thought of all is, that this fated district can never regain what it has lost, can never be what it was. And perhaps a lighted match carelessly thrown among the dry leaves was the cause of it all. "Behold how great a forest a little fire kindleth!" Many families have been broken up, many churches have been disbanded, many communities have been set by the ears—sometimes a whole land has been laid under reproach—by a word maliciously or heedlessly spoken. Then the injuries which the lawless tongue inflicts are for the most part irreparable. There is nothing so hard to heal as a wounded reputation—the scar will always be there—and at the same time there is nothing so sensitive. Scarcely anything cuts so deep as an unkind word. How many hopes the slanderous tongue has blighted! how many hearts it has broken! how many graves it has dug! And they are irreparable wrongs. We may bitterly repent of the sin committed against our brother, we may put forth our utmost endeavours to undo the evil which we have done, but unless we can bring back the dead we cannot repair the injury. And this evil tongue, which gives our brother a wound which can never be healed, is no respecter of persons. It spares neither age nor sex. Genuine goodness, exalted worth, a life devoted to charity, are no protection. Nay, the purest, the sweetest, the holiest, the highest, the most revered and the most beloved, are the surest to be assailed. There is no such joy for an envious man as to drag some great name through the dust. We may, then, well believe what St. James tells us, that the evil tongue is under a diabolic inspiration. The tongue of the liar or the slanderer or the profane swearer is touched by a coal brought from the pit. The man speaks as he is moved by that fallen spirit who wanted to be something more than an archangel, who wanted to be something higher than the Highest. He inspires the talebearer, the gossip, the heedless talker, the obscene jester, and, above all, the malicious libeller. And if this heedless talker, this man so regardless of the feelings of his fellow-men—if this man is a follower of Christ, then his evil-speaking is the profanation of a holy thing. To use this consecrated tongue for any evil purpose is like taking a lamp from the sanctuary to hang up in some den of infamy; it is a desecration, a profanation, a sacrilege in fullest meaning of that awful word. The tongue is spoken of in Scripture as the glory of our frame. It is the tongue which lifts us so far above the inferior orders of creation. They can plan and build, they can love and hate, they can sing and moan; but they cannot speak. They have their cities and governments and granaries; they have their armies and wars and conquests; but they have no words. The tongue arouses a righteous indignation, it awakens a holy enthusiasm, it inflames a people with heroic resolves, and it has won multitudes and multitudes more to the obedience of the faith. The tongue, as if on eagles' wings, bears our thoughts and thanks and aspirations to the ear of our Father. And shall we let Satan take possession of this glory of our frame? Shall we let him use it to bring his nefarious purposes to pass—this tongue with which we bless man, this tongue with which we praise God? Shall Satan use it to hurt my brother or insult my Father? If the fallen archangel would spread a scandal, if he would wound some good man to the death, if he would send some saintly woman to a premature grave, if he would publish some deadly heresy or cover the slandered daughter of Zion with a cloud, he must have a human tongue to do it; and, to our shame be it said, he has never been hindered by the want of a tongue. I am sure that no man can better begin the day than with this petition: "Set a watch before my mouth." Nay, even that may not be enough: "Keep Thou the door of my lips." Let no word this day go forth from my mouth that can hurt my brother or harm the cause or grieve my God. The man who has brought his tongue under complete control has solved the great problem of the Christian life; nothing after that can hold out against him. (*J. B. Shaw, D.D.*) *The tongue*:—I. THE LICENSE OF THE TONGUE. 1. The first license given to the tongue is slander. I am not of, course, speaking now of that species of slander against which the law of libel provides a remedy, but of that of which the gospel alone takes cognisance; for the worst injuries which man can do to man are precisely those which are too delicate for law to deal with. Now observe, this slander is compared in the text to poison. The deadliest poisons are those for which no test is known: there are poisons so destructive that a single drop insinuated into the veins produces death in three

seconds, and yet no chemical science can separate that virus from the contaminated blood, and show the metallic particles of poison glittering palpably, and say, "Behold, it is there!" In the drop of venom which distils from the sting of the smallest insect, or the spikes of the nettle-leaf, there is concentrated the quintessence of a poison so subtle that the microscope cannot distinguish it, and yet so virulent that it can inflame the blood, irritate the whole constitution, and convert day and night into restless misery. In St. James's day, as now, it would appear that there were idle men and idle women, who went about from house to house, dropping slander as they went, and yet you could not take up that slander and detect the falsehood there. You could not evaporate the truth in the slow process of the crucible, and then show the residuum of falsehood glittering and visible. You could not fasten upon any word or sentence, and say that it was calumny; for in order to constitute slander it is not necessary that the word spoken should be false—half truths are often more calumnious than whole falsehoods. It is not even necessary that the word should be distinctly uttered; a dropped lip, an arched eyebrow, a shrugged shoulder, a significant look, an incredulous expression of countenance, nay, even an emphatic silence, may do the work: and when the light and trifling thing which has done the mischief has fluttered off, the venom is left behind, to work and rankle, to inflame hearts, to fever human existence, and to poison human society at the fountain springs of life. 2. The second license given to the tongue is in the way of persecution: "therewith curse we men which are made after the similitude of God." "We!"—men who bear the name of Christ—curse our brethren! Christians persecuted Christians. Thus even in St. James's age that spirit had begun, the monstrous fact of Christian persecution; from that day it has continued, through long centuries, up to the present time. We congratulate ourselves that the days of persecution are gone by; but persecution is that which affixes penalties upon views held, instead of upon life led. Is persecution only fire and sword? But suppose a man of sensitive feeling says, The sword is less sharp to me than the slander: fire is less intolerable than the refusal of sympathy! II. THE GUILT OF THIS LICENSE. 1. The first evil consequence is the harm that a man does himself: "so is the tongue among the members, that it defiles the whole body." I will take the simplest form in which this injury is done, it effects a dissipation of spiritual energy. There are two ways in which the steam of machinery may find an outlet for its force: it may work, and if so it works silently; or it may escape, and that takes place loudly, in air and noise. There are two ways in which the spiritual energy of a man's soul may find its vent: it may express itself in action, silently; or in words noisily: but just so much of force as is thrown into the one mode of expression, is taken from the other. Few men suspect how much mere talk fritters away spiritual energy,—that which should be spent in action, spends itself in words. In these days of loud profession, and bitter, fluent condemnation, it is well for us to learn the Divine force of silence. Remember Christ in the Judgment Hall, the very symbol and incarnation of spiritual strength; and yet when revilings were loud around Him and charges multiplied, "He held His peace." 2. The next feature in the guilt of calumny is its uncontrollable character: "the tongue can no man tame." You cannot arrest a calumnious tongue, you cannot arrest the calumny itself; you may refute a slanderer, you may trace home a slander to its source, you may expose the author of it, you may by that exposure give a lesson so severe as to make the repetition of the offence appear impossible; but the fatal habit is incorrigible: to-morrow the tongue is at work again. Neither can you stop the consequences of a slander; you may publicly prove its falsehood, you may sift every atom, explain and annihilate it, and yet, years after you had thought that all had been disposed of for ever, the mention of a name wakes up associations in the mind of some one who heard the calumny, but never heard or never attended to the refutation, or who has only a vague and confused recollection of the whole, and he asks the question doubtfully, "But were there not some suspicious circumstances connected with him?" It is like the Greek fire used in ancient warfare, which burned unquenched beneath the water, or like the weeds which when you have extirpated them in one place are sprouting forth vigorously in another spot, at the distance of many hundred yards; or, it is like the wheel which catches fire as it goes, and burns with a fiercer conflagration as its own speed increases. You may tame the wild beast, the conflagration of the American forest will cease when all the timber and the dry underwood is consumed; but you cannot arrest the progress of that cruel word which you uttered carelessly yesterday; that will go on slaying, poisoning, burning

beyond your own control, now and for ever. 3. The third element of guilt lies in the unnaturalness of calumny. "My brethren, these things ought not so to be"; ought not—that is, they are unnatural. That this is St. James's meaning is evident from the second illustration which follows: "Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?" "Can the fig-tree, my brethren, bear olive berries, or a vine, figs?" The truest definition of evil is that which represents it as something contrary to nature: evil is evil, because it is unnatural; a vine which should bear olive berries, an eye to which blue seems yellow, would be diseased: an unnatural mother, an unnatural son, an unnatural act, are the strongest terms of condemnation. It is this view which Christianity gives of moral evil: the teaching of Christ was the recall of man to nature, not an infusion of something new into humanity. Now the nature of man is to adore God and to love what is god-like in man. The office of the tongue is to bless. Slander is guilty because it contradicts this; yet even in slander itself, perversion as it is, the interest of man in man is still distinguishable. What is it but perverted interest which makes the acts, and words, and thoughts of his brethren, even in their evil, a matter of such strange delight? Remember therefore, this contradicts your nature and your destiny; to speak ill of others makes you a monster in God's world: get the habit of slander, and then there is not a stream which bubbles fresh from the heart of nature,—there is not a tree that silently brings forth its genial fruit in its appointed season,—which does not rebuke and proclaim you to be a monstrous anomaly in God's world. 4. The fourth point of guilt is the diabolical character of slander; the tongue "is set on fire of hell." Now, this is no mere strong expression—no mere indignant vituperation—it contains deep and emphatic meaning. The apostle means literally what he says, slander is diabolical. The first illustration we give of this is contained in the very meaning of the word devil. "Devil," in the original, means traducer or slanderer. The first introduction of a demon spirit is found connected with a slanderous insinuation against the Almighty, implying that His command had been given in envy of His creature: "for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." There is another mode in which the fearful accuracy of St. James's charge may be demonstrated. There is one state only from which there is said to be no recovery—there is but one sin that is called unpardonable. To call evil, good, and good, evil—to see the Divinest good, and call it Satanic evil—below this lowest deep there is not a lower still. There is no cure for mortification of the flesh—there is no remedy for ossification of the heart. Oh! that miserable state, when to the jaundiced eye all good transforms itself into evil, and the very instruments of health become the poison of disease. Beware of every approach of this! Beware of that spirit which controversy fosters, of watching only for the evil in the character of an antagonist! Beware of that habit which becomes the slanderer's life, of magnifying every speck of evil and closing the eye to goodness!—till at last men arrive at the state in which generous, universal love (which is heaven) becomes impossible, and a suspicious, universal hate takes possession of the heart, and that is hell! Before we conclude, let us get at the root of the matter. "Man," says the Apostle James, "was made in the image of God"; to slander man is to slander God: to love what is good in man is to love it in God. Love is the only remedy for slander: no set of rules or restrictions can stop it; we may denounce, but we shall denounce in vain. The radical cure of it is Charity—"out of a pure heart and faith unfeigned," to feel what is great in the human character; to recognise with delight all high, and generous, and beautiful actions; to find a joy even in seeing the good qualities of your bitterest opponents, and to admire those qualities even in those with whom you have least sympathy—this is the only spirit which can heal the love of slander and of calumny. If we would bless God, we must first learn to bless man, who is made in the image of God. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) *Boastful speech*:—1. A usual sin of the tongue is boasting. Sometimes the pride of the heart shooteth out by the eyes (Prov. vi. 17); but usually it is displayed in our speech. The tongue trumpeteth it out—(1) In bold vaunts (1 Sam. ii. 3; Isa. xiv. 13). (2) In a proud ostentation of our own worth and excellency. It is against reason that a man should be judge in his own cause. In the Olympic Games the wrestlers did not put the crowns upon their own heads; that which is lawful praise in another's lips, in our own it is but boasting. (3) In contemptuous challenges of God and man. (4) Bragging promises, as if they could achieve and accomplish great matters above the reach of their gifts and strength: "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil," &c. (Exod. xv.). 2. Small things

are to be regarded; and we must not consider matters in their beginning only, but progress, and ultimate issue. A little sin doth a great deal of mischief, and a little grace is of great efficacy (Eccles. x. 13). (*T. Manton.*) *The use of the tongue*:—Talk, chat, confer, converse. But don't gossip, and don't slander. It is not often that the tongue is accused of laziness. It is generally thought to be quite too busy. It is called "the unruly member," and so it is, not because it will wag, but because it will not wag in the right direction. What volumes have been written upon restraining this most important article of speech! Quaint old Quarles says: "Give not thy tongue too great liberty lest it take thee prisoner." "Evil speaking," said the great Brighton divine—and he knew too well what he said—"is like a freezing wind, that seals up the sparkling waters and tender juices of flowers, and binds up the hearts of men in uncharitableness and bitterness of spirit, as the earth is bound up in the grip of winter." Half the lawsuits and half the wars, it may be safely asserted, have been brought about by the tongue. Husband and wife have separated for ever, children have forsaken their homes, bosom friends have become bitter foes—all on account of fiery arrows shot by this little member. And yet, rightly used, the tongue is a most valuable factor of society. "The music of the tongue" has passed into a proverb, along with its kind and timely words, earnest words, sincere words, good words, cheery words, hopeful, helpful words. What a blessing it has been and is! God be thanked for speech, the head and heart utterances which have been the hope, the joy, the comfort, the warning, the help of all people, all races, through all the ages! Next to proclaiming the everlasting truths of a free gospel, and the raising of the voice in prayer and praise, one of the best uses to which the tongue can be put is conversation. There is altogether too little of it. People talk, and we know some who can listen; but conversely the generality of people do not. Yet no other form of speech is so interesting or so edifying. How Socrates discoursed—not talked only, but could listen, compare opinions, and discuss them! And Plato: is it any wonder that when he discoursed the Greeks thought that Jupiter had visited the earth? All truth is two-sided; and he who sees but one side when he might have both, is like the knights, each of whom saw but one side of the shield, and that the one hidden from the other; and happy for him if the issue be not so serious. The truth is, in the hurry and worry of our life of to-day—more hurried than ever before—the race of conversationists is fast dying out, and bids to disappear with the moose and the elk, which naturalists tell us will not survive the century; and scarcely anything is a subject for more profound regret. Conversation ought to be cultivated, and especially should homely people qualify themselves for conversation, and they would not be thought homely then, just as the brilliancy of Madame de Staël's conversation triumphed so far over the plainness of her features that Curran said that she had the power of talking herself into a beauty. *The great effects of the tongue*:—"Boasteth great things"—does not mean vain-gloriously boastful—magnifying its own powers and its own doings. It rather means, it has great things to boast of—to boast of with truth. The object being to show the wonderful power and efficacy of so "little a member," this is the only sense of the words that is at all to the apostle's purpose. How prodigious have been the effects of the tongue! How marvellously has it both stirred and stilled the passions of men! How often has it, by a very whisper, infuriated millions, and roused a desolating tempest of popular commotion! and how often by the charms of its eloquence, laid the conflicting elements of such a storm to rest! The great things which it has done have many a time, alas! been bad things: and then, when it boasts, it "glories in its shame." But not the less may they be manifestations of power. It has a power for evil, as well as for good: and more frequent have been the proofs, alas! of the former than of the latter; as, indeed, the corruption of our nature might have led us to anticipate. (*R. Wardlaw, D.D.*) *The injury which may be wrought by an insignificant thing*:—In the Fisheries Exhibition there was exhibited a "cable-worm" that had pierced through the Atlantic Cable and stopped the communication between two continents. It was a very insignificant little creature, but its power for mischief was unlimited. (*H. O. Mackey.*) **How great a matter a little fire kindleth.**—*The gradual progress of evil*:—It is a great point of wisdom to know how to estimate little things. Of those which are evidently great every one can see the importance; but true wisdom looks at these great objects before they have arrived at their full size. She considers that it is principally in this earlier state that they come under the power of man, and can be arranged, modified, increased, or extinguished at his pleasure; whereas, in a more advanced stage, they set at defiance all his efforts. Behold a conflagration! With

what dreadful fury it rages! The largest houses are devoured by it in a moment! Yet this fire, which now resists the united wisdom and power of man, originated from a small spark, and might at first have been extinguished by a child. Look also at yon tree, which is now so firmly rooted in the earth, which rears its lofty head so high, and bears its flourishing honours so thick upon it! It was once only a small seed; it was then a tender plant, so slender and so weak that the foot of accident might have crushed it, or the hand of negligence or wantonness have torn it up. Thus does Nature point out to us the growth of the strongest things from weak and almost imperceptible beginnings. And if we look into the moral world we shall find that they are not there to be considered as of less importance. Behold an abandoned and hardened murderer, who is about to receive from the hands of public justice the ignominious punishment due to his crimes! Would you know by what means he arrived at such a dreadful pitch of sin? It was one little step taken after another which brought him to it! Contemplate also the unhappy woman whose licentious conduct has banished her from the society of her own sex, and whose shameless impudence makes her shunned by all but the most wortbless. To what shall we attribute this dreadful accumulation of crime? Perhaps it may have been one, the evil of which is little suspected. It is, indeed, a small spark which kindleth such a fire. It may have been only the love of admiration. 1. Let me remark, then, that evil passions in their early stage do not wear the disgusting appearance which they afterwards do when they are carried to excess. The buds even of the most noxious weeds appear pretty. The most savage animals, while yet young, only amuse us with their gambols as they lie in ambush for their prey or spring upon it. But however harmless their mirth may then be, it is easy to perceive in it the spirit which by and by will tear to pieces with fury the quivering victim. 2. I observe, further, that the foundation of all great vices is laid in those little things which often are scarcely noticed, or scarcely appear to need correction. It is by little things that habits are formed and principles become established. They resemble the spots or eruptions which sometimes appear in the human body, which are of no material importance in themselves, but are of great consequence when they are considered as indicating a general unsoundness of constitution. It should be remembered that principle is as truly sacrificed by little offences as by great ones. 3. I remark, also, that little sins are the steps by which we travel on to greater acts of transgression. Temptation has, in general, but little force, except when it solicits to those sins which have often before been committed, or which are but a single degree beyond what we have been accustomed to commit. Thus persons are brought imperceptibly to practices and principles which would once have shocked them. 4. It follows, therefore, that little sins are what, most of all, ought to be attended to and resisted. Watch against the beginnings. The spark may soon be extinguished, but the conflagration rages with irresistible fury. The first channel by which confined waters run over their banks may soon be stopped; but by and by it becomes a torrent which tears down the mounds and spreads itself with desolating fury. Here, therefore, religion will most successfully operate in restraining at first the evil disposition as soon as it arises; in watching against those little sins by which corrupt principles and corrupt dispositions are chiefly gratified and nourished. 5. This subject presents useful lessons of instruction to parents. They form the minds of their children. And it is too much to be feared that many of those unhappy persons who have been brought to ruin have been brought to it chiefly by the operation of those very principles which their parents instilled into them and encouraged. 6. The consideration of the subject of my discourse should lead us also to deep humiliation on account of our great corruption, and to earnest prayers for the grace of Christ to pardon and to cleanse us. 7. And as we see evil arrive at its perfection by small gradations, so let us remember that good advances in the same manner. We should not despise little things, either in what is good or bad; for "he that despiseth little things shall fall by little and little." The character is formed very much from the repetition of little acts; and a progress in religion is made by small successive steps, none of which ought to be despised. Try to do a little, and that little will prepare you for more. Take the first step, and that will prepare the way for a second. (*J. Venn, M.A.*) *Small in origin, wide-spread in issue*:—A circumstance, probably without a parallel even in the history of the United States, is reported in advices received from Ashland, Wisconsin territory (1888), viz., the destruction of the town of Wakefield by fire through the mischievousness of a monkey. The monkey was located in the Vaudeville Theatre, and had the freedom of the place. During the evening of the 25th ult. he got to

some kerosene and covered himself with the oil. He then set fire to himself with a lamp which was burning in the room, and then appeared at the window of the theatre amusing the people. Presently the building was in flames, and the monkey running about in its frenzy set fire to other places. The buildings in the town were of wood, and the conflagration spread from place to place, until the whole of the town was burnt down. Gangs of roughs during the progress of the fire commenced looting the stores, and in most instances the flames had scarcely reached the respective places before the robbers commenced sacking the premises. The owners tried to protect their stores, and in the encounters many pistol shots were exchanged. The proprietor of the theatre was a man named O'Brien, and between him and a storekeeper named Lewis, whose premises were destroyed, an altercation took place, Lewis blaming O'Brien for allowing the monkey to be in the theatre. O'Brien became enraged, and shot Lewis twice with a revolver, wounding him mortally. (*J. F. B. Tinling, B.A.*) *Importance of little things*:—He that despiseth little things, shall perish by little and little. (*Son of Sirach.*) *From little to great*:—A fire at first no bigger than the flame of a taper may consume a mansion or a palace. One Roman soldier's torch flung into the holiest of all, burned down to the ground the temple of the Lord, in the days of Titus. *From little to great*:—As the smallest spark will, if duly fanned, kindle a vast pyre, so is the least element of virtue capable of growth till the whole nature of the man glows with a new warmth and brightness. (*Philo.*) *Act and habit*:—I knew a lad once, a pleasant, open-hearted, merry boy as you ever saw. He was grown old enough to leave school and go to work. "Come," said a companion one day, "come into the publichouse and have a glass." He held back for a minute; he had never done it before, and he felt it was wrong. "Oh, come on!" cried his friend, laughing, and taking his arm. "You must not be too particular, you know." "Well," thought the lad to himself, "it's only once and only just a little." It was the same thing over again the next day. Then two or three times a day, and still it was only just once and only just a little. Down this wretched alley, with its miserable houses and its miserable people and its miserable children, see what looks like a heap of rags. And now he lifts the foul face of a drunkard, a face so bleared and blotted that you shrink back from it frightened. "Only just once, and only just a little"—this is what it has turned him into. (*M. G. Pearse.*) *Influence of little things*:—A little wheel in a vast machine may, if neglected, throw the results of that machine into destructive confusion. A little miscalculation in some process of high mathematical thought may issue in an enormous and damaging mistake. A little spark may fire a prairie; a little leak may sink a ship; a little seed may hold a future forest growth of good or evil. A dislodged stone in your pathway may seem to you to be a thing too trivial for notice, yet it may draw down the notice of an angel. That stone may cause a fall, the fall a fracture, and the fracture death; therefore it is written, "He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." Some slight unchronicled incident in your experience may colour your life for eternity. Some noteless action may be the germ of a power that shall spread through all the earth, and fill all hell with heightened sorrow, or all heaven with praise. (*C. Stanford, D.D.*) *The tiny mother of mischief*:—The mother of mischief may be no bigger than a gnat's wing. *Fire a dangerous plaything*:—A child playing with a box of matches caused the destruction of two hundred and thirty-two houses in the Hungarian village of Nemedi, reducing the whole population to bankruptcy. **The tongue is a fire.**—*Sins of the tongue*:—St. James goes on to say that the tongue "setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." The word "course" is, in the original, wheel or circle of nature, and may mean the generations of men succeeding each other with the rapidity of the revolutions of a wheel; or the course of a man's life; or the circle of human affairs. Each of these ideas might have been in the mind of the apostle, because the tongue does set on fire a whole generation of men; does ignite the whole course of a man's life; and does make the circle of social life to blaze under its fiery appliances. But St. James goes on to say of this tongue, which is itself a fire, that "it is set on fire of hell." The idea is that the tongue derives all its power to do harm from the evil influences which have their origin in hell. St. James illustrates still further the power of the tongue by comparing it with ferocious beasts and other animals, and pronouncing it more ferocious and untamable than anything on earth. You can sooner make the condor of the Andes perch upon your wrist; you can sooner make leviathan sport with you in the cresting surf; you can sooner make the boa-constrictor coil

harmlessly around your neck; you can sooner make the lion so gentle that a little child can lead him, than tame the tongue; for "the tongue," he says, "can no man tame." What a strong declaration this is concerning the power of the tongue! Well may he say "it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." If we look into other portions of the Bible we shall find further metaphors to indicate the power of the tongue. Job calls it "a scourge or a whip" whose every blow inflicts severe wounds on the character and leaves its purple welts on the lacerated peace and reputation. Daniel styles the tongue "a sharp sword," a murderous weapon, which hews down those upon whom it falls, and drips with the gore of slaughtered innocence or virtue. Jeremiah says of the tongue, it "is an arrow, shot out." A pointed arrow shot by wicked archers, against those whom they wish to pierce through with anguish, and yet themselves keep at a distance from the one whose good name they aim to destroy. St. Paul, speaking of the lips through which the tongue speaks, says "the poison of asps is under their lips"; and St. James says it is full of deadly poison. Such being the general outlines of the character of an evil tongue, let us now descend to some particular sins of the tongue, because only as we expose those sins can their vileness and influence be made apparent. 1. The first tongue-sin which I will name is that of tattling; by this I mean a thoughtless, trifling, heedless talking. There is a process in chemistry by which you can arrest the invisible gas, and weigh it, and separate it into its constituent elements; and were there moral re-agents by which we could arrest the gaseous tattle of these busybodies, and resolve it into its elements, its constituent parts would be folly, slander, falsehood, flattery, and boastfulness. 2. The second tongue-sin is slander. Under this head I enumerate backbiting, or speaking evil of one behind his back; defaming one's good name by absolute or implied censure; detraction, envious jealousies, secret whisperings, and innuendoes, and all other ways by which the tongue wounds and injures the name and reputation of another. The devil, then, is, as Christ says, "the father of lies"; and every one who gives his tongue to slander, and maligns his neighbours, or utters words of falsehood or detraction, comes into the class of those false accusers, those Diaboloi of which Jesus truly said, "Ye are of your father the devil." The grossest kind of slander is bearing false witness: that is, saying a person did things which he did not do. This false witness is sometimes spoken openly, sometimes in secret, but always with malicious intent; and in every instance the tongue which utters it, not only setteth on fire the course of nature, but is set on fire of hell. Another way of slandering is to impute false motives to good actions. When we say of a liberal man that he is vainglorious; of an active man in Church affairs, that he is a Diotrephes; of a prudent man, that he is miserly; of a devout man, that he is hypocritical. Another way is to distort views, words, and actions; giving them a false construction; suppressing what might appear good; magnifying what might seem to be evil. This is taking a man's words and deeds, and, like Romish inquisitors, stretching them upon the rack until they become disjointed, and the once symmetrical form is all distorted and awry by reason of the unjust treatment to which slander subjects it. Another way is by insinuations, sly suggestions, expressions of doubt, intimations as to something concealed, a qualifying of the praise of others by some question implying distrust, or lack of confidence. 3. The third tongue-sin which St. James mentions is the fretful, scolding tongue. There are those who are always complaining. Even if blessings come, they murmur because they are no greater, and are ready to find fault, not only with all the dealings of their fellow-men, but with all the providences of God. 4. Falsehood is another grievous tongue-sin; and in this I would include all kinds of lying. The lie positive, and the lie negative; the lie direct, and the lie by implication; the lie malignant, and the lie sportive; every designed departure from truth is falsehood; and every falsehood is a sin against one's own soul, a sin against your fellow-men, and a sin against God, which He will punish with fearful severity. 5. The tongue commits a great sin when it is used in filthy talking and indecent speech. It is greatly to be lamented that even in polite, and what would pass for modest, society there is too much of tampering with this sin. 6. Another tongue-sin is boasting. "The tongue is a little member, but boasteth great things." Boasting results from an overestimate of ourselves, and an underestimate of others. It is selfishness manifesting itself in words. It is the inflated mind, venting itself in windy words. It betrays weakness, littleness, ignorance, vanity, self-conceit, arrogance, presumption. 7. Another sin of the tongue is flattery, or the giving of undue and undeserved praise. The desire to say something that will please the person we are speaking to, or that will secure his favour, or elevate us in

his regard; or the desire, perhaps, to have him reciprocate the compliment, and flatter us, is the usual motive for this sin of the tongue. 8. Lastly, there is the sin of profanity, the taking of God's name in vain. With what caution use an instrument of speech which has under it "the poison of asps"! With what assiduity should we seek to tame that most untamable of things, that it rends us not by its fierceness, and ravin not upon society by its brute-like goadings! Yet we cannot do this in our own strength or wisdom, and our prayer must be that of the Psalmist, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth. Keep the door of my lips." We must seek for Divine grace to aid us in subduing and controlling the tongue. We must seek to have hearts created anew in Christ Jesus; for if our hearts are right with God our speech will be also. (*Bp. Stevens.*) *The government of the tongue*:—The keeping of the tongue is one of those duties that entitles a man to safety from evil times, and therefore must now be urged as a seasonable duty. The wisest monarch could hardly govern a great part of the world; how difficult then must it be to govern a world, and that a world of iniquity. The tongue is a world of iniquity, a heap of evils; as in the world many things are contained, so in the tongue. This world of iniquity is divided into two parts, undue silence, and sinful speaking. These are the higher and lower parts of this world, yet quickly may men travel from the one to the other. I. UNDUE SILENCE, WHEN THE TONGUE RESTS IDLE, WHEN GOD CALLS IT TO WORK. Our tongues are our glory, and should not be involved in a dark cloud of silence when God calls them to shine forth. 1. Silence is unseasonable when sin rageth and roareth. Our tongues testify that we are men, and they should show we are Christians and in a covenant with God, offensive and defensive. By this undue silence we are injurious to God, in that we do not vindicate His glory, bespattered with the sins of others. His glory, I say, Who hath given us a tongue as a banner to be displayed because of truth. This undue silence is also injurious to our neighbour. We see him pulling down the house about his ears, and yet we will not help him; selling his soul for a trifle, and yet we do not bid him rue his bargain. It is injurious likewise to ourselves, for thereby we adopt the devil's children brought forth by others, and set down their debts to our own account (Eph. v. 7–11). This silence also leaves a sting in our conscience, which remains inactive in the hearts of some for a while; but when the opportunity of bearing testimony against sin is gone, it bites dreadfully the hearts of those whose consciences are not seared. 2. When an opportunity of edifying others inviteth us to speak. Oh, what iniquity is contracted by the neglect of heavenly discourse among professors! A dumb Christian is a very unprofitable servant. A philosopher, seeing a man with a fair face and a silent tongue, bade him speak that he might see him. When scholars or merchants meet, we know what they are by their discourse; and why should not Christians also discover themselves? (1) Dumb Christians are very unlike Christ, whose ordinary way it was to spiritualise all things, and turn the current of the discourse toward heaven. (2) Either there is no religion at all, or but very little, in that heart. Nearest the heart, nearest the mouth. If fire be upon the hearth, the smoke will come out at the chimney. (3) They are very useless sort of people; like the vine that is fruitless. 3. Silence is unseasonable when our wants are crying. These should make us cry to God, like that woman who cried to the king of Israel, saying, "Help, my Lord, O King." II. SINFUL SPEAKING: WHEN THE TONGUE IS EXERCISED, BUT ILL EXERCISED; AND THIS IS A STRONG PIECE OF THIS WORLD OF INIQUITY. I may divide it again into two parts—one against our duty to God, the other against our duty to man. 1. Against our duty to God. (1) Rash swearing by the name of God. (2) A light, irreverent, and profane using of the name of God in common talk. (3) Cursing; whereby we wish some horrid ill to ourselves or neighbours; but, because it is a kind of profane prayer, I speak of it under this head. (4) Profaning of Scripture phrases, by jesting or scoffing on the Scriptures; or using them to express the conceptions of men's wanton wits, alluding to them in common talk, and the like. (5) Mocking of religion and seriousness. (6) Reasoning against religion, and defending sinful opinions and practices. (7) Murmuring and complaining. Proud hearts make us fret at the dispensations of providence (Jude 14–16). 2. Against our duty to man. (1) Idle speaking—that is, words spoken to no good purpose, tending neither to the glory of God, nor the good of ourselves or others, either in spiritual or temporal things. A gracious soul will beware of idle words, as of vain thoughts. (2) A trade of jesting. It is not unlawful to pass an innocent jest, to produce a moderate recreation. But if a jest be allowed to be sauce to our conversation, yet it is impious to make it the meat. (3) Lying. Pernicious; officious;

the sporting lie; the rash lie, when men through inadvertency and customary looseness tell an untruth. This is so common that we may say truth hath fallen in the streets. Few so tender as to avoid making a lie. Consider God is a God of truth, and therefore it is most contrary to His nature, and the devil is the father of lies. It is a badge of the old man. (4) Uncharitable speaking of truth, to the wounding of the reputation of others. It is not enough that what ill we speak of others be true, but the speaking of it must bring a greater than the disadvantage the party gets by it. (5) Slandering or backbiting. Of this three sorts of persons are guilty. (*a*) He that raiseth a false report of his neighbour (Exod. xxiii. 1). Here is a true son of the devil, with malice and lying in conjunction. (*b*) He who readily reports it, though he knows it to be false, as readily receives, though he is not sure it is true. (*c*) He that spreads it. (*T. Boston, D.D.*) *Sins of the tongue*:—1. The evil tongue is the silent tongue; it is wholly mute in matters of religion; it never speaks of God or of heaven, as if it cleaved to the roof of the mouth. 2. The evil tongue is the earthly tongue. Men talk of nothing but the world, as if all their hopes were here, and they looked for an earthly eternity. 3. The evil tongue is the hasty or angry tongue; they have no command of passions, but are carried away with them as a chariot with wild horses. 4. The evil tongue is the vain tongue, that vents itself in idle words: "under his tongue is vanity." A vain tongue shows a light heart; a good man's words are weighty and prudent: "the tongue of the just is as choice silver," but "the mouth of fools pours out foolishness." 5. The evil tongue is the censorious tongue: "who art thou that judgest another?" Were men's hearts more humble, their tongues would be more charitable. 6. The evil tongue is the slanderous tongue. A slanderer wounds another's fame, and no physician can heal these wounds. The sword doth not make so deep a wound as the tongue. 7. The evil tongue is the unclean tongue that vents itself in filthy and scurrilous words: "let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth." 8. The evil tongue is the lying tongue: "lie not one to another." Nothing is more contrary to God than a lie; it shows much irreligion; lying is a sin that doth not go alone, it ushers in other sins. Absalom told his father a lie, that he was going to pay his vow at Hebron, and this lie was a preface to his treason. 9. The evil tongue is the flattering tongue, that will speak fair to one's face but will defame: "he that hateth, dissembleth with his lips." When he speaketh fair believe him not; dissembled love is worse than hatred. 10. The evil tongue is the tongue given to boasting: "the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things." There is a holy boasting: "In God we boast all the day," when we triumph in His power and mercy: but it is a sinful boasting when men display their trophies, boast of their own worth and eminency, that others may admire and cry them up; a man's self is his idol, and he loves to have this idol worshipped: "there arose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody." 11. The evil tongue is the swearing tongue. Some think it the grace of their speech; but if God will reckon with men for idle words, what will He do for sinful oaths? 12. The railing tongue is an evil tongue; this is a plague-sore breaking out at the tongue when we give opprobrious language. 13. The seducing tongue is an evil tongue. The tongue that by fine rhetoric decoys men to error: "by fair speeches they deceive the hearts of the simple." A fair tongue can put off bad wares; error is bad ware, which a seducing tongue can put off. 14. The evil tongue is the cruel tongue, that speaks to the wounding the hearts of others. Healing words are fittest for a broken heart: but that is a cruel, unmerciful tongue which speaks such words to the afflicted as to cut them to the heart: "they talk to the grief of those whom Thou hast wounded." 15. The evil tongue is the murmuring tongue: "these are murmurers." Murmuring is discontent breaking out at the lips; men quarrel with God, and tax His providence as if He had not dealt well with them. Why should any murmur or be discontented at their condition? Doth God owe them anything? Or can they deserve anything at His hands? Oh, how uncomely is it to murmur at Providence! 16. The evil tongue is the scoffing tongue. 17. The evil tongue is the unjust tongue: that will for a piece of money open its mouth in a bad cause. (*T. Watson.*) *The tongue a fire*:—1. There is a resemblance between an evil tongue and fire. (1) For the heat of it. It is the instrument of wrath and contention, which is the heat of a man—a boiling of the blood about the heart (Prov. xvii. 27). (2) For the danger of it. It kindleth a great burning. The tongue is a powerful means to kindle divisions and strifes. You know we had need look to fire. Where it prevaileth it soon turneth houses into a wilderness: and you have as much need to watch the tongue (Prov. xxvi. 18). (3) For the scorching.

Reproaches penetrate like fire. (4) It is kindled from hell. When you feel this heat upon your spirit, remember from what hearth these coals were gathered. 2. There is a world of sin in the tongue. Some sins are formal and proper to this member, others flow from it. It acteth in some sins, as lying, railing, swearing, &c. It concurreth to others, by commanding, counselling, persuading, seducing, &c. It is made the pander to lust and sin. Oh! how vile are we if there be a world of sin in the tongue—in one member! 3. Sin is a defilement and a blot. 4. Tongue sins do much defile. They defile others. We communicate evil to others, either by carnal suggestions, or provoke them to evil by our passion. They defile ourselves. By speaking evil of them we contract guilt upon ourselves. 5. An evil tongue hath a great influence upon other members. When a man speaketh evil, he will commit it. When the tongue hath the boldness to talk of sin, the rest of the members have the boldness to act it (1 Cor. xv. 33). 6. The evils of the tongue are of a large and universal influence, diffuse themselves into all conditions and states of life. There is no faculty which the tongue doth not poison, from the understanding to the locomotive; it violently stirreth up the will and affections, maketh the hands and the feet "swift to shed blood" (Rom. iii. 14, 15). There is no action which it doth not reach; not only those of ordinary conversation, by lying, swearing, censuring, &c., but holy duties, as prayer, and those direct and higher addresses to God, by foolish babbling and carnal requests; we would have God revenge our private quarrel. There is no age exempted; it is not only found in young men that are of eager and fervorous spirits, but in those whom age and experience hath more matured and ripened. Other sins decay with age, this many times increaseth; and we grow more forward and pettish as natural strength decayeth, and "the days come on in which is no pleasure." 7. A wicked tongue is of an infernal origin. Calumnies and reproaches are a fire blown up by the breath of hell. The devil hath been "a liar from the beginning" (John viii. 44), and an accuser of the brethren, and he loveth to make others like himself. Learn, then, to abhor revilings, contentions, and reproaches, as you would hell flames; these are but the eruptions of an infernal fire; slanderers are the devil's slaves and instruments. Again, if blasted with contumely, learn to slight it; who would care for the suggestions of the father of lies? The murderer is a liar. In short, that which cometh from hell will go thither again (Matt. v. 22). (*T. Manton.*) *Misuse of the tongue*:—Some time ago I saw a terrible fire, or rather the reflection of it in the sky; the heavens were crimsoned with it. It burned a large manufactory to the ground, and the firemen had hard work to save the buildings which surrounded it. They poured streams of water on it from fifteen engines, but it licked it up, and would have its course till the walls gave way. That terrible fire was kindled by a farthing rushlight! Some years ago I saw the black ashes of what the night before was a cheerful farmyard, with its hay-ricks, corn-stacks, stables, and cow-sheds; and lying about upon them were the carcases of a number of miserable horses and bullocks which had perished in the flames. All that was done by a lucifer-match! In America the Indians strike a spark from a flint and steel, and set fire to the dry grass, and the flames spread and spread until they sweep like a roaring torrent over prairies as large as England, and men and cattle have to flee for their lives. "And the tongue is a fire." A few rash words will set a family, a neighbourhood, a nation, by the ears; they have often done so. Half the law-suits and half the wars have been brought about by the tongue. (*James Bolton.*) *Mischief of the tongue*:—Give not thy tongue too great a liberty, lest it take thee prisoner. A word unspoken is, like the sword in the scabbard, thine; if vented, thy sword is in another's hand. If thou desire to be held wise, be so wise as to hold thy tongue. (*Quarles.*) **A world of iniquity.**—*The tongue a world of wickedness*:—It is a world of wickedness, because most mischiefs and greatest sins among men by unbridled and wicked tongues are attempted and performed. By the tongue thieves confer together and determine of robberies; murderers by their tongues raise up brawlings, the causes of cruel murder. By their tongues adulterous and treacherous persons first tempt the chastity of others, and with their words agree upon the wickedness. By the tongue lying, dissembling, flattery, and counterfeiting is committed. By the tongue slander, backbiting, swearing, blasphemy, and perjury is uttered. By the tongue false sentence is pronounced, either to the condemning of the righteous or absolving of the wicked, both which are abominable before the Lord. By the tongue men are led into error through false doctrine, drawn to wickedness by lewd counsel. Through the tongue, by false reports, private men and princes, kingdoms and countries, towns and cities, societies and families, are set at

variance. By the tongue familiars and friends have been set at daggers drawn, and their quarrels thereby have ended in blood. By the tongue quarrels are picked, contentions caused, brawlings grow, to the great hurt of private estates, and the marvellous hurt and disturbance of public weals; with filthiness of speech it corrupteth, with dissembling and flattery it deceiveth, with lying and cogging it beguileth, with false reports it slayeth, with slanders it defameth, with vain swearing it blasphemeth, with enticing it inveigleth, with smoothness of talk it enforceth, yea, almost every wickedness among the children of men is either determined, attempted, executed, or finished by the tongue. Insomuch that Sirach, having great experience thereof, falleth into a large discourse of those evils which come of the wicked tongue, as that it hath destroyed many which were at peace, that it hath disquieted many and driven them from nation to nation, that it hath broken down strong cities and overthrown the houses of great men, abated the strength of the people, and been the decay of mighty nations; that it hath cast down many virtuous women and robbed them of their labours, that it causeth that such as hearken unto it shall never rest and live quietly, that it striketh deeper than any rod, and devoureth more than the sword of the enemy, and such like. (*R. Turnbull.*) *A world of iniquity:*—A new-found world. Not a city or country only, but "a world of iniquity"; a sink, a sea of sin, wherein there is not only that leviathan, but creeping things innumerable (Psa. civ. 26). (*J. Trapp.*) *The tongue defiles:*—Leaving a stain upon the speaker, and setting a stain upon the hearer, even the guilt and filth of sin. (*Ibid.*) *The evil tongue destructive:*—The tongue is a centre from which mischief radiates; that is the main thought. A wheel that has caught fire at the axle is at last wholly consumed as the fire spreads through the spokes to the circumference. So also in society. Passions kindled by unscrupulous language spread through various channels and classes, till the whole cycle of human life is in flames. Reckless language first of all "defiles the whole" nature of the man who employs it, and then works destruction far and wide through the vast machinery of society. And to this there are no limits; so long as there is material the fire will continue to burn. (*A. Plummer, D.D.*) **Set on fire of hell.**—*The tongue hell ignited:*—The tongue is a fire, but how is it ignited? Whence come the sparks which make it blaze so fiercely and fatally? The answer is here plainly given. It is hell-lighted. The devil perverted man's powers at first; and he still inflames the corruption which he was the means of introducing into our nature. He applies the torch to the combustible materials which are stored up in every part of our mental and physical constitution. He is still the great tempter and destroyer. He is an actual and an active being. His prison-house, the pit of hell, is a terrible reality. Men may doubt or deny its existence—they may regard it as a mere bugbear, but that only proves how effectually Satan can yet blindfold, mislead, hoodwink, as he did at the beginning—"Thou shalt not surely die." It is the region of devouring flames, of unquenchable fire; and to it we are ultimately to trace those baleful conflagrations which the tongue is the instrument of kindling. It is here identified with the devil and his angels, for whom it has been provided, and who send forth from it all evil and destructive influences. (*John Adam.*) *Talk the devil's ammunition:*—The devil keeps an arsenal in every man's breast, which he fills with supplies in advance of a siege, just in the same way that a great general places his stores in a country he means to invade before he marches into it his entire army. Satan is more artful, as well as more potent, for he gets inside of a citadel that he means to besiege, and lays there a train which in the moment of assault he hopes to ignite. The powder which he thus trusts to touch is passion, for he knows that if that once explodes, the whole edifice must go. Take the temptation of anger. Suppose an irritating circumstance occurs: it is silence alone that can preserve the heart from an explosion. If a single word is uttered, it is apt, like the making of a pinhole in a steam boiler, to cause the whole fabric to burst. Talk, to use the word in its popular sense, is extremely impolitic in temptation. There is a majestic power in silence, particularly when it is silence of that kind which stands as a suppliant before the throne of grace. *A fiery tongue:*—Of Dr. Annesley it is recorded that, taking coffee one evening at an hotel, he heard one of two gentlemen in the next compartment swearing violently in conversation with the other, upon which he rang for the waiter and ordered a glass of water. When brought to him he said, "Take it to the gentleman in the next box." The gentleman was surprised, and said he had ordered no such thing. "I thought," said the venerable doctor, gravely, "to cool your tongue after the fiery language you have been uttering." (*Baxendale's Anecdotes.*) *The tongue a fire:*—Just before crossing the Hackensack River, on the

New York and Erie Railroad, I noticed by the roadside a large sign bearing, in very boldly painted letters, the words, "Shut your ash-pan." I wondered what the singular and impertinent counsel meant, when in a moment I found the train on a long low wooden bridge. I at once saw the force and propriety of the signboard suggestion. Burning coals dropping from the open ash-pan of the locomotive might destroy the bridge, interrupt travel, imperil life, and cause numberless embarrassments in a financial way. So it is very important that the faithful engineer heed the signboard, "Shut your ash-pan." I saw in the admonition a reminder of the words of James, "The tongue is a fire." *Setting on fire the wheel of life*:—The functions of a wheel, set on fire by the internal friction of its own axis, are deranged; and so the organisation of human society is disturbed and destroyed by the intestine fire of the human tongue—a fire which diffuses itself from the centre, and radiates forth to the circumference by all the spokes of slander and detraction, and involves the social framework in combustion and conflagration. (*J. T. Mombert, D.D.*) *The tongue captured, all else may follow*:—Let him who has one member belonging to hell take care lest he do not altogether belong to it. He is like a bird whose foot the fowler has bound with a thread: he can fly about apparently free, but still he is in the fowler's power; and if he does not break the thread while it is yet time, the fowler draws him to himself by means of it, and at the fitting moment catches him and kills him. (*J. H. A. Ebrard, D.D.*)

Vers. 7, 8. **The tongue can no man tame.**—*The taming of the tongue*:—The intense practicalness of James as a religious teacher leads him directly to this topic of the taming of the tongue. Here he sees, what every man to whom behaviour is a chief concern must see, one of the pivotal points of character. The religion that does not rule the speech is a failure and a fraud. The tongue, in the figure of James, is a wild beast that needs taming—fierce, reasonless, uncontrollable. A good part of the evils of life arise from its depredations. 1. First, of course, is the lying tongue. Of all the evils of speech falsehood is central and seminal. 2. Next to the lying tongue we must put the reviling tongue. 3. After the reviling tongue the foul tongue must be reckoned—the tongue that is the channel through which the impurities of a bad heart discharge themselves; the tongue that deals in indecent speech. 4. Next we think of the passionate tongue; the tongue that hastens to give voice to the anger and the hate that arise within. Anger, the Latin poet said, is a brief insanity; and when it begins to rage within the breast it needs to be chained and kept under till its paroxysm is past. But the mischievous tongue sometimes sets it loose and becomes its servitor—to hurl missiles of hot and stinging words right and left, doing damage that it is hard to repair. 5. The sarcastic tongue is another kind that needs taming. Sarcasm has its uses, no doubt; in our warfare with incorrigible evil-doers we must sometimes resort to it; but in the common intercourse of life it is scarcely more legitimate than the cudgel or the rapier. The arrows of sarcasm are barbed with contempt; that is what makes them rankle so; and contempt is a feeling that a good man cannot afford to indulge. 6. The scolding tongue is another kind that calls for a curb. Reproofs must be spoken, but sometimes there are too many of them, and their tone is too impatient, or too harsh, or too loud. Reproof must sometimes be severe, but it may be severe without being petulant. 7. The flattering tongue is a tongue that needs the bit. Honest and hearty praise is not to be avoided; we do not have half enough of it. Many are toiling on, heartsick and hopeless, to whom such a word of recognition would be as cold water to a thirsty soul. But this is not flattery. Flattery is either false praise, or praise addressed, not to the quality of our actions so much as to our excellences of person or that which is external to us. To praise your child's looks, and so stimulate his vanity, that is flattery, a most nauseous exhibition of it; and the tongue that indulges in it ought to be bridled. But the worst kind of flattery is that which seeks to please, and so to entice, by artful and insincere praises. This is a species of lying, of course; but it is a species so mean and dangerous that it needs to be singled out and denounced. 8. The chattering tongue is another kind that needs restraint and discipline. A few people are too taciturn; a great many are too talkative. Such endless prattle is an encroachment on other people's rights. How much time is consumed in attending to words that are utterly destitute of thought, that convey no ideas and impart no benefits! How many things we might have done that were worth doing, how many things we might have thought of that were worth thinking of, while we were listening! But what is worse, it is debilitating to

the one who indulges in it. He talks so much that he has no time to think. "Set a watch, O God," prayed the psalmist, "before my mouth; keep the door of my lips." The trouble with some of these constant talkers seems to be that there is no door to their lips, nothing but a doorway. 9. The last kind of tongue I shall mention that needs taming is the slanderous tongue. To speak evil of their neighbours is to some men and women a positive luxury. You would use harsh words about a man who got his living by retailing scandal, orally, for five cents a customer; what have you to say about the man who spices his newspaper with such items to make it sell? "But the tongue can no man tame." So much the more need, then, that a power stronger than man's should be invoked to subdue its unruliness and mitigate its fierceness. Such a Divine power the fables of all the peoples have celebrated; the power that tames the wildest beasts, and makes the tiger as gentle and docile as a lamb. The mythic song of Amphion is but a prelude of the triumph of the Prince of Peace, under whose blessed reign all savage and noxious creatures shall learn obedience and service. He at whose word the demoniac ceased his ravings, and the savage seas hushed their tumult—He who has the power and the purpose to subdue all things unto Himself—can cause the lying tongue to speak verities, and the reviling tongue to praise and bless, and the passionate tongue to be silent when the anger rises, and the foul tongue to utter purity, and the sarcastic tongue to temper its severities, and the scolding tongue to learn gentleness, and the flattering tongue to speak with sincerity, and the chattering tongue to be more discreet, and the talebearing tongue to be still. (*W. Gladden, D.D.*) *Taming the tongue*:—1. The tractableness of the beasts to man, and the disobedience of man to God (Isa. i. 3). Fallen man may go to school to the beasts to learn mildness and obedience; and yet God hath more power to subdue, and we have more reason to obey. 2. The greatness of man's folly and impotency in governing his own soul. Though he tameth other things, he doth not tame himself. 3. The deepness of man's misery. Our own art and skill is able to tame the fiercest beasts, and make them serviceable; beasts as strong as lions and elephants; fishes that do, as it were, inhabit another world; birds as swift almost as a thought; serpents hurtful and noxious. But, alas! there is more rebellion in our affections; sin is stronger, all our art will not tame it. 4. Art and skill to subdue creatures is a relic and argument of our old superiority. The heathens discerned we had once a dominion, and the Scriptures plainly assert it (Gen. i. 26). (*T. Manton.*) *The taming of the tongue*:—Here is a single proposition, guarded with a double reason. The proposition is, "No man can tame the tongue." The reasons—1. It is "unruly." 2. "Full of deadly poison." As the proposition is backed with two reasons, so each reason hath a terrible second. The evil hath for its second unruliness; the poisonfulness being deadly. It is evil, yea, unruly evil; it is poison, yea, deadly poison. 1. In the proposition we will observe—(1) The nature of the thing to be tamed. (2) The difficulty of accomplishing it. 2. The insubjectable subject is the tongue, which is—(1) A member; and—(2) An excellent, necessary, little, singular member. 1. It is a member. He that made all made the tongue; he that craves all must have the tongue. It is an instrument; let it give music to Him that made it. All creatures in their kind bless God (Psa. cxlviii). They that want tongues, as the heavens, sun, stars, meteors, orbs, elements, praise Him with such obedient testimonies as their insensible natures can afford. They that have tongues, though they want reason, praise Him with those natural organs. Man, then, that hath a tongue, and a reason to guide it, and more, a religion to direct his reason, should much more bless Him. Not that praise can add to God's glory, nor blasphemies detract from it. As the sun is neither bettered by birds singing, nor battered by dogs barking. Yet we that cannot make His name greater can make it seem greater; and though we cannot enlarge His glory, we may enlarge the manifestation of His glory. This both in words praising and in works practising. They that before little regarded Him may thus be brought to esteem Him greatly; giving Him the honour due to His name, and glorifying Him, after our example. This is the tongue's office. Every member, without arrogating any merit, or boasting the beholdenness of the rest unto it, is to do that duty which is assigned to it. The tongue is man's clapper, and is given him that he may sound out the praise of his Maker. Infinite causes draw deservingly from man's lips a devout acknowledgment of God's praise. 2. It is a member you hear; we must take it with all its properties; excellent, necessary, little, singular. (1) Excellent. First, for the majesty of it. It carries an imperious speech, wherein it hath the pre-eminence of all mortal creatures. Secondly, for the pleasantness of the tongue. No instruments are so

ravishing, or prevail over man's heart with so powerful complacency, as the tongue and voice of man. If the tongue be so excellent, how, then, doth this text censure it for being so evil? I take the philosopher's old and trite answer, Than a good tongue, there is nothing better; than an evil, nothing worse. It hath no mean; it is either exceedingly good or excessively evil. If it be good, it is a walking garden, that scatters in every place a sweet flower, an herb of grace to the hearers. If it be evil, it is a wild bedlam, full of madding mischiefs. So the tongue is every man's best or worst movable. A good tongue is a special dish for God's public service. The best part of a man, and most worthy the honour of sacrifice. This only when it is well seasoned. Seasoned, I say, "with salt," as the apostle admonisheth; not with fire (Col. iv. 6). But an evil tongue is meat for the devil, according to the Italian proverb: The devil makes his Christmas pie of lewd tongues. (2) It is necessary; so necessary that without a tongue I could not declare the necessity of it. It converseth with man, conveying to others by this organ that experimental knowledge which must else live and die in himself. It imparts secrets, communicates joys, which would be less happy suppressed than they are expressed. Lastly, it speaks our devotions to heaven, and hath the honour to confer with God. It is that instrument which the Holy Ghost useth in us to cry, "Abba, Father." It is our spokesman; and he that can hear the heart without a tongue, regardeth the devotions of the heart better, when they are sent up by a diligent messenger, a faithful tongue. (3) It is little. As man is a little world in the great, so is his tongue a great world in the little. It is a "little member," saith the apostle (ver. 5), yet it is a world; yea, "a world of iniquity" (ver. 6). It is little in quantity, but great in iniquity. What it hath lost in the thickness it hath gotten in the quickness; and the defect of magnitude is recompensed in the agility. If it be a talking tongue it is a world of prating. If it be a wrangling tongue it is a world of babbling. If it be a learned tongue it is, as Erasmus said of Bishop Tonstal, a world of learning. If it be a petulant tongue it is a world of wantonness. If it be a poisonous tongue, saith our apostle, "it defileth the whole body" (ver. 6). It is "little." So little that it will scarce give a kite her breakfast, yet it can discourse of the sun and stars, of orbs and elements, of angels and devils, of nature and arts, and hath no straighter limits than the whole world to walk through. It is a "little member," yet "boasteth great things" (ver. 5). Though it be little, yet if good, it is of great use. A little bit guideth a great horse to the rider's pleasure. A little helm ruleth a great vessel, though the winds blow and the floods oppose, yet the helm steers the ship. Though little, yet if evil, it is of great mischief. A little sickness distempereth the whole body. A little fire setteth a whole city on combustion. "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth" (ver. 5). It is little in substance, yet great to provoke passion, to produce action. It either prevails to good, or perverts to evil: purifieth or putrefieth the whole carcase, the whole conscience. It betrayeth the heart when the heart would betray God; and the Lord lets it double treason on itself when it prevaricates with Him. It is a little leak that drowneth a ship, a little breach that loseth an army, a little spring that pours forth an ocean. Little; yet the lion is more troubled with the little wasp than with the great elephant. Many have dealt better with the greater members of the body than with this little one. (4) It is a singular member. God hath given man two ears; one to hear instructions of human knowledge, the other to hearken to His Divine precepts; the former to conserve his body, the latter to save his soul. Two eyes, that with the one he might see to his own way, with the other pity and commiserate his distressed brethren. Two hands, that with the one he might work for his own living, with the other give and relieve his brother's wants. Two feet, one to walk on common days to his ordinary labour (Psa. civ. 23); the other, on sacred days to visit and frequent the temple and the congregation of saints. But among all, He hath given him but one tongue, which may instruct him to hear twice so much as he speaks; to work and walk twice so much as he speaks (Psa. cxxxix. 14). Stay and wonder at the wonderful wisdom of God! First, to create so little a piece of flesh, and to put such vigour into it; to give it neither bones nor nerves, yet to make it stronger than arms and legs, and those most able and serviceable parts of the body. Secondly, because it is so forcible, therefore hath the most wise God ordained that it shall be but little, that it shall be but one. That so the parvity and singularity may abate the vigour of it. Thirdly, because it is so unruly, the Lord hath hedged it in, as a man will not trust a wild horse in an open pasture, but prison him in a close pound. A double fence hath the Creator given to confine

it, the lips and the teeth; that through these mounds it might not break. And hence a threefold instruction for the use of the tongue is insinuated to us. First, let us not dare to pull up God's mounds; nor, like wild beasts, break through the circular limits wherein He hath cooped us. "Weigh thy words in a balance, and make a door and bar for thy mouth." Let this be the possession thou so hedgest in, and thy precious gold thou so bindest up. "Beware thou slide not by it, lest thou fall before him that lieth in wait." Commit not burglary by breaking the doors and pulling down the bars of thy mouth. Much more, when the Lord hath hung a lock on it, do not pick it with a false key. Rather pray with David (Psa. li. 15). It is absurd in building to make the porch bigger than the house; it is as monstrous in nature when a man's words are too many, too mighty. Let thy words be few, true, weighty, that thou mayest not speak much, not falsely, not vainly. Remember the bounds, and keep the *non ultra*. Secondly, since God hath made the tongue one, have not thou "a tongue and a tongue." It is made simple; let it not be double. Thirdly, this convinceth them of preposterous folly, that put all their malice into their tongue, as the serpent all her poison in her tail; and as it were by a chemical power, attract all vigour thither, to the weakening and enervation of the other parts. 3. We see the nature of the thing to be tamed, the tongue; let us consider the difficulty of this enterprise. No man can do it. Which we shall best find if we compare it—(1) With other members of the body. (2) With other creatures of the world. 1. With other members of the body, which are various in their faculties and offices; none of them idle. (1) The eye sees far, and beholdeth the creatures in the heavens—sun, and stars; on the earth—birds, beasts, plants, and minerals; in the sea—fishes and serpents. That it is an unruly member, let our grandmother speak, whose roving eye lost us all. Yet this eye, as unruly as it is, hath been tamed. Did not Job "make a covenant with his eyes, that he would not look upon a maid" (Job. xxxi. 1)? The eye hath been tamed, "but the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil." (2) The ear yet hears more than ever the eye saw; and by reason of its patulous admission, derives that to the understanding whereof the sight never had a glance. It can listen to the whisperings of a Doeg, to the susurrations of a devil, to the noise of a Siren, to the voice of a Delilah. The ear hath been tamed, "but the tongue can no man tame," &c. (3) The foot is an unhappy member, and carries a man to much wickedness. It is often swift to the shedding of blood; and runneth away from God, Jonah's pace. There is "a foot of pride" (Psa. xxxvi. 11), a saucy foot, that dares presumptuously enter upon God's freehold. There is a foot of rebellion, that with an apostate malice kicks at God. There is a dancing foot, that paceth the measures of circular wickedness. Yet, as unruly as this foot is, it hath been tamed. David got the victory over it (Psa. cxix. 59). "But the tongue can no man tame," &c. (4) The hand rageth and rangeth with violence, to take the bread it never sweat for, to enclose fields, to depopulate towns, to lay waste whole countries. Yet it hath been tamed; not by washing it in Pilate's basin, but in David's holy water—innocence. "I will wash my hands in innocency, and then, O Lord, will I compass Thine altar." 2. With other creatures of the world, whether we find them in the earth, air, or water. (1) On the earth there is the man-hating tiger, yet man hath subdued him; and (they write) a little boy hath led him in a string. There is the flock-devouring wolf, that stands at grinning defiance with the shepherd; mad to have his prey, or lose himself; yet he hath been tamed. The roaring lion, whose voice is a terror to man, by man hath been subdued. Yea, serpents that have to their strength two shrewd additions, subtlety and malice; that carry venom in their mouths, or a sting in their tails, or are all over poisonous; the very basilisk, that kills with his eyes (as they write) three furlongs off. Yea, all these savage, furious, malicious natures have been tamed. (2) In the sea there be great wonders (Psa. cvii. 23, 24). Yet those natural wonders have been tamed by our artificial wonders—ships. (3) In the air, the birds fly high above our reach, yet we have gins to fetch them down. Snares, lime-twigs, nets, tame them all; even the pelican in the desert, and the eagle amongst the cedars. Thus far, then, St. James's proposition passeth without opposition. "The tongue can no man tame"; the tongue is too wild for any man's taming. It would be foolish to infer that, though no man can tame the tongue, yet a woman may. Woman, for the most part, hath the glibbest tongue; and if ever this impossibility preclude men, it shall much more annihilate the power of the weaker sex (Prov. vii. 11, ix. 13). "The tongue can no man tame." Let us listen to some weightier exceptions. The prophets spake the oracles of life, and the apostles the words of salvation; and many men's speech

ministers grace to the hearers. Yield it; yet this general rule will have no exceptions: "no man can tame it"; man hath no stern for this ship, no bridle for this colt. How then? God tamed it. God must lay a coal of His own altar upon our tongues, or they cannot be tamed. And when they are tamed, yet they often have an unruly trick. Abraham lies; Moses murmurs. Peter forswears his Master, his Saviour. If the tongues of the just have thus tripped, how should the profane go upright? "The tongue can no man tame." The instruction hence ariseth in full strength; that God only can tame man's tongue. First, to open our lips when they should speak is the sole work of God (Psa. li. 15). God must open with His golden key of grace, or else our tongues will arrogate a licentious passage. We had better hold our peace, and let our tongues lie still, than set them a-running till God bids them go. Secondly, to shut our lips when they should not speak, is only the Lord's work also. It is Christ that casts out the talking devil; He shuts the wicket of our mouth against unsavoury speeches. Thus all is from God. Man is but a lock; God's Spirit the key "that openeth, and no man shutteth; that shutteth, and no man openeth" (Rev. iii. 7). Away, then, with arrogation of works, if not of words. When a man hath a good thought it is *gratia infusa*, when a good work it is *gratia diffusa*. If, then, man cannot produce words to praise God, much less can he procure his works to please God. If he cannot tune his tongue, he can never turn his heart. Two useful benefits may be made hereof. First, it is taught us, whither we have recourse to tame our tongues. He that gave man a tongue can tame the tongue. Let us move our tongues to entreat help for our tongues; and, according to their office, let us set them on work to speak for themselves. Secondly, we must not be idle ourselves; the difficulty must spur us to more earnest contention. As thou wouldest keep thy house from thieves, thy garments from moths, thy gold from rust, so carefully preserve thy tongue from unruliness. Look how far the heart is good, so far the tongue. If the heart believe, the tongue will confess; if the heart be meek, the tongue will be gentle; if the heart be angry, the tongue will be bitter. The tongue is but the hand without, to show how the clock goes within. 1. It is "an unruly evil." The difficulty of taming the tongue, one would think, were sufficiently expressed in the evil of it; but the apostle seconds it with another obstacle, signifying the wild nature of it—unruly. It is not only an evil, but an unruly evil. (1) To ourselves; "it is so placed among the members that it defileth all" (ver. 6). A wild cannibal in a prison may only exercise his savage cruelty upon the stone walls or iron grates. But the tongue is so placed that, being evil and unruly, it hurts all the members. (2) To our neighbours. Some iniquities are swords to the country, as oppression, rapine, circumvention; some incendiaries to the whole land, as evil and unruly tongues. (3) To the whole world. If the vast ruins of ancient monuments, if the depopulation of countries, if the consuming fires of contention, if the land manured with blood, had a tongue to speak, they would all accuse the tongue for the original cause of their woe. Slaughter is a lamp, and blood the oil; and this is set on fire by the tongue. You see the latitude and extension of this unruly evil, more unruly than the hand. Slaughters, massacres, oppressions, are done by the hand; the tongue doth more. The hand spares to hurt the absent, the tongue hurts all. One may avoid the sword by running from it; not the tongue, though he run to the Indies. The hand reacheth but a small compass; the tongue goes through the world. If a man wore coat of armour, or mail of brass, yet the darts of the tongue will pierce it. It is evil, and doth much harm; it is unruly, and doth sudden harm. Saint James here calls it fire. Now you know fire is an ill master; but this is unruly fire. Nay, he calls it "the fire of hell," blown with the bellows of malice, kindled with the breath of the devil. Nay, Stella hath a conceit, that it is worse than the fire of hell; for that torments only the wicked; this all, both good and bad. Swearers, railers, scolds, have hell-fire in their tongues. 2. "Full of deadly poison." Poison is loathsomely contrary to man's nature; but there is a poison not mortal, the venom whereof may be expelled; that is "deadly poison." Yet if there was but a little of this resident in the wicked tongue, the danger were less; nay, it is full of it, "full of deadly poison." It is observable that which way soever a wicked man useth his tongue, he cannot use it well. He bites by detraction, licks by flattery: and either of these touches rankle; he doth no less hurt by licking than by biting. All the parts of his mouth are instruments of wickedness. Logicians, in the difference betwixt *vocem* and *sonum*, say that a voice is made by the lips, teeth, throat, tongue. The lips are the porter, and that is fraud; the porch, the teeth, and there is

malice; the entertainer, the tongue, and there is lying; the receiver, the throat, and there is devouring. I cannot omit the moral of that old fable. Three children call one man father, who brought them up. Dying, he bequeaths all his estate only to one of them, as his true natural son; but which that one was left uncertain. Hereupon every one claims it. The wise magistrate, for speedy decision of so great an ambiguity, causeth the dead father to be set up as a mark, promising the challengers that which of them could shoot next his heart, should enjoy the patrimony. The elder shoots, so doth the second; both hit. But when it came to the younger's turn, he utterly refused to shoot; good nature would not let him wound that man dead, that bred and fed him living. Therefore the judge gave all to this son, reputing the former bastards. The scope of it is plain, but significant. God will never give them the legacy of glory, given by His Son's will to children, that like bastards shoot through, and wound His blessed name. Think of this, ye swearing and cursing tongues! To conclude, God shall punish such tongues in their own kind; they were full of poison, and the poison of another stench shall swell them. They have been inflamed, and shall be tormented with the fire of hell. Burning shall be added to burning, save that the first was active, this passive. But blessed is the sanctified tongue. God doth now choose it as an instrument of music to sing His praise; He doth water it with the saving dews of His mercy, and will at last advance it to glory. (*T. Adams.*) *The tongue hardly tamed*:—1. The tongue is hardly tamed and subdued to any right use. No human art and power can ever find a remedy and curb for it. (1) Come before God humbly; bewail the depravation of your nature, manifested in this untamed member. (2) Come earnestly. 2. There is an unbridled license and violence in the tongue (Job xxxii. 19). When the mind is big with the conception, the tongue is earnest to utter it (Psa. xxxix. 3). Meeken the heart into a sweet submission, lest discontent seek the vent of murmuring. 3. A wicked tongue is venomous and hurtful; as Bernard observeth, it killeth three at once—him that is slandered, his fame by ill report; him to whom it is told, his belief with a lie; and himself with the sin of detraction. Bless God when you escape those deadly bites, the fangs of detraction. (*T. Manton.*) *All kinds of creatures tamed by man*:—The assertion may seem at first somewhat hyperbolical, but the well-known cases of tame rats and tame wasps, the lion of Androcles, and the white fawn of Sertorius, furnish what may well be termed "crucial instances" in support of it. The story related by Cassian, that St. John in his old age kept a tame partridge, makes it probable that St. James may have seen, among his fellow-teachers, such an instance of the power of man to tame the varied forms of animal life around him. (*Dean Plumptre.*) *The tongue untamable*:—Men have gained the ascendancy over many evils which it has pleased God should be intermingled with the course of earthly things; they have been able to encounter and overcome them. Many poisons in minerals, plants, or animals, have been rendered harmless, or turned to beneficial purposes. But to tame the tongue, this most unruly of all evils, to neutralise this deadliest of poisons, to regulate this most refractory agent, has surpassed the power of mortals. The laws of nature have been partially ascertained, and are becoming every day more fully known to us, in proportion as the human mind succeeds in diving into the depths of nature, and investigating her counsels and mysteries. Hence there is a gradual development of intelligence and power, of patient and persevering investigation; hence each generation avails itself of the experience of the preceding; one nation extends the hand of brotherly union to another, and even inquiries apparently unsuccessful at the time, have in the end led to beneficial results. Oh, why has the result been so very different when attempts have been made to gain the supremacy over sin, and to bring under the law of the Spirit only a single member of our frame, that has been under the domination of sin! Oh, here are more profound depths, more hidden mysteries, than in "all the nature of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents." Here are greater wonders than in all the wonders of the deep! This baffles the most acute understanding, the most powerful will, the most determined industry of man! (*B. Jacobi.*) *A "not-under-control" signal*:—When anything goes wrong with a ship at sea which prevents her from being moved or answering the helm, she is bound to put up a signal, so that other ships may keep at a safe distance. This, which is called the "not-under-control" signal, consists of three iron balls. It would be well if some of us could put up "not-under-control" signals at times when our tempers are not what they should be. Indeed, we know of one man who used to do this. He was an eccentric author, and when, owing to pre-occupation of mind, or any other circumstance,

he was likely to be peevish and snappish to his family, he would stick on his forehead a red wafer. This was a danger signal, telling every one to keep out of his way. (*Quiver.*) *The malignant propensity of the tongue* :—It is an untamable, venomous beast. It combines the ferocity of the tiger and the mockery of the ape with the subtlety and venom of the serpent. (*A. Plummer, D.D.*) *Scandal a poison* :—Scandal, hydra-headed, poison-fanged, lives on the garbage of the world, and slays even after it is seemingly killed. There is a story of a cobra which got into a West Indian church during service. Some one saw it, went quietly out, procured a weapon, and coming back, cut off the snake's head. After the service the people went to look at the animal, and a native touched the dead head with his foot. He drew it back with a cry of pain, and in an hour he was dead. The poison-fangs had power to kill, though their owner was dead. (*Christian Age.*) "*An unruly evil*" :—In the "Shepherd" of Hermas (ii. 2), calumny is described as a "restless demon." (*Cambridge Bible for Schools.*)

Vers. 9–12. **Therewith bless we God.**—*The moral contradictions in the reckless talker* :—In these concluding sentences of the paragraph respecting sins of the tongue St. James does two things—he shows the moral chaos to which the Christian who fails to control his tongue is reduced, and he thereby shows such a man how vain it is for him to hope that the worship which he offers to Almighty God can be pure and acceptable. He has made himself the channel of hellish influences. He cannot at pleasure make himself the channel of heavenly influences, or become the offerer of holy sacrifices. A man who curses his fellow-men, and then blesses God, is like one who professes the profoundest respect for his sovereign, while he insults the royal family, throws mud at the royal portraits, and ostentatiously disregards the royal wishes. It is further proof of the evil character of the tongue that it is capable of lending itself to such chaotic activity. "Therewith bless we the Lord and Father," *i.e.*, God in His might and in His love; "and therewith curse we men, which are made after the likeness of God." The heathen fable tells us the apparent contradiction of being able to blow both hot and cold with the same breath; and the son of Sirach points out that "if thou blow the spark, it shall burn; if thou spit upon it, it shall be quenched; and both these come out of thy mouth" (Ecclus. xxviii. 12). St. James, who may have had this passage in his mind, shows us that there is a real and a moral contradiction which goes far beyond either of these: "Out of the same mouth cometh forth blessing and cursing." Well may he add, with affectionate earnestness, "My brethren, these things ought not so to be." Assuredly they ought not; and yet how common the contradiction has been, and still is, among those who seem to be, and who think themselves to be, religious people! There is perhaps no particular in which persons professing to have a desire to serve God are more ready to invade His prerogatives than in venturing to denounce those who differ from themselves, and are supposed to be therefore under the ban of Heaven. There are many questions which have to be carefully considered and answered before a Christian mouth, which has been consecrated to the praise of our Lord and Father, ought to venture to utter denunciations against others who worship the same God and are also His offspring and His image. Is it quite certain that the supposed evil is something which God abhors; that those whom we would denounce are responsible for it; that denunciation of them will do any good; that this is the proper time for such denunciation; that we are the proper persons to utter it? The illustrations of the fountain and the fig-tree are among the touches which, if they do not indicate one who is familiar with Palestine, at any rate agree well with the fact that the writer of this Epistle was such. Springs tainted with salt or with sulphur are not rare, and it is stated that most of those on the eastern slope of the hill-country of Judæa are brackish. The fig-tree, the vine, and the olive were abundant throughout the whole country; and St. James, if he looked out of the window as he was writing, would be likely enough to see all three. It is not improbable that in one or more of the illustrations he is following some ancient saying or proverb. Thus, Arrian, the pupil of Epictetus, writing less than a century later, asks, "How can a vine grow, not vinewise, but olivewise, or an olive, on the other hand, not olivewise, but vinewise? It is impossible, inconceivable." It is possible that our Lord Himself, when He used a similar illustration in connection with the worst of all sins of the tongue, was adapting a proverb already in use (Matt. xii. 33–36). And previously, in the Sermon on the Mount, where He is speaking of deeds rather than of words (Matt. vii. 16–18). Can it be the case that

while physical contradictions are not permitted in the lower classes of unconscious objects, moral contradictions of a very monstrous kind are allowed in the highest of all earthly creatures? Just as the double-minded man is judged by his doubts, and not by his forms of prayer, so the double-tongued man is judged by his curses, and not by his forms of praise. In each case one or the other of the two contradictories is not real. If there is prayer, there are no doubts; and if there are doubts, there is no prayer—no prayer that will avail with God. So also in the other case: if God is sincerely and heartily blessed, there will be no cursing of His children; and if there is such cursing, God cannot acceptably be blessed; the very words of praise, coming from such lips, will be an offence to Him. But it may be urged, our Lord Himself has set us an example of strong denunciation in the woes which He pronounced upon the scribes and Pharisees; and again, St. Paul cursed Hymenæus and Alexander (1 Tim. i. 20), the incestuous person at Corinth (1 Cor. v. 5), and Elymas the sorcerer (Acts xiii. 10). Most true. But firstly, these curses were uttered by those who could not err in such things. Christ "knew what was in man," and could read the hearts of all; and the fact that St. Paul's curses were supernaturally fulfilled proves that he was acting under Divine guidance in what he said. And secondly, these stern utterances had their source in love; not, as human curses commonly have, in hate. And let us remember the proportion which such things bear to the rest of Christ's words and of St. Paul's words, so far as they have been preserved for us. All this applies with much force to those who believe themselves to be called upon to denounce and curse all such as seem to them to be enemies of God and His truth: but with how much more force to those who in moments of anger and irritation deal in execrations on their own account, and curse a fellow-Christian, not because he seems to them to have offended God, but because he has offended themselves! That such persons should suppose that their polluted mouths can offer acceptable praises to the Lord and Father, is indeed a moral contradiction of the most startling kind. The writer of this Epistle has been accused of exaggeration. It has been urged that in this strongly worded paragraph he himself is guilty of that unchastened language which he is so eager to condemn; that the case is over-stated, and that the highly-coloured picture is a caricature. Is there any thoughtful person of large experience that can honestly assent to this verdict? Who has not seen what mischief may be done by a single utterance of mockery, or enmity, or bravado; what confusion is wrought by exaggeration, innuendo, and falsehood; what suffering is inflicted by slanderous suggestions and statements; what careers of sin have been begun by impure stories and filthy jests? All these effects may follow, be it remembered, from a single utterance in each case, may spread to multitudes, may last for years. One reckless word may blight a whole life. And there are persons who habitually pour forth such things, who never pass a day without uttering what is unkind, or false, or impure. (*A. Plummer, D.D.*) *The tongue—its blessing and cursing*:—I. THE INCONSISTENCY OF THE TONGUE. 1. Its blessing of God. This is the great end for which the human tongue exists—this the highest employment in which it can be engaged. We do this in various ways. We thus bless Him in our praises. These are sung either more privately in our own dwellings or more publicly in the sanctuary. He requires, above everything, the soul, but He will have the body also; the members and organs of the one, not less than the faculties and affections of the other. We thus bless God also in our prayers, whether these be secret, domestic, or public. In them adoring and thankful praises constitute no small or subordinate element. We extol the Lord for His infinite perfections, we give Him the glory due unto His great and holy name. We testify our obligations to Him for His mercies without number, and lay offerings of grateful homage on His altar. 2. Its cursing of men. Even the most orthodox and charitable Christians are not wholly exempt from this tendency. We are far too ready to pass sentence on our brethren, and in effect, if not in form, to curse such as do not happen to agree with us in some respects, and these, it may be, of quite secondary importance. Everything of this sort is of the nature of cursing—it partakes in one degree or another of that character. And mark the aggravating circumstance, that which involves the frightful inconsistency charged against the tongue—"men, which are made after the similitude of God." We were at first created in His image, stamped with His moral lineaments in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. And in a sense too, as the language here obviously implies, we still bear that likeness. Such cursing is in reality a cursing of God Himself, whom we yet bless—a cursing of Him in man, who is not only His workmanship, but His reflection, His image—not merely a being formed by His hand,

but formed after His likeness. We cannot keep the first table of the law, and at the same time set at nought the second. The strangely, outrageously inconsistent nature of the whole proceeding is still more forcibly exhibited by bringing the two contrary things together, placing them side by side, presenting them in sharpest contrast (ver. 10). There it is that the flagrant, shocking contradiction appears. II. THE UNNATURALNESS OF THIS INCONSISTENCY (vers. 11, 12). "Doth a fountain send forth at the same place"—the same hole, chink, or fissure, as in the rock whence it issues—"sweet water and bitter?" No—nothing of this kind is ever witnessed. The water which flows from the spring may have either, but it cannot have both of these qualities. It may indeed afterwards undergo a change, it may lose its original properties, and be turned into the opposite of what it was, by reason of the soil through which it runs, or the purposes to which it is applied. What was sweet may by certain mixtures become bitter. But at first, in its own nature, and apart from all foreign ingredients, it is wholly the one or the other. There is no inconsistency in the material region. He passes to a higher department, the vegetable kingdom, and shows that there too plants and trees bring forth a single kind of fruit, and that which is suited to the order, the species to which they belong. "Can the fig-tree, my brethren, bear olive-berries, either a vine figs?" Of course it cannot. Any such thing would be a monstrosity. Then, returning to the spring, not without reference to the internal, hidden source from which all our words proceed, he adds, "So can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh." He wishes to fix attention on the inconsistency manifested in the use of the tongue, and lead them to the right explanation of its origin. This anomaly does seem to be exhibited in the moral world, if not in the material. But it is so more in appearance than in reality. That water is often the same which looks different. What to some tastes and tests is fresh, when thoroughly examined, is found to be salt as the ocean. Much that to our earthly senses is sweet, to the spiritually-discerning is bitter indeed. Thus the blessing of many is formal, if not even false, having nothing gracious in it, no love or homage of the heart, no element or quality fitted to render it acceptable to the great object of worship. In its origin and essence it is not opposed to, nor, indeed, different from the cursing of man, with which it is associated. The latter reveals the true nature of the common source, or there may be two fountains where only one is perceptible. The former supposition applies to nominal and hypocritical Christians—this latter to living, genuine believers. They have an old man and a new, corruption and grace both existing and working within them; and as the one or the other gains the ascendancy, and, for the time, governs the tongue, the stream of discourse that issues from it is wholesome or deleterious—fresh as that of the bubbling spring, or salt as that of the briny deep. (*John Adam.*) *The evil tongue:*—St. James uses three special arguments to restrain Christians from the unruly use of the tongue: the first is the inconsistency of the thing—that the heart touched by the Holy Spirit should do the works of the flesh—that the fountain which hath been purified should again flow with bitter waters and the servants of Christ should serve Belial. We have promised to study the strains of angels, and become familiar with and adopt them as our own; so that instead of being now a Babel of confusion, the Church may utter but one language in the presence of the Lamb; and how very inconsistent that from such lips cursing should proceed—how very inconsistent if any of you who have been now repeating David's psalms, the notes of heaven, should to-morrow be found uttering an oath, or even using a passionate expression. It is bad enough for one who only professes Christianity to use the language of the devil, but it is a greater inconsistency when out of the same mouth proceeds blessing and cursing—when you, the same person, bless God, yet curse His image. Let the wicked do it; the heathen who is without God, and without Christ, if it must be. "He that is unjust," &c. But a Christian man—a man who has been baptized into the Holy Trinity; a man who reads the Bible, and comes into God's house and worships there: a man who joins himself to the company of the saints, dead and living, and takes into his mouth the same words, the same prayers, the same Scripture passages with them;—nay, the man who perhaps approaches the awful mystery of the Body and Blood of His Lord;—that from such a mouth should proceed the gibes and imprecations of lost spirits, is it not shockingly inconsistent? Next, St. James reminds us of the consequences both to others and ourselves. "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth, and the tongue is a fire." How far may a single spark dropped among stubble reach! How does it steal along the floor, creep up the wall, envelop the roof,

spread from house to house, and seize churches and noble buildings, till it wrap a whole city in conflagration! So does a single word dropped unadvisedly. If a soft answer turneth away wrath, on the other hand "grievous words stir up anger." If you reply quietly to a provocation, or refuse to answer, the quarrel dies; but one word draws on another, and wrath kindleth wrath; and that is made eternal which might have been extinguished if only one had been a Christian. You see, then, how great a matter a little fire kindleth. Is it surprising "if of every idle word we shall give an account at the judgment"? But again, you say something injurious of your neighbour. There is a little truth in it, but much more falsehood. It has been added to, and enlarged, and swollen into a crime. But you repeat it. The story spreads. It is told everywhere, and though it wounds your neighbour to death, and from the calumny he loses all acquaintances and friends, yet you cannot recall it now. See "how great a matter a little fire kindleth." Again, you utter impure words before a child, the child treasures them up all through his life; though he lives sixty or seventy years, unhappy being, his thoughts and language take their complexion from your words; but besides, to how many has he communicated what he first heard from you! Mark again, "how great a little fire kindleth." Surely the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity, and setteth on fire the course of nature. To conclude: if we will not restrain our members by the aid of God's Spirit, and especially that member which St. Peter calls "an unruly evil, full of deadly poison"; if we will, in the indulgence of a wilful spirit, scatter fire-brands about, unkind, malicious, polluting, or injurious words, wide-spread as the evil may be, will it stop short with others? No, it will return upon ourselves; which "setteth on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire of hell." The fire which hath gone forth spreading and consuming, at the judgment hour is stopped in its course, and rolling back again is concentrated on the tongue which gave it existence. You who uttered the word, which has done such mischief to thousands, and ruined so many souls, now feel its burning effects in your own person. Ought not this to make you careful of your words, those winged words, which once launched forth take a flight you know not whither? (*J. M. Chanter, M.A.*) **Made after the similitude of God.**—*Man made after God's image*:—This image of God consisteth in three things—1. In His nature, which was intellectual. God gave him a rational soul, spiritual, simple, immortal, free in its choice; yea, in the body there were some rays and strictures of the Divine glory and majesty. 2. In those qualities of "knowledge" (Col. iii. 10); "righteousness" (Eccles. vii. 29); and "true holiness" (Eph. iv. 24). 3. In his state, in a happy confluence of all inward and outward blessings, as the enjoyment of God, power over the creatures, &c. But now this image is in a great part defaced and lost, and can only be restored in Christ. Well, then, this was the great privilege of our creation, to be made like God: the more we resemble Him the more happy. Oh! remember the height of your original. We press men to walk worthy of their extraction. Those potters that were of a servile spirit disgraced the kingly family and line of which they came (1 Chron. iv. 22). Plutarch saith of Alexander, that he was wont to heighten his courage by remembering he came of the gods. Remember you were made after the image of God; do not deface it in yourselves, or render it liable to contempt, by giving others occasion to revile you. (*T. Manton.*)

Ver. 13. **Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge.**—*Divine wisdom*:—In Scripture the term "wisdom" ordinarily signifies the knowledge and fear of God, especially that enlightening of the mind which flows from the word and spirit of Christ; and the superior excellence of this wisdom may be well expressed in the words of Solomon (Prov. iii. 13, 14). Much of what is called wisdom and knowledge among men can scarcely be said to have any influence at all, and very frequently all that can be said in its praise is merely this, that it is a more sedate species of amusement than men commonly pursue. But it may be that there is some difficulty in attaining it, and that every one is not able to make such an acquirement. Hence it is esteemed by many as of no small value, because it exercises their faculties, ministers to their vanity, or plausibly occupies their time. Other kinds of wisdom and knowledge there are which may be sufficiently applicable to practical purposes and sufficiently useful in promoting the temporal interests of their possessor, but which have no salutary influence on the heart or conduct. Such kinds of wisdom may often be attained by the most worthless persons, and may sometimes render them only the more daring in their wickedness and the more dangerous to their fellow-men. But it is the distinguishing character of the wisdom

mentioned in the text, that it both produces good fruit for the use of others and exerts a purifying influence on the heart where it dwells. I. IT LEADS TO A "GOOD CONVERSATION," or manner of life. You are well assured that the calling, with which you are called in the gospel of Christ, is a "holy calling," and that the wisdom which cometh down from above is first pure—pure in its whole character and influence. For this end it cometh down, namely, to make us "free from the law of sin," and to purify "us unto God a peculiar people." Let every one, therefore, who seemeth to have this wisdom, or wishes to have it, feel his obligation "to cleanse himself from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit." "Let your conversation always be as becometh the gospel," and your conduct "as the children of God, blameless, harmless, and without rebuke." Let it never once enter into the imagination of your minds that you truly possess any portion of heavenly wisdom if it is not your full desire and endeavour to be "holy in all manner of conversation." No inconsistency can be greater, no delusion more fatal, than to suppose it possible for you to be guided by "the wisdom which is from above," while you show not "a good conversation" or manner of life. II. IT LEADS TO "GOOD WORKS"; let him show out of a good conversation his works. He who is wise ceases not only to be the servant of sin but learns to become an "instrument of righteousness." He not only rejects what would be disgraceful and debasing in practice, but studies to be "full of mercy and of good fruits." He is not content with avoiding whatever would be offensive to his Maker, hurtful to his neighbour, or injurious to his own best interests; he strives, farther, to do what may be pleasing in the sight of God, profitable to man, purifying to his own spirit. III. IT LEADS TO "MEEKNESS," or gentleness. "The meekness of wisdom," that unassuming and unoffending deportment which always becomes, and ought always to attend, true wisdom and superior knowledge. Such a spirit is not only a duty in itself, a part of the Christian character, but is in a manner the appropriate dress in which every heavenly grace and good work should be arrayed. Thus you are exhorted to associate this meekness with every form of well-doing; to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called with all lowliness and meekness; to "hear with meekness the ingrafted word"; to give a reason "of the hope that is in you with meekness"; to "restore one who is overtaken in a fault in the spirit of meekness"; in "meekness, to instruct those that oppose themselves." This is the way in which you are to show or exercise your wisdom, and hence it is called "the meekness of wisdom," that which belongs to it as a property, which becomes it as an ornament, which proceeds from it as an effect, which proves it to be from above. (*Jas. Brewster.*) *True wisdom*:—1. Wisdom and knowledge do well together; the one to inform, the other to direct. A good apprehension and a good judgment make a complete Christian. 2. True wisdom endeth in a good conversation. Surely the practical Christian is the most wise: in others, knowledge is but like a jewel in a toad's head: Deut. iv. 6, "Keep these statutes, for this is your wisdom." This is saving knowledge, the other is but curious. What greater folly than for learned men to be disputing of heaven and religion, and others less knowing to surprise it! This is like him that gazed upon the moon, but fell into the pit. One property of true wisdom is to be able to manage and carry on our work and business; therefore none so wise as they that "walk circumspectly" (Eph. v. 15). The careless Christian is the greatest fool; he is heedless of his main business. Another part of wisdom is to prevent danger; and the greater the danger, the more caution should we use. Certainly, then, there is no fool like the sinning fool, that ventureth his soul at every cast, and runneth blindfold upon the greatest hazard. 3. The more true wisdom, the more meek. Wise men are less angry, and more humble. 4. Meekness must be a wise meekness. It is said, "Meekness of wisdom." It not only noteth the cause of it, but the quality of it. It must be such as is opposite to fierceness, not to zeal. 5. A Christian must not only have a good heart, but a good life, and in his conversation show forth the graces of his spirit (Matt. v. 16). (*T. Manton.*) *Wisdom and knowledge*:—It must be observed that there is a difference between wisdom and knowledge. One is natural, the other acquired; one comes from God, the other from man. A man who is not wise cannot acquire wisdom by his own exertions; but any man can become learned if he have industry and memory. A man may be wise and unlearned; a man may be learned and be a fool. Wisdom is as superior to learning as the man who is both architect and builder is superior to the materials which he uses. But as those materials are necessary to the builder, so is learning to a wise man. Therefore, he who is truly wise will industriously seek to obtain all knowledge within his reach. No man to whom God has given wisdom despises

learning. He can do little without it. It is that with which he is to make his life-work. The very first motion of wisdom in a man is to "get understanding," to obtain a knowledge of things. (*C. F. Deems, D.D.*) *Knowledge and practice*:—Knowledge is a jewel, and adorns him that wears it. It is the enriching and bespangling of the mind. Knowledge is the eye of the soul, to guide it in the right way; but this knowledge must be joined with holy practice. Many illuminated heads can discourse fluently in matters of religion; but they do not live up to their knowledge: this is to have good eyes, but to have the feet cut off. How vain is knowledge without practice! as if one should know a sovereign medicine, and not apply it. Satan is a knowing spirit; but he hath no holy practice. (*T. Watson.*) *Knowledge and practice*:—Criticisms in words, or rather ability to make them, is not so valuable as some may imagine them. A man may be able to call a broom by twenty names, in Latin, Spanish, Dutch, Greek, &c.; but my maid, who knows the way to use it, but knows it only by one name, is not far behind him. (*John Newton.*) *Life—explains religion*:—One of our party greatly needed some elder-flower water for her face upon which the sun was working great mischief. It was in the Italian town of Varallo, and not a word of Italian did I know. I entered a chemist's shop and surveyed his drawers and bottles, but the result was *nil*. Bright thought; I would go down by the river, and walk until I could gather a bunch of elder-flowers, for the tree was then in bloom. Happily the search was successful: the flowers were exhibited to the druggist, the extract was procured. When you cannot tell in so many words what true religion is, exhibit it by your actions. Show by your life what grace can do. There is no language in the world so eloquent as a holy life. Men may doubt what you say, but they will believe what you do. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The chief thing to learn*:—It was the labour of Socrates to turn philosophy from the study of nature to speculations upon life; but there have been and are others who are turning off attention from life to nature. They seem to think that we are placed here to watch the growth of plants, or the motion of the stars; but Socrates was rather of opinion that what we had to learn, was how to do good and avoid evil. (*Dr. Johnson.*) *Knowledge and goodness*:—The most intellectual Gnostics were sensualists; sensualists upon a theory and with deliberation. And modern history yields many a warning that intellectual culture about religious things is one thing and genuine religion quite another. Henry VIII., who had been destined for the English Primacy, was among the best read theologians of his day: but whatever opinion may be entertained of his place as a far-sighted statesman in English history, no one would seriously speak of him as personally religious. (*H. P. Liddon, D.D.*) **Let him shew . . . with meekness of wisdom.**—*Practical wisdom*:—I. The man must "SHOW HIS WORKS." The apostle takes it for granted that, if he really be "wise and endued with knowledge," he will have works to show. Of course all pride, and vanity, and ostentation are to be eschewed. But still, the glory of God and the welfare of the world demand the exhibition of the fruits which Divine grace has produced in the character and conduct of the man. II. The man must "show his works OUT OF A GOOD CONVERSATION." A man's "conversation" is the course and tenor of his life. Consistency of conduct and comprehensive moral excellence are here required. III. Out of this "good conversation" the man must "show his works" in a certain way—"WITH MEEKNESS OF WISDOM." Meekness—which is, as it were, kindness and humility blended into one harmonious feeling of the mind—is very frequently enforced in the Word of God—sometimes by express command, sometimes by a referenee to the meekness of Christ Himself, sometimes by a statement of the personal benefits which follow in its train, and sometimes by an exhibition of its fitness to sustain the cause and promote the influence of religious truth. It is here associated with "wisdom." And assuredly not only do wisdom and meekness dwell together, but the former dictates, originates, fosters, and upholds the latter. (*A. S. Patterson, D.D.*) *How to prove one's possession of wisdom*:—James intimates that if a man is to be selected for wisdom he cannot make manifest that wisdom by an argument to prove its existence, but all he has to do is to show from a good life, a life of truth, fidelity, and beneficence, that he has so used what he has acquired as to adapt all objects in his control to their intended end. Not only by words but by works let the world see his wisdom, not only in one field but in all fields, not only on one side of his character, but on all sides let all who know anything of him know that it is good; and let him not parade this, let him show no exultation when it is discovered nor distressful disappointment when it is neglected, and by that very meekness men will be sure that he has wisdom. Meekness may not always be wise, but wisdom is always meek. (*C. F. Deems, D.D.*)

Wisdom and meekness:—Men are naturally fond of a reputation for superior understanding and wisdom. Here, then, is the best way to show the real possession of such superiority; not by a forward self-consequence—a self-commendatory and over-eager desire to dictate to others from the teacher's chair; not by a magisterial dogmatism of manner; not by a lofty and supercilious contempt of other men and their views and modes of instruction; not by a keen, contentious, overbearing zeal. No; let the man of "knowledge" and "wisdom" show his possession of these attributes—acquaintance with truth, and sound discretion to direct to the right use of it—by keeping his station, and studying to adorn it. Let him, first of all, maintain "a good conversation"—or course of conduct, private and public—a conversation upright and holy, in full harmony with the genuine influence of Divine truth, and "let him show, out of such a conversation, his works"—the practical results of his knowledge and professed faith. These "works" consisted in active conformity to the duties required by Divine precept, in all the various relations of life, more private or more public. And these "works" were to be shown "with meekness of wisdom"—(that is, with the meekness by which genuine wisdom is ever distinguished. Vanity is one of the marks of a weak mind. Humility and gentleness are the invariable associates of true wisdom. The two were united, in their respective fulness of perfection, in the blessed Jesus. Let the man, then, who would have a character for true wisdom manifest in his entire deportment "the meekness and gentleness of Christ." (*R. Wardlaw, D.D.*) *A sham religion useless*:—This paragraph is, in fact, simply a continuation of the uncompromising attack upon sham religion which is the main theme throughout a large portion of the Epistle. St. James first shows how useless it is to be an eager hearer of the Word, without also being a doer of it. Next he exposes the inconsistency of loving one's neighbour as oneself if he chances to be rich, and neglecting or even insulting him if he is poor. From that he passes on to prove the barrenness of an orthodoxy which is not manifested in good deeds, and the peril of trying to make words a substitute for works. And thus the present section is reached. Throughout the different sections it is the empty religiousness which endeavours to avoid the practice of Christian virtue, on the plea of possessing zeal, or faith, or knowledge, that is mercilessly exposed and condemned. "Deeds! deeds! deeds!" is the cry of St. James; "these ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone." Without Christian practice, all the other good things which they possessed or professed were savourless salt. (*A. Plummer, D.D.*)

Ver. 14. **Bitter envying and strife in your hearts.**—*Envying and strife*:—1. Envy is the mother of strife. They are often coupled (Rom. i. 29, xiii. 13; 1 Cor. iii. 3; 2 Cor xii. 20; Gal. v. 20). Envy is the source of all heresies. Arius envied Peter of Alexandria, and thence those bitter strifes and persecutions. It must needs be so. Envy is an eager desire of our own fame, and a maligning of that which others have. Well, then, "let nothing be done through strife and vainglory" (Phil. ii. 3). Scorn to act out of that impulse. Should we harbour that corruption which betrayed Christ, enkindled the world, and poisoned the Church? 2. There is nothing in the life but what was first in the heart (Matt. xv. 19). The heart is the fountain, keep it pure; be as careful to avoid guilt as shame. If you would have the life holy before men, let the heart be pure before God; especially cleanse the heart from strife and envy. Strife in the heart is worst; the words are not so abominable in God's eye as the will and purpose. Strife is in the heart when it is cherished there, and anger is soured into malice, and malice bewrayeth itself by debates or desires of revenge; clamour is naught, but malice is worse. 3. Envious or contentious persons have little reason to glory in their engagements. Envy argueth either a nullity or a poverty of grace; a nullity where it reigneth, a weakness where it is resisted but not overcome (Gal. v. 24). 4. Envy and strife goeth often under the mask of zeal. These were apt to glory in their carnal strifes; it is easy to take on a pretence of religion, and to baptize envious contests with a glorious name. 5. Hypocrisy and carnal pretences are the worst kind of lies. The practical lie is worst of all; by other lies we deny the truth, by this we abuse it; and it is worse sometimes to abuse an enemy than to destroy him. (*T. Manton.*) *The nature, causes, and consequences of envy*:—I. WHAT ENVY IS, AND WHEREIN THE NATURE OF IT CONSISTS. Moralists generally give us this description of it: that it is a depraved affection or passion of the mind, disposing a man to hate or malign another for some good or excellency belonging to him, which the envious person judges him unworthy of, and which for the most part he wants himself. Or yet more briefly: envy is a certain grief of mind conceived upon the sight of another's

felicity, whether real or supposed. So that we see that it consists partly of hatred, and partly of grief. In respect of which two passions, and the proper actings of both, we are to observe, that as it shows itself in hatred, it strikes at the person envied; but as it affects a man in the nature of grief, it recoils and does execution upon the envier; both of them are hostile affections, and vexatious to the breast which harbours them. II. WHAT ARE THE GROUNDS AND CAUSES OF ENVY. 1. On the part of the person envying. (1) Great malice and baseness of nature. (2) An unreasonable grasping ambition. It is remarked of Alexander as a very great fault, and, in truth, of that nature, that one would wonder how it could fall upon so great a spirit, namely, that he would sometimes carp at the valorous achievements of his own captains. He thought that whatsoever praise was bestowed upon another was taken from him. (3) Another cause of envy is an inward sense of a man's own weakness and inability to attain what he desires and would aspire to. (4) Idleness often makes men envy the high offices, honours, and accomplishments of others. 2. On the part of the person envied. (1) Great abilities and endowments of nature. (2) The favour of princes and great persons. (3) Wealth, riches, and prosperity. (4) A fair credit, esteem, and reputation in the world. III. THE EFFECTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF ENVY. 1. First of all, this ill quality brings confusion and calamity upon the envious person himself who cherishes and entertains it, and, like the viper, gnaws out the bowels which first conceived it. It is indeed the only act of justice that it does, that the guilt it brings upon a man it revenges upon him too, and so torments and punishes him much more than it can afflict or annoy the person who is envied by him. We know what the poet says of envy; and it is with the strictest truth, without the least hyperbole, that Phalaris's brazen bull, and all the arts of torment invented by the greatest masters of them, the Sicilian tyrants, were not comparable to those that the tyranny of envy racks the mind of man with. For it ferments and boils in the soul, putting all the powers of it into the most restless and disorderly agitation. 2. In the next place, consider the effects of envy, in respect of the object of it, or the person envied; and these may be reduced to the following three. (1) A busy, curious inquiry, or prying into all the concerns of the person envied and maligned; and this, no doubt, only as a step or preparative to those further mischiefs which envy assuredly drives at. (2) Calumny, or detraction. Has a man done bravely, and got himself a reputation too great to be borne down by any base and direct aspersions? Why, then, envy will seemingly subscribe to the general vogue in many or most things; but then it will be sure to come over him again with a sly oblique stroke in some derogating *but* or other, and so slide in some scurvy exception, which shall effectually stain all his other virtues; and like the dead fly in the apothecary's ointment, which (Solomon tells us) never fails to give the whole an offensive savour. (3) The last and grand effect of envy, in respect of the person envied, is his utter ruin and destruction; for nothing less was intended from the very first, whatsoever comes to be effected in the issue. Lessons: 1. The extreme vanity of even the most excellent and best esteemed enjoyments of this world. Shadows do not more naturally attend shining bodies than envy pursues worth and merit, always close at the very heels of them, and like a sharp blighting east wind, still blasting and killing the noblest and most promising productions of virtue in their earliest bud; and, as Jacob did Esau, supplants them in their very birth. 2. This may convince us of the safety of the lowest, and the happiness of a middle condition. Only power and greatness are prize for envy; whose evil eye always looks upwards, and whose hand scorns to strike where it can place its foot. Life and a bare competence are a quarry too low for so stately a vice as envy to fly at. And therefore men of a middle condition are indeed doubly happy. (1) That, with the poor, they are not the objects of pity; nor (2), with the rich and great, the mark of envy. 3. We learn from hence the necessity of a man's depending upon something without him, higher and stronger than himself, even for the preservation of his ordinary concerns in this life. Nothing can be a greater argument to make a man fly, and cast himself into the arms of Providence, than a due consideration of the nature and the workings of envy. (*R. South, D.D.*) *Envy the worst of sins*:—Envy, says an old writer, is, in some respects, the worst of all sins; for when the devil tempts to them, he draws men by the bait of some delight; but the envious he catches without a bait, for envy is made up of bitterness and vexation. Another man's good is the envious man's grief. Nothing but misery pleases him, nor is anything but misery spared by him. Every smile of another fetches a sigh from him. To him bitter things are sweet, and sweet bitter. And whereas the enjoyment of good is unpleasant

without a companion, the envious would rather want any good than that another should share with him. It is recorded that a prince once promised an envious and a covetous man whatever they pleased to ask of him. The promise, however, was suspended upon this condition, that he who asked *last* should have twice as much as he who asked *first*. Both, therefore, were unwilling to make the first request; but the prince, perceiving this reluctance, commanded the envious man to be the first petitioner. His request was this—that one of his own eyes should be put out, that so *both* the eyes of the covetous man should be put out also. Truly envy, like jealousy, is cruel as the grave! It is its own punishment—a scourge not so much to him upon whom it is set, as to him in whom it is. *Boasting in evil principles:*—"Bitter envying and strife in the heart" are things in the very indulgence of which some men actually "glory." They call them exhibitions of a manly nature, and indications of an honourable pride. Alas! alas! These are mean and ignoble, as well as vile and criminal, affections of the soul. They degrade, as well as defile, the man in whom they dwell. But there are others who, without boasting of these evil principles, suppose that, in spite of them, they are pious and religious men—the children of God and the heirs of heaven. These, too, are grievously deceived. Love pervades the religion of Jesus Christ, and must needs be a paramount and prevailing principle in the regenerated soul. In applying to this state of character and experience the name of "wisdom," the apostle uses one of its current names, and suggests what opinion is frequently formed of it in this misguided world, but assuredly does not sympathise with that opinion. And how dark is the description which he gives of that very thing to which he attaches the name of "This wisdom"! (*A. S. Patterson, D.D.*) *Universality of envy:*—Envy is a weed that grows in all soils and climates, and is no less luxuriant in the country than in the court; it is not confined to any rank of men or extent of fortune, but rages in the breasts of all degrees. Alexander was not prouder than Diogenes; and it may be, if we would endeavour to surprise it in its most gaudy dress and attire, and in the exercise of its full empire and tyranny, we should find it in schoolmasters and scholars, or in some country lady, or the knight, her husband; all which ranks of people more despise their neighbours than all the degrees of honour in which courts abound; and it rages as much in a sordid affected dress as in all the silks and embroideries which the excess of the age and the folly of youth delight to be adorned with. Since, then, it keeps all sorts of company, and wriggles itself into the liking of the most contrary natures and dispositions, and yet carries so much poison and venom with it, that it alienates the affections from heaven, and raises rebellion against God Himself, it is worth our utmost care to watch it in all its disguises and approaches, that we may discover it in its first entrance, and dislodge it before it procures a shelter or retiring-place to lodge and conceal itself. (*Lord Clarendon.*) *Envy is a pure soul-sin:*—Having least connection with the material or animal nature, and for which there is the least palliation in appetite or in any extrinsic temptation. Its seat and origin is super-carnal, except as the term carnal is taken, as it sometimes is by the apostle, for all that is evil in humanity. A man may be most intellectual, most free from every vulgar appetite of the flesh; he may be a philosopher, he may dwell speculatively in the region of the abstract and the ideal, and yet his soul be full of this corroding malice. Envy is also the most purely evil. Almost every other passion, even acknowledged to be sinful, has in it somewhat of good or appearance of good. But envy or hatred of a man for the good that is in him, or in any way pertains to him, is evil unalloyed. It is the breath of the old serpent. It is pure devil, as it is also purely spiritual. It is a soul-poison, yet acting fearfully upon the body itself, bringing more death into it than seemingly stronger and more tumultuous passions that have their nearer seat in the fleshy nature. Solomon describes it as "rottenness in the bones" (Prov. xiv. 30). All bad passions are painful, but envy has a double barb to sting itself. **Lie not against the truth.**—*Lying against the truth:*—They professed the faith of the truth. But the indulgence and manifestation of such tempers of mind was a "lie against the truth" which they professed. It was not merely a lie against their profession of it. Then all would have been right. Those who witnessed their tempers and behaviour would have been led only to conclude that their profession was unsound, and had no corresponding reality; that they were either self-deceivers or hypocrites. And this would have been the right conclusion. But they "lied against the truth." While they professed to believe it, and acted inconsistently with it, they bore to the world a false testimony—a practical testimony much more apt to be credited than a verbal one—with regard to its real nature and

its legitimate influence. Everything of the kind is a practical lie. It is "bearing false witness" against the truth of God, and, consequently against the God of truth. It is leading the world to erroneous estimates; and while dishonouring to God, is ruinous to souls. And let us see that we generalise the principle. It is true of all inconsistences, as well as of those here specified. The charge of "lying against the truth" bears upon every one who assumes the name of Christian, while "walking," in any part of his conduct, "according to the course of this world." As the Jews of old belied their God and their religion, when, on "entering among the heathen," they acted so wickedly as to lead the heathen to say, with a scornful taunt—"These are the people of Jehovah, and are come forth out of His land"!—so is it, alas, among the heathen still, in regard to the multitudes who go amongst them, from our own or other countries called Christian, bearing the Christian name, while in the general course of their conduct they are utterly *un*christian. There is hardly a more serious obstacle in the way of their success with which missionaries have to contend than this. O let us beware of throwing any such stumbling-block in the way of an ungodly world—any such obstacle in the way of the progress of the Redeemer's cause. Upon all our words and all our actions let there ever be the impress of the truth—that, like Demetrius, we may "have good report of all men, and of the truth itself":—and that thus our characters may attest the Divine origin of the gospel by presenting to men a manifestation of its Divine influence. (*R. Wardlaw, D.D.*)

Vers. 15, 16. **This wisdom descendeth not from above.**—*The wisdom that is from below*:—There are two characteristics here specified which we shall find are given as the infallible signs of the heavenly wisdom; and their opposites as signs of the other. The heavenly wisdom is fruitful of good deeds, and inspires those who possess it with gentleness. The other wisdom is productive of nothing really valuable, and inspires those who possess it with contentiousness. This test is a very practical one, and we can apply it to ourselves as well as to others. How do we bear ourselves in argument and in controversy? Are we serene about the result, in full confidence that truth and right should prevail? Are we desirous that truth should prevail, even if that should involve our being proved to be in the wrong? Are we meek and gentle towards those who differ from us? or are we apt to lose our tempers and become heated against our opponents? If the last is the case we have reason to doubt whether our wisdom is of the best sort. "In meekness of wisdom." On this St. James lays great stress. The Christian grace of meekness is a good deal more than the rather second-rate virtue which Aristotle makes to be the mean between passionateness and impassionateness, and to consist in a due regulation of one's angry feelings (Eth. Nic. IV. v.). It includes submissiveness towards God, as well as gentleness towards men; and it exhibits itself in a special way in giving and receiving instruction, and in administering and accepting rebuke. It was, therefore, just the grace which the many would-be teachers, with their loud professions of correct faith and superior knowledge, specially needed to acquire. "But if," instead of this meekness, "ye have bitter jealousy and faction in your heart, glory not, and lie not against the truth." With a gentle severity St. James states as a mere supposition what he probably knew to be a fact. There was plenty of bitter zealousness and party spirit among them; and from this fact they could draw their own conclusions. It was an evil from which the Jews greatly suffered; and a few years later it hastened, if it did not cause, the overthrow of Jerusalem. This "jealousy" or zeal (ζῆλος) itself became a party name in the fanatical sect of the Zealots. It was an evil from which the primitive Church greatly suffered, as passages in the New Testament and in the sub-Apostolic writers prove; and can we say that it has ever become extinct? Jealousy or zeal may be a good or a bad thing, according to the motive which inspires it. To make it quite plain that it is to be understood in a bad sense here, St. James adds the epithet "bitter" to it, and perhaps thereby recalls what he has just said about a mouth that utters both curses and blessings being as monstrous as a fountain spouting forth both bitter water and sweet. Moreover, he couples it with "faction" (ἐριθεία), a word which originally meant "working for hire," and especially "weaving for hire" (Isa. xxxviii. 12), and thence any ignoble pursuit, especially political canvassing, intrigue, or factiousness. What St. James seems to refer to in these two words is bitter religious animosity; a hatred of error (or what is supposed to be such), manifesting itself, not in loving attempts to win over those who are at fault, but in bitter thoughts and words and party combinations. "Glory not, and lie not against the

truth." To glory with their tongues of their superior wisdom, while they cherished jealousy and faction in their hearts, was a manifest lie, a contradiction of what they must know to be the truth. In their fanatical zeal for the truth, they were really lying against the truth, and ruining the cause which they professed to serve. Of how many a controversialist would that be true; and not only of those who have entered the lists against heresy and infidelity, but of those who are preaching a crusade against vice! "This wisdom is not a wisdom that cometh down from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish." The wisdom which is exhibited in such a thoroughly un-christian disposition is of no heavenly origin. It may be a proof of intellectual advantages of some kind, but it is not such as those who lack it need pray for (chap. i. 5), nor such as God bestows liberally on all who ask in faith. And then, having stated what it is not, St. James tells in three words, which form a climax, what the wisdom on which they plume themselves, in its nature, and sphere, and origin, really is. It belongs to this world, and has no connection with heavenly things. Its activity is in the lower part of man's nature, his passions, and his human intelligence, but it never touches his spirit. And in its origin and manner of working it is demoniacal. Not the gentleness of God's Holy Spirit, but the fierce recklessness of Satan's emissaries, inspires it. Does this seem to be an exaggeration? St. James is ready to justify his strong language. "For where jealousy and faction are, there is confusion and every vile deed." And who are the authors of confusion and vile deeds? Are they to be found in heaven, or in hell? Is confusion, or order, the mark of God's work? Jealousy and faction mean anarchy; and anarchy means a moral chaos in which every vile deed finds an opportunity. We know, therefore, what to think of the superior wisdom which is claimed by those in whose hearts jealousy and faction reign supreme. The professed desire to offer service to God is really only a craving to obtain advancement for self. Self-seeking of this kind is always ruinous. It both betrays and aggravates the rottenness that lurks within. It was immediately after there had been a contention among the apostles, "which of them was accounted to be greatest" (Luke xxii. 24), that they "all forsook Him and fled." (*A. Plummer, D.D.*) *The wisdom which is not from above:*—I. THE PRESCRIBED COURSE: THAT REQUIRED BY AND INDICATIVE OF TRUE WISDOM (ver. 13). "Wise"—that is, gifted with spiritual discernment and discretion, with capacity and enlightenment in regard to Divine things. "Endued with knowledge"—having large information, acquaintance with facts, doctrines, precepts. The ablest, those whose intellects are the clearest and whose judgments are the soundest, must work in the dark; they must stumble and err egregiously if they lack requisite information. Religion is often represented under this aspect. It is the highest and, indeed, the only true wisdom. Well, how is such a person to proceed? How is he to prove his character, how evince his wisdom? "Let him show out of a good conversation his works." He is to manifest what he really is, to give open evidence of his spiritual understanding and prudence. His light is to shine, his principles are to appear. The grand general effect is to be a consistent, godly walk—a walk regulated by the doctrines and the precepts of Christianity. Out of it he is to show his works—that is, rising from the even tenor of his way, the fair and fertile field of holy living, special, individual works of faith and love are to stand forth prominent, conspicuous. These fruits of the Spirit are to come out as the separate, noticeable features, and prove the nature of the tree on which they are found growing. He adds, "with meekness of wisdom." Here is the disposition, the spirit in which their works were to be shown forth out of a good conversation. In it lies the special distinction and difference between the true and the false wisdom, which he unfolds in this passage. The expression is remarkable—"the meekness of wisdom"—that is, the meekness which is characteristic of wisdom, which is its proper attribute. Meekness is gentleness, mildness, submissiveness. Wisdom is a thing calm, quiet, peaceful. It is not fierce, violent, contentious. It is not passionate, disputatious, or tumultuous, It looks at matters with a steady, patient mind, and shapes its course with deliberation and caution. It knows how weak and prone to err the very best are, and what need there ever is for consideration and forbearance. Let us not mistake, however. This meekness is not a feeble, crouching, despicable thing; on the contrary, it is strong, noble, and victorious. It is consistent with the utmost firmness; and, indeed, that is saying little, for it is essential to true and enduring firmness. Jesus was meek and lowly in heart; He did not strive nor cry, when reviled He reviled not again, when He suffered He threatened not; and yet He was most perfectly stedfast, immovable as a rock in

the prospect of—yes, and under the pressure of—sorrows and sufferings, not only infinitely beyond human endurance, but even as far beyond human conception. And so, in all ages, the gentlest of His servants have been the strongest, the most stable and invincible. Think of the meek, lamb-like pair, Henry Martyn and Daniel Corrie, whose friendship was so close and whose characters were so similar. Where shall we find any more resolute, unbending than they were? It is also consistent with the most ardent zeal. Along with it, under it, there may be the warmest affections—a faith and love of no ordinary fervour and power. We see this in the sainted men to whom I have already referred. They were animated by a zeal which consumed them as that of their Divine Master did Him. Who of mortals dared more or accomplished more than Moses, the leader and lawgiver of Israel? And yet was not he the meekest of men? The prophet testifies, "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." II. THE OPPOSITE COURSE: WHAT IT IS AND WHAT IT INDICATES (ver. 14). "But if"—implying, not obscurely, that this was no mere supposition, but the actual and painful fact in too many instances—"ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts." The word rendered "envying" is literally zeal, but it often has the meaning of jealousy, emulation, rivalry. It originates in bitter feelings, not in attachment to truth, but in opposition to persons—in selfish, ambitious, crooked designs. Its root is evil. It appears in bitter actings, venting itself, as it does, in speeches and proceedings fitted to wound, alienate, exasperate. It scatters firebrands, reckless of feelings and of consequences. And it issues in bitter results, causing conflicts, separations, and manifold evils. "And strife"—rivalry. This is the natural consequence of such envying—such unhallowed and envenomed zeal. It is the parent of controversy, with all that passion and violence by which it is so often marked. He says, if ye have this "bitter envying and strife in your hearts." It is "in your hearts," not in your conduct, your proceedings. No; and the manner in which the thing is put here teaches, as it doubtless was designed to do, more than one important lesson. The spring of this whole evil lies within, in the region of the heart. It is all to be traced to its carnal lusts, its depraved principles and propensities. And it must be dealt with there, if dealt with thoroughly, dealt with to any good purpose. You can get rid of the fruits only by cutting down the deadly upas tree on which they grow so luxuriantly. Again, it intimates that there might be much of this envying and strife in the bosom, while it did not fully appear, but was skilfully disguised in the life. And still farther, it teaches that we are not to judge here by mere appearances; for as in one case our decision might be too favourable, as we have seen, so in another it might be the very opposite. It is not always what outwardly seems to be envying and strife that is so in reality. We are to contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints, and we may do it most resolutely without being in the least degree actuated by such a spirit. He says, if ye have these feelings in your hearts, "glory not, and lie not against the truth." "Glory not"—boast not of your alleged wisdom, pride not yourselves on any such supposed attainment. And "lie not"—bringing out still more strongly the contrariety, the direct and thorough antagonism. They professed to believe, and even presumed to teach, the Christian system. They set themselves up as its witnesses and advocates. Well, by the spirit they manifested, and the conduct to which it led, they flatly contradicted the truth, they misrepresented its whole nature and design. Missionaries, from India and elsewhere, tell us that this is perhaps the very greatest hindrance with which they have to contend, and that no argument is more frequently used or more difficult to combat. He now characterises the so-called wisdom of these parties. "This wisdom descendeth not from above" (ver. 15); or, more pointedly, is not such as descendeth from above—it is not that, it has nothing in common with that, which so descendeth. It is wholly different from the heavenly in its origin and nature. It is "earthly." It belongs to this lower, clouded sphere, this world of sin and sense, and bears throughout its impress. It is prevalent in earthly affairs. It may gain men a reputation for ability, for discretion, for sagacity, and raise them to professional or political eminence. Not to be despised in its own place, this has nothing spiritual and saving in its composition. It is marked by earthly principles. Its calculations and its plans are formed on the basis of the opinions, maxims, and habits which prevail in society. Self-interest and expediency go a great length with it, and often shut out all higher considerations of truth and duty. And it is devoted to earthly objects. It seeks not heavenly ends and interests, but those which are worldly. Gain rather than godliness is what it pursues. It labours for the meat which perishes, not for

that which endures unto everlasting life. "Sensual." What is intimated is, that this wisdom, however imposing it may seem, and however useful it may really be, pertains not to our nobler being—the soul—as it is when possessed and purified by the Holy Ghost. It is limited to the narrow, inferior domain of self, with its circle of objects and interests. It is unspiritual. Another feature yet remains, and the most repulsive of all—"devilish." It is demoniacal, satanic. Not from above, it is from below. The tongue was said to be set on fire of hell; and the wisdom which keeps company with envying and strife has the same origin. What a dark and dreadful description! This account of it he justifies by the effects which it produces. "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work" (ver. 16). The wisdom consists with, if not in, "envying and strife"; and where such a spirit prevails, what are its natural fruits, its inevitable results? The terms are the same as those used in the 14th verse, without the qualification of "bitter," that being understood, and not requiring repetition. "There is confusion"—disorder, anarchy, tumult, all kinds of agitation and disturbance. "And every work." They are productive of whatever is bad and base, of all sorts and measures of wickedness. There is no error, no folly, no vice, no crime to which they do not readily conduct. They shut out everything good, they open the door to everything evil. As the fruit reveals the species of tree on which it grows, so do the effects here the nature of those principles from which they proceed. (*John Adam.*) *Two kinds of wisdom distinguished:*—I. THERE IS ONE WISDOM EARTHLY, ANOTHER HEAVENLY, THAT CONDEMNED, AND THIS COMMENDED AMONG MEN. 1. Concerning the former, which is wicked wisdom (if we may call it wisdom, by the common speech of men so calling it), it is described here by three qualities. (1) It is earthly, such as savoureth altogether of the earth and of the world, and of worldly demeanour and manners. The wisdom of earthly and worldly minded men is to be proud, contentious, quarrellous, given to revenge every offence, every injury. (2) As earthly, so is this wisdom sensual, naturally blind in heavenly things. Such whereunto by common sense, men are carried as brute beasts, who, suffering injuries one of the other, forthwith either strike again or push with horn, or bite and tear with mouth, and so are avenged. Such wisdom is to be contentious and given to revenge; this wisdom is not purged, but corrupt with evil affections of nature. This proceedeth from those who, being carnal men, men natural, not regenerate, perceive not the things of God, neither can they understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. This is a part of the wisdom of the flesh, which is enmity with God, and neither is, neither can be, subject to Him. (3) It is devilish. The original of envy and contention, wherein the wicked worldlings repose wisdom, is from Satan himself, the author, the well-head of maliciousness, envy, contention among men, whereunto only through him are men moved. Now as the worldly and wicked wisdom is by properties noted, so is it also set down by effects, which follow contention and strife. Whereof St. James saith, "Where envying and strife is, there is sedition and all manner of evil works." Whereby he teacheth that sedition and all manner of evil works ensue and follow contention and strife among men, and therefore ought it with all carefulness and diligence to be avoided. II. Now as there is wisdom which is wicked, so ALSO IS THERE GODLY WISDOM, whereof St. James saith, "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without judging, without hypocrisy." Where the apostle in eight properties setteth down this heavenly wisdom unto men. (*R. Turnbull.*) **For where envying and strife is, there is confusion.**—*Envy and strife lead to confusion:*—That the life of man is unhappy, that his days are not only few, but evil, that he is surrounded by dangers, distracted by uncertainties, and oppressed by calamities, requires no proof. This is a truth which every man confesses, or which he that denies it denies against conviction. When such is the condition of beings, not brute and savage, but endowed with reason, and united in society, who would not expect that they should join in a perpetual confederacy against the certain or fortuitous troubles to which they are exposed? that they should universally cooperate in the proportion of universal felicity? that every man should easily discover that his own happiness is connected with that of every other man? This expectation might be formed by speculative wisdom, but experience will soon dissipate the pleasing illusion. Instead of hoping to be happy in the general felicity, every man pursues a private and independent interest, proposes to himself some peculiar convenience, and prizes it more as it is less attainable by others. When the ties of society are thus broken, and the general good of mankind is subdivided into the

separate advantages of individuals, it must necessarily happen that many will desire when few can possess, and consequently that some will be fortunate by the disappointment or defeat of others, and, since no man suffers disappointment without pain, that one must become miserable by another's happiness. The misery of the world, therefore, so far as it arises from the inequality of conditions, is incurable. Every man may, without a crime, study his own happiness if he be careful not to impede, by design, the happiness of others. In the prosecution of private interest, which Providence has either ordained or permitted, there must necessarily be some kind of strife. Where blessings are thrown before us as the reward of industry there must be a constant struggle of emulation. But this strife would be without confusion if it were regulated by reason and religion, if men would endeavour after lawful ends by lawful means. But as there is a laudable desire of meliorating the condition of life which communities may not only allow, but encourage, as the parent of useful arts; as there is likewise an honest contention for preference and superiority, by which the powers of greater minds are pushed into action; so there is likewise a strife, of a pernicious and destructive kind, which daily disturbs the quiet of individuals, and too frequently obstructs, or disturbs, the happiness of nations; a strife which always terminates in confusion, and which it is therefore every man's duty to avoid himself, and every man's interest to repress in others. This strife the apostle has, in his prohibition, joined with envying. And daily experience will prove that he has joined them with great propriety; for perhaps there has seldom been any great and lasting strife in the world of which envy was not either the original motive or the most forcible incentive. The ravages of religious enthusiasts and the wars kindled by difference of opinions may perhaps be considered as calamities, which cannot properly be imputed to envy; yet even these may often be justly suspected of rising from no higher or nobler causes. No man whose reason is not darkened by some inordinate perturbation of mind can possibly judge so absurdly of beings, partakers of the same nature with himself, as to imagine that any opinion can be recommended by cruelty and mischief, or that he, who cannot perceive the force of argument, will be more efficaciously instructed by penalties and tortures. The power of punishment is to silence, not to confute. Whenever, therefore, we find the teacher, jealous of the honour of his sect, and apparently more solicitous to see his opinions established than approved, we may conclude that he has added envy to his zeal, and that he feels more pain from the want of victory, than pleasure from the enjoyment of truth. I. BY WHAT TOKENS WE MAY DISCOVER IN OURSELVES OR OTHERS THE STRIFE WHICH SPRINGS FROM ENVY, AND ENDS IN CONFUSION. 1. That strife may well be supposed to proceed from some corrupt passion, which is carried on with vehemence, disproportioned to the importance of the end openly proposed. 2. It is a token that strife proceeds from unlawful motives when it is prosecuted by unlawful means. The man whose duty gives way to his convenience, who, when once he has fixed his eye upon a distant end, hastens to it by violence over forbidden ground, or creeps on towards it through the crooked paths of fraud and stratagem, as he has evidently some other guide than the Word of God, must be supposed to have likewise some other purpose than the glory of God or the benefit of man. 3. There is another token that strife is produced by the predominance of some vicious passion when it is carried on against natural or legal superiority. Thus, if we consider the conduct of individuals towards each other, we shall commonly find the labourer murmuring at him who seems to live by easier means. We shall hear the poor repining that others are rich, and even the rich speaking with malignity of those who are still richer than themselves. And if we survey the condition of kingdoms and commonwealths it will always be observed that governors are censured, that every mischief of chance is imputed to ill designs, and that nothing can persuade mankind that they are not injured by an administration either unskilful or corrupt. It is very difficult always to do right. To seem always to do right to those who desire to discover wrong is scarcely possible. Every man is ready to form expectations in his own favour, such as never can be gratified, and which will yet raise complaints if they are disappointed. II. THE EVILS AND MISCHIEFS PRODUCED BY THAT CONFUSION WHICH ARISES FROM STRIFE. That the destruction of order, and the abolition of stated regulations, must fill the world with uncertainty, distraction, and solicitude, is apparent, without any long deduction of argument. (*John Taylor, LL.D.*)

Vers. 17, 18. **The wisdom that is from above is first pure.**—*Characteristics*

of heavenly wisdom:—I. IT IS HALLOWED. On the spirit of the man who has it there has fallen a sacred hush, as on a temple which a god inhabits. Its precincts are consecrated to worship. All desecrating principles, maxims, thoughts, purposes are excluded. It has no doubtful expedients and utters no words of double meaning. It is clear, because it has been clarified. It is open to heaven and earth without concealments. It is chaste, seeking no unholy pleasures. II. IT IS PEACEABLE. It is peaceable, because it is pure. Men that have no false and wicked purposes cannot break the peace. There never was dissension between two friends, never a rupture in any Church, never a rebellion in any State, never a war between two countries, never a wicked controversy of any kind which did not have its origin in some impurity of soul. III. IT IS REASONABLE. It is not violent in its maintenance of its own convictions; it is not stubborn, unwilling to hear what may be said on the other side. There are men who deem themselves wise, who storm out what they believe to be the truth. Real wisdom does not so. Where there is a sober conviction of the right, and a firm faith in the final triumph of the right, all that a man has to do is to speak the truth in love. If any man holds an error, the wise man regards him as most unfortunate, and pities him, as a man in good health pities his neighbour whose eruptions show that he is diseased. Gentleness is not weak, and is not the product of weakness. It comes from being reasonable. None but the strong can be gentle; others may be soft and apathetic, but gentleness as much requires strength for its basis as the beautiful flowers and verdure require the strong ground of the geological formations. A gentle man gains by giving. He is not punctilious of his rights. He will maintain them, but always on grounds of reason, not of passion. He holds to his property, not because it is his, but for the reason that he is responsible for it. Just so a man who has this wisdom from above will not be violent in argument. He maintains his opinions, not because they are *his* opinions, but because he has formed them reasonably, and must maintain them reasonably and not passionately. So he will hear what others have to say. IV. IT IS PERSUADABLE. As the word which we have translated "reasonable" indicates the condition of the wise man's soul when he is striving to convince others, so this "persuadable" seems to indicate the posture of his soul when others are striving to convince him. It means that if he has made an error he will not keep wandering on because he is unwilling to retrace his steps. It means that he will not waste energy in endeavouring to hold an untenable position under the control of intellectual pride. It means that he can be won over by fair means and sound argument. He yields to no force that is not reasonable, as he employs no agency that is not reasonable. V. IT IS COMPASSIONATE. In a man of true celestial wisdom there is so much sympathy and compassion that it is perpetually bursting out into fruits of goodness, which are so profitable that all men acknowledge them. You cannot know so well the condition of the tree, but fruits are visible and palpable. Men know the tree by the fruit, as God knows the fruit by the tree. VI. IT IS NOT PARTISAN. It will not adhere to a party it loves, "right or wrong." It will not condemn the other party, "wrong or right." It will not oppress the poor when it happens to be rich, nor wrong the rich when it happens to be poor. Appeals on ground of caste, or class, or previous condition, will have no effect upon its judgment. It regards a man for what he is, not for what he has or has not been. VII. IT IS FREE FROM ALL HYPOCRISY. Against nothing did Jesus lift up His voice in more clear and terrible notes than against hypocrisy, which was a crying sin among the Jews. (*C. F. Deems, D.D.*) *The wisdom that is from above*:—I. WHAT IS WISDOM? 1. It is prudence, discretion, knowledge reduced to practice, and employed in the use of such means as are most suitable to accomplish the desired end (Prov. iii. 19, 20, viii. 12). 2. "The wisdom that is from above" is an inspired definition of the true religion; it is an attractive exhibition of that infallible knowledge which, having descended from heaven, discovers to us the most direct way to God; the means best calculated to make us lovingly acquainted with His holy law; the manner in which those means may be most easily and effectually used; and the happy results which flow from them. II. ITS DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS. 1. Pure. While religion regulates and transforms all the powers of the mind, its first and immediate effect is not on the understanding to make it more enlightened; or on the judgment to make it more correct; or on the imagination to make it more discursive and brilliant; or on the memory to make it stronger and more retentive; but on the heart, to purify it from all moral defilement, and to make it the more upright, inoffensive, and holy. 2. Peaceable. The design of His government is to induce

men to lay aside all causes of strife and alienation, and to promote unity and love. 3. Gentle and easy to be entreated. It is not rash, or authoritative, or fond of display; not rude or overbearing; not harsh or cruel; does not seek to fix upon others that which they disclaim, even though their words or conduct seemed to bear such an interpretation; and is willing to give preference to the sentiments or plans of others when they furnish evidence of superiority. It is not impatient when contradicted; or, if any misunderstanding arises, it is pacific rather than rigorous, complacent rather than censorious. 4. Full of mercy and good fruits. When it is said that "the wisdom from above is full of mercy," we learn that it is not implacable and parsimonious, but clement and liberal; not resentful and grudging, but forgiving and bountiful. "Full of good fruits," the fruits of good living; sympathising with those who are in trouble, showing kindness to such as are in distress, or by aiding those whose object it is to mitigate human woe in any of its multifarious forms, and to convert sinners from the error of their way. 5. Without partiality. Men of little minds or contracted views are easily dazzled with outward splendour, and, like children, count nothing good but what is gay and adorned with pomp. Hence they readily give a preference to that which is most attractive in form, and, in the spirit of conscious partiality, undervalue or look coldly on those of greatest worth, because they make the least pretensions. But "the wisdom that is from above" looks not on men "after the outward appearance"; it renders to every one his due, without being swayed by self-interest or worldly honour, and determined to do equal justice to all, according to their moral worth. 6. Without hypocrisy. "An Israel indeed" is a man "in whom is no guile," no fraud, no trick, no deceit; all he pretends is genuine; all he says is sincere. Lessons: 1. That there is a wide difference between the religion here described and that of many who bear the Christian name. 2. That it is both the duty and the privilege of all who bear the Christian name to live in possession of this heavenly wisdom. (*W. Lupton.*) *Wisdom from above:*—I. THE ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC OF GENUINE RELIGION. Now true religion may be denominated wisdom—1. As it directs the mind to the most glorious pursuits. 2. As it employs the most efficient means for the attainment of these objects. II. ITS HEAVENLY ORIGIN. 1. The contrivance of salvation was from above. 2. The Author of our salvation came from above. 3. The revelation of true religion is from above. 4. All the blessings of our religion are from above. III. ITS DISTINGUISHED ATTRIBUTES. 1. It is pure. Not absolute or angelic purity, but spiritual purity. The opposite of depravity and corruption. This purity is supernatural, real, and progressive. 2. It is peaceable. Not contentious. Not boisterous. It commences with the pacification of the conscience towards God. It produces a peaceful state of mind. 3. It is gentle. Hence the Christian resembles the dove, and not the vulture; the lamb, and not the lion. 4. Is easy to be entreated. Not stubborn or self-willed. 5. It is full of mercy. 6. Full of good fruits. 7. Without partiality. 8. Without hypocrisy. Application: 1. How important that we ascertain if our religion possess these essential attributes! 2. How happy those who experience in their hearts these heavenly fruits! 3. What a blessing is genuine religion to the world at large! (*J. Burns, D.D.*) *Wisdom or prudence:*—"I, wisdom," says Solomon, "dwell with prudence": hence wisdom and prudence, and the characters of wise and prudent, are often mentioned together. Prudence lies in wisely fixing upon a right end of all actions, and in wisely choosing the best means conducive to that end, and in using them at the best time and in the fittest manner. I. WHAT SPIRITUAL WISDOM IS, as it is an internal grace, or inward disposition of the mind, respecting Divine things; a man's duty, the salvation of his soul, and the glory of God. 1. It is, in general, grace in the heart: "wisdom in the hidden part" (Psa. li. 6; Prov. xvi. 21). This wisdom cometh from God, who gives it entrance, and puts it there (Prov. ii. 6). 2. Spiritual wisdom, in particular, is a right knowledge of a man's self; no man that is wise in his own eyes, and prudent in his own sight, knows himself; "there is more hope of a fool than of such." 3. True spiritual wisdom is no other than the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, which God commands to shine in the hearts of men. 4. True spiritual wisdom is no other than the fear of the Lord (Psa. cxi. 10; Prov. ix. 10; Job xxviii. 28). This includes the whole worship of God, internal and external, flowing from a principle of grace; it takes in the whole duty of man, which it is his wisdom to practice, internally and externally. 5. It is being wise unto salvation, or in things respecting that. II. WHEREIN THIS WISDOM PRACTICALLY SHOWS ITSELF. 1. In doing good things

in general. Such who are wickedly wise are wise to do evil; but such who are spiritually wise are "wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil" (Rom. xvi. 19); and these are capable of doing things both for their own good and for the good of others. 2. This spiritual wisdom shows itself in particular in a profession of religion. 3. This spiritual wisdom shows itself in a becoming walk and conversation. 4. This wisdom shows itself in observing the providence of God in the world and the dispensations of it: in making useful remarks upon it, and in learning useful lessons from it. 5. This spiritual wisdom shows itself in a man's concern about his last end and future state; how it will be with him at last, and how it will go with him in another world (Deut. xxxii. 29). III. FROM WHENCE THIS SPIRITUAL WISDOM COMES. "God understandeth the way thereof, and He knoweth the place thereof" (Job xxviii. 20-23), for it is with Him originally, and in full perfection, yea, it is in Him infinite, unsearchable: it is in His gift to bestow, and is to be asked of Him (chap. i. 5). IV. THE NATURE AND PROPERTIES OF THIS WISDOM. 1. It is from above—from God, Father, Son, and Spirit; it is conversant about heavenly things; it is celestial wisdom, and stands opposed to earthly wisdom in a preceding verse. 2. It is pure in itself and in its effects; productive of purity of heart, life, and conversation. 3. It is peaceable: it influences the professors of it to be at peace among themselves and one another, to cultivate peace in families, among neighbours, and even with enemies. 4. It is gentle: it makes those who have it to be gentle towards all men, moderate and humane, to bear the infirmities of the weak, to forbear and forgive one another injuries done. 5. It is easy to be entreated or persuaded to put up with affronts, to condescend to men of low estate, and not mind high things. 6. It is full of mercy and good fruits: it fills men with compassion to those in distress, and puts them upon acts of beneficence to the poor, according to their ability. 7. It is without partiality; without partiality to themselves, esteeming others better than themselves; and to others, showing no respect of persons. 8. It is without hypocrisy to God and man, not making a show of what they have not, and intend not to do: as it is a grace, it has a close connection with faith unfeigned, with a hope that is without hypocrisy, and with love which is without dissimulation. (*T. Hannam.*) *The heavenly wisdom:*—What a change passes on the scene! A bright, celestial form appears. A fair and fragrant landscape bursts upon the view. 1. The apostle commences his description of "the wisdom that is from above" with the statement, "It is first pure." It avoids and excludes what is false in doctrine, and what is vile in character and action; and this process leads the way and regulates the rest. 2. It is "then peaceable." It leads him who possesses it to "follow peace," to maintain peace, and to promote peace. The voices of the world are constantly exclaiming, "We are for war." 3. It is "gentle." It leads him to deal mildly with the broken heart, and even to use meekness towards "such as oppose themselves." 4. It is "easy to be entreated." 5. It is "full of mercy and good fruits." It awakens and sustains a practical kindness in the heart. 6. It is "without partiality"—a representation, probably, referring to the case of "respect of persons," as animadverted on in the second chapter. 7. It is "without hypocrisy." Itself genuine and true, it prompts and inclines to strict and consistent honesty in speech, and conduct, and profession. (*A. S. Patterson, D.D.*) *The heavenly wisdom:*—I. ITS PURITY. "First pure"—not in the order of time, but in importance, in the sense that it is the basal attribute of true wisdom. 1. Christ could not be the wisdom of God if He had not been the holiness of God, and we can never be wise if we are not pure. 2. But there is more implied than sinlessness: it means Divine and spiritual energy. Think of the purity of nature, how beautiful it appears when it is renewing its youth in spring. When the grass grows, the trees bud, and the leaves and flowers open, we see the working of the Divine energy bringing fresh forms of life before us, robed in the purity and beauty of the sanctuary of the Divine life. So in moral and spiritual beings their purity is a sign of the Divine energy which is working in and through them, keeping their thoughts holy and their lives sinless. II. ITS PEACEABLENESS. This means that inward peaceable temper which is the fruit of purity of heart, and is never to be found apart from purity. That Divine energy expels from man's nature all the elements of disorder, discord, and restlessness, and fills the soul with order, harmony, and heavenly peace. III. ITS GENTLENESS. This was a new spirit brought into the world by Jesus, and which should distinguish His followers from all other men. According to the text, no one is a gentleman in the highest sense of the word if he has not received and is not practising the wisdom that is from

above. To the Christian gentleman humanity is sacred, and he can never intentionally hurt the feelings and injure the reputation of others, and will burn in indignation against all that are guilty of such vile and unmanly conduct. IV. ITS PERSUASIVENESS. True wisdom shows itself, St. James seems to say, in that subtle yet gentle power to persuade and win, which we all feel when we come in contact with one who is clearly not fighting for his own rights, but for the cause of truth. The followers of Jesus speak not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but in the words of the wisdom that is from above, which fell from the mouth of the Incarnate Word. But there is more in this persuasiveness than the power of eloquent and earnest words of entreaty, for its mightiest influence will be felt through the holy lives and deeds of love and kindness of those who are possessors of this heavenly wisdom. V. ITS MERCIFULNESS AND FRUITFULNESS. The train of thought is carried on. Wisdom is suasive because she is compassionate. In dealing with the froward she is stirred, not by anger, but by pity, and she overflows, not with every vile deed, but with the good fruits of kindly acts. Her purity makes her hate sin with perfect hatred, but she loves the sinner with intensity, and yearns for his return from his sinful ways to walk in her ways of pleasantness and paths of peace. She returns a blessing for a curse, a smile for an insult, good for evil, and with a heart overflowing with benevolence she gives water and bread to her enemies. VI. ITS IMPARTIALITY. To suffer wrong to pass uncondemned is impossible to her, for she is first pure. She shows that there is an everlasting distinction between right and wrong, and that according to the necessity of her pure nature she is for the right and against the wrong in whatever form it may show itself. Her eyes that look with compassion upon the oppressed, flash lightnings of holy indignation against the oppressor, and from her mouth that speaks words of heavenly tenderness to the weak, the sorrowful, and the lowly, come thunderbolts against all selfishness, cruelty, sinful ambition, arrogancy of spirit, and pride of heart. And even in the objects of her greatest love and highest delight she detects the least sin and condemns it unreservedly. VII. ITS GUILELESSNESS. This wisdom is free from all dissimulation, deceit, and trickery, and is as pure as the light, as transparent as the crystal. Her Divine light in the soul illuminates man's whole nature, so that he is perfectly what he appears. (*Z. Mather.*)

Divine wisdom:—Our first thought in reading the description which the apostle gives of the Divine wisdom is this, that it is totally different from the notion of wisdom which we usually adopt. If you were to ask men to define wisdom, they would begin to recapitulate what we may call the intellectual powers of man. If we asked them to define wisdom as she applied herself to the different walks of life, they would tell us that in the statesman it was foresight; in the merchant it was the power of sagacity or shrewdness; in the barrister keenness; in the teacher insight; in the judge comprehensiveness. When we turn to the apostle he sets aside all these; he gives us no picture of logical powers, of clear discrimination, of power of judgment, or power of imagination, but he gives us a catalogue of moral qualities: it is pure, it is gentle, it is full of mercy, it is full of good fruits, it is easy to be intreated. And as he speaks of it our thought is, it is outside the ordinary conduct and the ordinary definitions of man. But I would ask you to see these two things. That in the first place it is the noblest and truest definition of wisdom, because it recognises the true greatness of man; and also that it is the noblest and truest wisdom because it is capable of universal application. It is, in the first instance, the noblest and truest because it, and it alone, recognises the true greatness of man. If you will but search the annals of the past, you will see it is far, far more in the character of man that greatness is to be found than in the skill and intellectual powers which that character possesses. A man may be brilliant in all these capacities, he may have a power to anticipate events just as the foremost in the land, but it seems to me he may be entirely wanting in the very one thing which—as the history of the past can show—alone can gain the confidence of peoples. How was it that in old Athens the Greeks preferred the slower genius of Nicias to the quicker and more brilliant capacities of Alcibiades? Because with the first the moral character was a guarantee that he would live to use his intellectual powers aright. Wherever you scan the story of the past you will find that the true influence of man is the solid power which is built up primarily and first of all of the character which lies in the background. The ability, this is but the colour of the robe; the character is its very texture, and men ask not what the colour is, but what is the durable character of the fabric; they ask not what are the brilliancy of his parts, not the loftiness of his imagination, not the depth of his

insight, but rather the solidity and dependableness of his character. And so he wrote rightly, did the apostle, to say that when you are tempted to win your ascendancy over your fellow-men by the biting jest, by the ready sarcasm, by the quick wit of the tongue, take heed lest in the temporary ascendancy you sacrifice the true greatness of your manhood. It is easy to wound by the sharp word, it is easy to make the spirit quail before the rough tongue, but it is a far nobler thing that the mouth should be filled with gentleness, that the heart shall be levelled with love and the character built up in purity. It is, then, the noblest and the truest definition, because it sets aside the mere accidents of intellectual power, and it sets before us a far nobler ideal of wisdom, that which is nearest to the wisdom of God, pure as our Master is pure, gentle as our Redeemer was gentle, and in the hours of His sorrow and His sympathy full of mercy and good fruits, and abundant as the Divine munificence. But if it is thus the noblest definition, our thoughts are struck by another question, and we ask ourselves, Is it possible to work it in the world? Whence do we seek our evidence? My brethren, there are three great spheres which appeal to and touch the life of man. One is the great sphere of the outer world. We look into the heavens above us, into the air around us, and to the earth beneath us, and follow the traces of God's influence—it is the great sphere of nature. We ask from the sphere of nature, and the answer will be given that the wisdom which is from above is indeed full of mercy, for behold the races of men how anxiously they have inquired concerning the God who made all these things. The orbs of the planets and the growth of the flowers tell us of that token of God the Father, tell us that there is a voice from nature that informs us we are not left orphans in His universe, and this is the answer. And men tell us to behold the evidences of design from the hand of God, but what do they draw from its tokens? They do not ask you to behold the designs of the universe, they do not ask you to look upon its beauty, but they ask you to behold the tokens of mercy. It is not that they can tell us of stupendousness of distances which take away the breath as they are contemplated, it is not that they tell of mixed design, or when they take the fragile flower, of its exquisite form and accuracy, but they say behold how, by a marvellous adaptation, the needs of man, and the needs of the feeblest of God's creatures, are anticipated. There is another sphere which touches us. I ask you not to look now upon the outer world of the material universe, but turn for a moment and see the world of history. It is that great world which exhibits the lessons of the past, it is that which men will call history, but which wiser men will call the pictures of God's providence. What is the answer upon this? I answer, it is again that the truest wisdom is found in the moral qualities of purity, gentleness, meekness, and mercy. For our first reading of history is itself a story of man, it is a story of dynasties, it is a story of change, that strange drama which has been going on through all ages. But when we look more closely we begin to read history from another light; it is to mark the deeds of men, it is the development of principles, it is bringing to the test of time what are the enduring powers of the world in which we find ourselves, and as I look back I find once more the powers that endure are the moral qualities which St. James has spoken of. Do you want a clear illustration? Go back nineteen centuries and watch the struggle that is going on. On the one side there is the vast consolidated power of Rome grinding down with its iron heel the nations of the world, heedless of the cries of man and the necessity of reform and purity. On the other side there is the little kingdom which is cradled first in the manger of Bethlehem, which expands in the upper chamber at Jerusalem, which carries its way and plants itself in various parts of the earth, and face to face it has struggled against the imperial power which seeks to crush, and the weapons of the Church are but gentleness, purity, meekness. Do I ask the apostle with what weapons he seeks to combat the world and overcome it, he says by pureness, by knowledge, by love unfeigned, by the Holy Ghost, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left. There shall be the design of the statesman, there shall be the power of the legislature, all combined to crush it; and on the other side the meek spirit of silence, of patience, and of love. There are the two in conflict, and I ask you now what is the result? The empire has ceased to be which has been founded upon force, but the empire which has been founded upon purity, upon mercy, and upon love, has spread itself everywhere. History has given back the triumph into the hand of moral wisdom, of purity and love. There is another voice which we can summon to our aid. It is not the voice which comes from the contemplation of the world without, or of the history of the past, but it is listening to the voice which speaks to the inner heart of man.

It is the sphere of religion. And, again, I say that the answer will be that the true wisdom is that which is built up of pureness, of love, and of mercy. Behold how many have gathered together the superstitions and the religions of the past, and they have trembled before the God of power, they have been ravished by the face of the god of beauty, but they have not been raised in the social scale, they have not found their hearts touched, for they have failed to cast off the cloak of their sin, and tread their own unworthy self beneath their feet till He came who moved through the world and whose life was one of purity—"Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" They bear witness to His guilelessness, "He did no sin, neither did guile proceed out of His mouth." They bear witness to His gentleness, for they were emboldened to creep to His feet to receive blessings at His hands, as well as His loving-kindness and His mercy. Or I go deeper. I take His religion, and I ask, What is its source and force? You have seen how it seems to spread itself everywhere, that it touches every condition of man, that when it stands face to face with various nationalities it seems to find no difficulty in pouring its beneficent stream into the vessels of whatever shape they may be. The answer is, it is a religion of purity, it is a religion of mercy, it is a religion of gentleness, it comes to man, and it says that purity is the description of the Church, it is the description of dignity, it is the description of humanity, it is the description of God. Here, then, from every voice, of the heart of man, of the history of man, and of the world of man, we get back the same truth that it is indeed the highest wisdom which has as its features gentleness, purity, and love. What, then, shall we say? I say there is the last appeal to our own hearts. My brethren, the glory of it lies in one thing more, and that is that it is a greatness and a wisdom that is open to all. The very power which makes men often so despondent is this, that they say the very walk of life they fain would tread is closed to them because of some weakness of which they are conscious. All men desire greatness; they desire, that is to say, to climb above themselves. Here, then, is the door open to the highest greatness. There is not a greater thing on earth than man; there is not a greater man than the man that has learnt purity, gentleness, and love. And so far more high and noble ambition infinitely than to climb into the high places of the earth, a nobler ambition than all that glittering rank can bestow is the ambition to be a perfect man in Christ Jesus, nearer Him in resemblance of character, in tenderness of heart, in gentleness of speech, nearer to Him in sanctity and purity of life—and this greatness is open to all. (*Bp. Boyd Carpenter.*) *Divine wisdom:*—I. VERY LOVELY, THOUGH VERY BRIEF, IS THIS DELINEATION OF TRUE GODLINESS. It is "wisdom from above." Wherein lies wisdom? and what is her true character? Wisdom is the choice of the best end, and the pursuit of it by the best means. It is more than knowledge; for we may know the best end, and we may know the best means, and yet we may neither pursue the one, nor employ the other. But wisdom differs from knowledge in this—that it is knowledge carried into practice; it is knowledge, not in the abstract, but in the concrete—knowledge, not in the head alone, but in the heart and in the life, wrought out, and carried into effect. Can there be any doubt, then, as to what is the noblest end of mortal man? When man fell from his Maker, he fell from his being's end. Now, the wisdom that comes from above has for its end and object to restore man to the pursuit of that high favour, and to put into his soul means for the attainment of that end. Every one that believes in Jesus is restored to God's love; every one that is led and renewed by His Spirit is "transformed" again "into His image." He, therefore, who is taught this wisdom, chooses God for his Father, Christ for his way, the Spirit for his life. This wisdom is "from above," not from beneath. The wisdom that is from beneath is "earthly, sensual, devilish," full of pride, and full of dark rebellion against God. Nor is the wisdom which "maketh wise unto salvation" taught of man, nor discovered by man. Mighty intellect avails not here; profound learning avails not here; acute understanding is baffled here. Wisdom that maketh wise is from above in the revelation; it is from above in the impartation to the soul. We have not to rest our faith on the decisions of men, or on the vain conjectures of would-be philosophers, who would be "wise above that which is written," or wise without what is written; but we have God's own blessed immutable truth, as the rock of our rest. It has stood, and it shall stand when all things else disappear. There can be no doubt, for God hath spoken: there can be no incertitude, for God hath sworn, "that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." Never lose sight of this in studying

Scripture: it is "wisdom from above." We too little study the Bible in this spirit; we too little remember that it is entirely God's, that it is in no sort of man or from man, and that therefore we are not to treat it as if it were man's. But it is "wisdom from above" in a still more intimate, and a still more solemn, even in a personal sense. It is "wisdom from above" in the record, and it is so in the revelation to the soul. "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Then there is light within; then there is salvation to the soul; then there is "wisdom from above": the Spirit teacheth, and the Spirit giveth life. II. SHOW THE IMMEDIATE PRACTICAL POWER AND INFLUENCE OF THIS DIVINE WISDOM WHEN THUS RECEIVED BY ANY MAN IN HIS SOUL. It is "first pure, then peaceable." Here is its beautiful order: here is the process that works in the soul. 1. It is pure; pure as contrasted with error in principle; pure as contrasted with impurity and uncleanness in moral affection. It is pure in both senses—(1) Pure in principle: the darkness gives way to the light: we are "brought out of darkness into marvellous light"; we are "translated from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son." What a wonderful revolution takes place in a man's intellect when the light of Heaven shines into it! He had notions before, but he had no convictions: but now notions become convictions, if they were right; and if they were wrong, however cherished, they are swept away as the mountain's mists in the morning, when the sun arises in his strength, and "the day-spring from on high" visits the world. (2) "The wisdom from above is first pure": pure in doctrine. It makes no compromise with error, either in the man's soul at first, or afterwards in his lips or his labours among others. (3) And then, as it is pure in doctrine, it is pure also in its power and transforming efficacy on the affections, and on all the moral properties of the soul. Yes, when God gives light to the understanding, He implants love in the heart. He gives "a clean heart" when He reveals "a right spirit." He purifies the heart by faith; and faith, working by love, conforms to Christ; and Christ loved makes all to follow in beautiful obedience; for when "we love Him, we keep His commandments": and when we keep His commandments, we walk in purity and peace. This is the purifying effect of "the wisdom which cometh from above." And if it be pure in the man's heart, it will be pure in the man's intercourse. He will dislike whatever defiles; he will "have no fellowship with the workers of darkness, but rather reprove them." Mark the emphatic word here. "The wisdom which is from above is first pure, then peaceable." To sacrifice truth to peace is perfidy to God and treachery to Christ. To sacrifice truth to conciliation is to sacrifice the substance to the shadow; I might say, to sacrifice the victim that can be offered to God on the altar of Satan. False peace, and false charity, and false liberalism are an abomination to God. "First pure": keep that ever as your order. But "then peaceable." Yes, never forget that the direct tendency of the gospel of Christ is as much to produce peaceableness of spirit, of conversation, and of disposition, as it is to produce purity in heart and in affection. (*H. Stowell, M.A.*) *Divine wisdom, as seen in the nature of the gospel*:—I. Revealed truth—the wisdom that is from above—is "FIRST PURE, THEN PEACEABLE." It shows how God may dwell with man, and yet not sacrifice His purity; how man may dwell with God, and yet not lose his peace. It neither tarnishes Divine holiness, nor crushes human hope. It guards first the righteousness of the Judge; thereafter and therewith it obtains the pardon of the criminal. It is in Christ crucified that the two apparent contradictions meet. The substitution of Christ for His people is the fulcrum which sustains alike the honour of God and the safety of believing men. God preserves His own purity, and yet lifts the lost into His bosom: the guilty get a free pardon, and yet the motives which bind them to obedience, instead of being relaxed, are indefinitely strengthened. II. Revealed truth—the wisdom that is from above—is "GENTLE AND EASY TO BE ENTREATED." This is not the view which springs in nature, and prevails in the world. Fear in the conscience of the guilty, after passing through various degrees of intensity and forms of manifestation, ever tends to culminate in the question, "Shall I give the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" See the result as it is exhibited in India. The chief gratification of a chief idol is the self-murder of his worshippers under the wheel of the truck that bears his weight. The wisdom that is from above is gentle; "a bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." The wisdom that is from above is easy to be entreated; nay, more, He tenderly entreats you—"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." III. Revealed truth—the wisdom that is from above—is "FULL OF MERCY AND GOOD FRUITS." So far

from being in all cases united, these two, in their full dimensions, meet only in the gospel. The administration of a government might be full of mercy, and yet destitute of good fruits: nay, more, the want of good fruit might be directly due to the fulness of mercy. Mercy to the full—an absolutely unconditional pardon to the guilty is in human governments inconsistent with the public good. In the gospel of the grace of God, absolute fulness of mercy to the guilty binds the forgiven more firmly to obedience. The wisdom which is exhibited in the covenant is full of mercy. God could not put more mercy in His covenant, for all His mercy is in it already. Woe to us if that which it contains comes short of our need. It is not a wider door of mercy that we want, but a larger liberty to sin. This Divine wisdom is also full of good fruits. The tree is good, its fruits are good, and it bears them abundantly. Either attribute is in itself precious; and there is an additional interest in the union of the two. If there had not been Divine wisdom in the plan, the profusion of mercy would have blasted in the germ all the promises of fruit. The mercy that is free to us was dearly bought by our Divine substitute. Justice was satisfied while the guilty were set free. There lies the peculiar feature of the mercy which God gives and sinners get through Christ. It does not encourage the forgiven to continue in sin. It makes the forgiven love the forgiver much; and love is the greatest, the only fulfiller of the law. IV. Revealed truth—the wisdom that is from above—is "WITHOUT PARTIALITY, AND WITHOUT HYPOCRISY." We are so much accustomed to partiality and hypocrisy in human affairs, that it becomes difficult to lodge in our minds the conception of an offer entirely equal, and an announcement absolutely true. Accustomed in the moral department of human things to a continual state of siege, we have contracted a corresponding habit of suspicion. We lack the tendency, and perhaps the power, to exercise a pure implicit trust. How shall we be brought, in very deed and in simplicity, to trust that God is true, although every man should be a liar? "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Take away this suspicious heart, and give a tender, trustful one. The Mediator's proposal for peace with God is—1. Without partiality:—offered alike to all. All the fallen are in need, and all alike. His own goodness will not admit the best into favour; his own badness will not keep out the worst. Grace, absolutely sovereign and free, is the main principle of the gospel. 2. Without hypocrisy:—truly offered to each. What have we here? Can the Supreme, consistently with His own honour, plead before His creatures, that He is not a hypocrite, making His offer appear more generous than it really is? Yes; such is His long-suffering condescension. All the repetitions of His offer are of this kind—the overflowings of a compassion that is more than full. He stands at the door and knocks; He pleads with sinners, Why will ye die? Strange measure of forbearance this! But is it needed? Do men deny or doubt the sincerity of the offer which the Messenger of the covenant has brought to the world? They do. Nor is it here and there a rare example of peculiar wickedness; it is the commonest sin I know. We do not speak this distrust; but we live it. I have seen a dog tried in this fashion: his owner took a full dish of finest human food from the table, as it had been prepared for the family, and set it before him, encouraging him by word and gesture to eat. The sagacious brute shrank back, lay down, refused, and gave many unmistakable indications that he would be too glad to eat, but he saw clearly it was all a pretence—it was too good for him, and never intended for him—and if he should attempt to taste it, the dish would be snatched away, while he would perhaps receive a blow for daring to take the offer in earnest. The picture, although its associations are less grave, possesses, in relation to our subject, the one essential quality of trueness. It represents, more exactly than anything I know in nature, the treatment which God's offer gets from men. We treat the offer as if the offerer were not sincere. Alas for the pitiful condition of sinful men!—refusing the great salvation, because it is so great that they cannot believe it is really intended to be given free to the unworthy. (*W. Arnot.*) *Divine wisdom, as seen in the effects of the gospel:*—I. THE NEW CREATURE—the work of the Spirit in believers—is "FIRST PURE, THEN PEACEABLE." 1. In relation to God. In His approach to you there was first purity and then peace; therefore, as an echo answers to the sound that waked it, the same two in the same order will characterise your approach to Him. As God would not come in peace to the sinful, except on the foundations of holiness, honoured first, true Christians, much as they desire peace, do not expect—will not ask it on other terms. He who is at peace in impurity has not received upon his heart the imperial seal of the King Eternal, but the counterfeit of some false pretender. 2. In relation to ourselves. Peace of conscience is sweet, whether it be false or true. The desire to avoid

or escape remorse is an instinct of humanity, acting as strongly and steadily as the desire to avoid or escape bodily pain. When I accept mercy through the blood of Christ, my desire for peace of conscience, one of the strongest forces in my being, becomes a weight hung over a pulley exerting a constant pressure to lift me up into actual righteousness. 3. In relation to the world around. Those who have, through faith, gone down with Christ in His baptism of blood to wash their sins away, acquire a depth and solidity of character which enables them to bear unmoved the tossings of a troubled time. Their life, "hid with Christ in God," bears, without breaking, all the strain of the storm. "He that believeth shall not make haste." In times of trial the deepest is steadiest. II. THE NEW CREATURE—the work of the Spirit in believers—IS "GENTLE, AND EASY TO BE ENTREATED." Although the lot of men is, on the whole, much more equal than it seems, yet at certain particular points some have more to bear and do than others. Hard knots occur in some persons as in some trees, while others are constitutionally smoother in the grain. But while I willingly confess that more gnarled natures must endure more pain in the process of being made meek and gentle, I hesitate to own that, in the end, these Christians remain ordinarily more harsh and ungainly than others. I think, although it is not a uniform law, it is, notwithstanding, a common experience, to find in the new man a very low place where in the old man there was a mountain-height. Where the old was harsh and overbearing, the new may be gentle and easy to be entreated; where the old was timidly yielding, the new may be faithful and bold. III. THE NEW CREATURE—the work of the Spirit in believers—IS "FULL OF MERCY AND GOOD FRUITS." It is a principle of the gospel that he who gets mercy shows mercy. The little cistern is brought into connection with the living spring, and the grace which is infinite in the Master, is transferred to the disciple in the measure of his powers. When a man is full of mercy in this sinning, suffering world, a stream of benevolence will be found flowing in his track, all through the wilderness. If the reservoir within his heart be kept constantly charged by union with the upper spring, there need be neither ebbing nor intermission of the current all his days, for opening opportunities everywhere abound. Let no disciple of Christ either think himself excused, or permit himself to be discouraged from doing good, because his talents and opportunities are few. Your capacity is small, it is true; but if you are in Christ, it is the capacity of a well. Although it does not contain much at any moment, so as to attract attention to you for your gifts, it will give forth a good deal in a lifetime, and many will be refreshed. IV. THE NEW CREATURE—the work of the Spirit in believers—IS "WITHOUT PARTIALITY, AND WITHOUT HYPOCRISY." These plants, though not now indigenous in human nature, may, when transplanted, and watched, and watered, grow there, and bear substantial fruit. 1. Without partiality. It is not the impartiality of indifference, but the impartiality of love. (1) No partiality for persons. Love the poor as well as the rich; the rude as well as the polished; the ungainly as well as the winsome. The redemption of the soul is precious, and the opportunity of applying it in any given case will soon cease for ever. (2) No partiality for peoples. Care equally for drunken Sabbath-breakers on the Clyde, and ignorant idol-worshippers on the Ganges. A certain proverb is much used, and much abused in our day, by persons who discourage Christian missions to the heathen: Charity begins at home. Expressing only half a truth, it is so employed as to be equivalent to a whole falsehood. It would be more true and more salutary if it were written in full: Charity begins at home, but does not end there. (3) No partiality for sins. A young man who had used for his own purposes a hundred pounds of his employers' money, as it was passing through his hands, told me in the narrow prison-cell where he was dreeing his punishment, that at the same time in the same city men were going at large and living in splendour, who had notoriously committed the same crime, but prudently committed it on a larger scale than he. I was compelled to own the fact, although, of course, I refused to accept it as an apology. Of the parties to the vices that grow in pairs, why is one accepted in the drawing-room, and the other banished to the darksome wynd? The wisdom which plans and practically sanctions this distinction has not descended from above. The Church, too, must learn to copy more closely the impartiality of her Head. She must not throw a mantle over one sin, while she brandishes the rod of discipline over another. The sin that excludes from the kingdom of heaven should exclude from the communion of saints. 2. Without hypocrisy. When a sinner, softened in repentance, lays himself for pardon along a crucified Christ, he takes on from the Lord a transparent trueness which tells distinctly whose he is, to every passenger he meets on the highway of life. (*W. Arnot.*)

The wisdom that is from above:—I. THE JUST MOTION OF WISDOM IN GENERAL. 1. True wisdom distinguishes the particular seasons and circumstances of action. All times and all circumstances will not bear all things. It is very possible to destroy the best-laid scheme by an ill-seasoned execution. Every duty to God claims a proper time, and so likewise every duty to our neighbours and ourselves. To gain upon men for their good, there are soft times of address, which a mere accident may present, when a word spoken fitly will have greater weight than the most powerful arguments on other occasions. These a wise man will carefully observe, and strike the iron while it is hot and capable of yielding. II. THE EXCELLENCY OF THIS WISDOM. 1. The origination of wisdom is from above. 2. It heightens the excellency of wisdom, that the objects about which it is employed are suitable to its sublime original. 3. The great end it advances shows its excellency. It not only sets us on the way, but puts us in the possession of true happiness at last. III. MARK THE DIVINE LINEAMENTS OF IT here touched by the pen of the apostle, and so form a judgment of its beauty and excellence. 1. It is pure. It is like the blessed Author of it. It is the image of God in the soul; resembles Him in that which is the beauty and glory of His nature, His holiness. 2. It is peaceable. Peace is the fruit of holiness, and, therefore, properly placed after it. A pure conscience keeps a calm breast, and disposes the soul to seek and keep peace with others. 3. It is gentle, that is, equal and moderate. 4. It is easy to be intreated, ready to oblige, pliable and condescending to anything for the good of others, that is consistent with a good conscience. 5. It is full of mercy and good fruits; compassionate and liberal; not resting in good words and fair speeches, but doing good works. 6. That we may not be blinded or biassed by prejudice, that we may not confine our good opinions or good deeds to any one party of men, the apostle adds, Wisdom is without partiality, will not suffer us to judge men's characters by their circumstances, to think well or ill of them by external appearances, and treat them accordingly. 7. Without hypocrisy. True wisdom can never be divided from integrity. No man can be wise without being honest. He that walketh uprightly walketh surely. IN CONCLUSION it follows: 1. That prayer is an indispensable duty on every soul of man. True wisdom is the gift of God; and no man can have the least room or reason to expect it without asking. 2. How foolish, sinful, and contrary to our holy religion are all uncharitable principles and practices! (*Wm. Beat.*) *Christianity—"the wisdom that is from above"*:—1. With propriety it is designated wisdom; for a God of wisdom is its author and its end, and it reveals a scheme of mercy in the device of which omniscience itself was exerted. Yes, with propriety is it called wisdom; for it teaches man to know the character of God, and the riches of God's love, the natural debasement of humanity, and the means that have been put in operation for securing his eternal weal. With propriety is it called wisdom; for it enlightens the mind, informs the judgment, and regulates the life. With propriety is it called wisdom; for it makes him who lives under its influence wise in the estimation of God Himself. Once more, with propriety is it entitled wisdom; for the end of it is to make men wise unto salvation. 2. Not less appropriately is it designated a wisdom that cometh from above. Its origin is indeed celestial; for it is a beam that issues from God the fountain of light. Its origin is celestial; for the angel of the covenant Himself came down from heaven to reveal its first promise, and make known to Adam the great truth on which it all depends. Yes, its origin is celestial; for without the teaching of the Holy Spirit its high lessons cannot be learned. (*Wm. Craig.*) *The heavenly origin of wisdom*:—The ancients, when speaking of any valuable art or discovery highly beneficial to mankind, commonly deduce its origin from heaven, and acknowledge that they owed it to the teaching of the gods. Thus fire is said to have been stolen from heaven; the useful arts of agriculture, and such like, are ascribed to the direction of such and such particular deities; and philosophy itself is said to have come down from heaven. (*F. Carmichael.*) *The wisdom which is from above*:—I. THE NATURE OF THIS WISDOM (ver. 17). Now what are its properties, what its distinctive features? 1. The most internal and fundamental of these is purity. It is so, both in its nature and in the influence which it exerts. It is holy and makes holy. 2. "Peaceable." This is the opposite of that characteristic of the false wisdom which the apostle had been speaking of, namely, "envying and strife." The true, the heavenly, is disposed to peace, it follows after, it delights in peace. It animates its possessor with such a spirit, so that he desires, though he cannot always secure, this blessing. 3. "Gentle"—mild, forbearing. It corresponds to the "meekness of wisdom" spoken of in a preceding verse. It is ranked by Paul among the

fruits of the Spirit (Gal. v. 22, 23). A really peaceable disposition may be connected with not a little roughness and harshness of manner. There may be a sternness, a severity which repels others, and does injustice to the genuine principles and affections of the bosom. This wisdom should subdue and soften the spirit, should infuse into it a real tenderness and sweetness, and it must so far as it is imparted and has free course. Yes; for it embraces a sense of our own obligations to infinite mercy, matchless long-suffering,—it assimilates us to Him from whom it all proceeds, for Christ is made unto His people, wisdom; and how conspicuous was this feature in His character! And it teaches us that such is the disposition which not only becomes us as Christians, but is the most effectual in winning over others to the faith of the gospel. 4. "Easy to be entreated"—readily persuaded, compliant. It is not obstinate, unbending, implacable. It is willing to learn, whoever may be the teacher, and however disagreeable may be the lesson. It is ready to listen to reason and remonstrance. It does not require much persuasion to induce it to forgive injuries and be reconciled to adversaries. It insists not on studious etiquette, nor on carefully adjusted and elaborately expressed acknowledgments. In this respect its possessors have the mind of Him whose ear is open to the cry of sinners, rebels, and who is always standing waiting to be gracious—ready to pardon. 5. "Full of mercy and good fruits." These two are closely connected in the mode of expression, and this accords with their real relation. Mercy is compassion, pity, and has respect to the offending and the miserable. It manifests itself with respect to temporal distress, and still more with reference to spiritual destitution. This wisdom has not merely a little of it, but is full of it, according to the text. The mercy which has its spring here, not only flows but overflows. It is cherished, not toward a narrow circle of objects, but one large and stretching far beyond those barriers which limit the sympathies of many. It is shown, not on rare occasions, but frequently, habitually, well-nigh as often as the appeal is made or the need discovered. And it is not a half-hearted thing, not a shallow, superficial feeling, soon exhausted and gone—for it is not only real but deep and enduring. 6. "Without partiality and without hypocrisy." The heavenly wisdom is impartial. It does not respect persons. Neither is it one-sided in its attachment to truth and duty. It does not choose this and reject that; but embraces the whole will of God in its regards. And it is equally unprejudiced with reference to the modes of usefulness, means and ways of doing good, being largely free from that narrow-mindedness which is so common in these respects, and which forces itself on our view in so many quarters. It is also "without hypocrisy." There is about it no feigning, no pretence, no insincerity. It is open, transparent, consistent. With it the reality and the semblance, the substance and the form, correspond. II. THE RESULT OF THIS WISDOM (ver. 18). It yields precious fruit—the fruit of righteousness. The expression may mean, either that the fruit springs from, or consists in, righteousness. We understand it in the latter sense. This is its substance, its nature. And so we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews of chastisement yielding "the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." Righteousness is conformity to the will of God, and largely taken, as it is here, embraces the discharge of all the duties we owe directly to Him, as well as those we are bound to perform toward our fellow-creatures. It is equivalent to holiness of heart and life in all its parts; indeed, to true religion in the whole compass of its personal influence and effects. (*John Adam.*) *The wisdom that is from above:*—The "first" and the "then" may be seriously misunderstood. St. James does not mean that the heavenly wisdom cannot be peaceable and gentle until all its surroundings have been made pure from everything that would oppose or contradict it; in other words, that the wise and understanding Christian will first free himself from the society of all whom he believes to be in error, and then, but not till then, will he be peaceable and gentle. This interpretation contradicts the context, and makes St. James teach the opposite of what he says very plainly in the sentences which precede, and in those which follow. He is stating a logical, and not a chronological order, when he declares that true wisdom is "first pure, then peaceable." In its inmost being it is pure; among its very various external manifestations are the six or seven beneficent qualities which follow the "then." If there were no one to be gentle to, no one coming to entreat, no one needing mercy, the wisdom from above would still be pure; therefore this quality comes first. Here "pure" must certainly not be limited to mean simply "chaste." The word "sensual," applied to the wisdom from below, does not mean unchaste, but living wholly in the world of sense; and the purity of the heavenly

wisdom does not consist merely in victory over temptations of the flesh, but in freedom from worldly and low motives. Its aim is that truth should become known and prevail, and it condescends to no ignoble arts in prosecuting this aim. Contradiction does not ruffle it, and hostility does not provoke it to retaliate, because its motives are thoroughly disinterested and pure. Thus, its peaceable and placable qualities flow out of its purity. It is "first pure, then peaceable." It is because the man who is inspired with it has no ulterior selfish ends to serve that he is gentle, sympathetic, and considerate towards those who oppose him. He strives, not for victory over his opponents, but for truth both for himself and for them; and he knows what it costs to arrive at truth. A critical writer of our own day has remarked that "by an intellect which is habitually filled with the wisdom which is from heaven, in all its length and breadth, 'objections' against religion are perceived at once to proceed from imperfect apprehension. Such an intellect cannot rage against those who give words to such objections. It seems that the objectors do but intimate the partial character of their own knowledge." It will be observed that while the writer just quoted speaks about the intellect, St. James speaks about the heart. The difference is not accidental, and it is significant of a difference in the point of view. The modern view of wisdom is that it is a matter which mainly consists in the strengthening and enrichment of the intellectual powers. Increase of capacity for acquiring and retaining knowledge; increase in the possession of knowledge: this is what is meant by growth in wisdom. And by knowledge is meant acquaintance with the nature and history of man, and with the nature and history of the universe. All this is the sphere of the intellect rather than of the heart. The purification and development of the moral powers, if not absolutely excluded from the scope of wisdom, is commonly left in the background and almost out of sight. What St. James says here is fully admitted: the highest wisdom keeps a man from the bitterness of party spirit. But why? Because his superior intelligence and information tell him that the opposition of those who dissent from him is the result of ignorance, which requires, not insult and abuse, but instruction. St. James does not dissent from this view, but he adds to it. There are further and higher reasons why the truly wise man does not rail at others, or try to browbeat and silence them. Because, while he abhors folly, he loves the fool, and would win him over from his foolish ways; because he desires not only to impart knowledge, but to increase virtue; and because he knows that strife means confusion, and that gentleness is the parent of peace. Christians are charged to be "wise as serpents, but harmless as doves." "Full of mercy and good fruits." The wisdom from above is not only peaceable, reasonable, and conciliatory, when under provocation or criticism, it is also eager to take the initiative in doing all the good in its power to those whom it can reach or influence. The intellectual miser, who gloats over the treasures of his own accumulated knowledge, and smiles with lofty indifference upon the criticisms and squabbles of the imperfectly instructed, has no share in the wisdom that is from above. He is peaceful and moderate, not out of love and sympathy, but because his time is too precious to be wasted in barren controversy, and because he is too proud to place himself on a level with those who would dispute with him. No selfish arrogance of this kind has any place in the character of the truly wise. His wisdom not only enlightens his intellect, but warms his heart and strengthens his will. "Without variance, without hypocrisy." These are the last two of the goodly qualities which St. James gives as marks of the heavenly wisdom. Similarity in sound, which cannot well be preserved in English, has evidently had something to do with their selection (*ἀδιάκριτος, ἀνυπόκριτος*). The first of the two has perplexed translators. Of the various possible meanings of the word before us we may prefer "without doubtfulness." The wisdom from above is unwavering, steadfast, single-minded. Thus Ignatius charges the Magnesians (xv.) to "possess an unwavering spirit" (*ἀδιάκριτον πνεῦμα*), and tells the Trallians (i.) that he has "learned that they have a mind unblamable and unwavering in patience" (*ἀδιάκριτον ἐν ὑπομονῇ*). And Clement of Alexandria (*Pæd.* II. iii., p. 190) speaks of "unwavering faith" (*ἀδιακρίτῳ πίστει*), and a few lines farther on he reminds his readers, in words that suit our present subject, that "wisdom is not bought with earthly coin, nor is sold in the market, but in heaven." If he had said that wisdom is not sold in the market, but *given* from heaven, he would have made the contrast both more pointed and more true. "The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for them that make peace." The Greek may mean either "*for* them that make peace," or "*by* them that make peace"; and we need not attempt to decide. In either case

it is the peacemakers who sow the seed whose fruit is righteousness, and the peacemakers who reap this fruit. The whole process begins, progresses, and ends in peace. (*A. Plummer, D.D.*) *The seven qualities of wisdom*:—The seven qualities which James attributes to the wisdom from above are nothing but the seven colours of the one ray of light of heavenly truth, which has been revealed and has appeared in Christ Himself. He is therefore supremely entitled to the name "the Wisdom of God." (*Lange's Commentary.*) *The sequence* is that of thought, not of time. It is not meant, *e.g.*, that purity is an earlier stage of moral growth in wisdom than peace, but that it is its foremost attribute. (*Dean Plumptre.*) *Peaceable*:—The person endowed with this will not indeed give up the fundamentals of religion, the articles of faith, under the notion of being peaceable. He will not sit by an unconcerned spectator, void of all concern and zeal, while others are doing this. He will not sacrifice good order and government in the Church of God to the caprice or clamours of enthusiasm or faction. No; this is not being peaceable, but a criminal lukewarmness and indifference unworthy of a Christian. In such cases, however peaceable he is otherwise, he will within his proper sphere contend most earnestly for the faith. (*Wm. Thorold, M.A.*) *Gentleness*:—The Archbishop of Canterbury, speaking after Earl Granville had unveiled the memorial to his predecessor, adorned the occasion by a reference to the secret of the beautiful life of Dr. Tait. "I have heard," said he, "and I believe it is true, that on the first day of his wedded life he and his bride pledged themselves to each other that they would never quarrel with any one, and I believe that pledge was kept to the end." This memory is better than any memorial in marble. *Power of gentleness*:—Morning by morning God's great mercy of sunshine steals upon a darkened world in still, slow, self-impartation; and the light which has a force that has carried it across gulfs of space that the imagination staggers in trying to conceive, yet falls so gently that it does not move the petals of the sleeping flowers, nor hurt the lids of an infant's eyes, nor displace a grain of dust. So should we live and work, clothing all our power in tenderness, doing our work in quietness, disturbing nothing but the darkness, and with silent increase of beneficent power filling and flooding the dark earth with healing beams. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) **Full of mercy and good fruits.**—"Mercy" may here be taken for the inward principle, and "good fruits" for the effect of this principle in our outward actions. Divine wisdom fills men with tenderness and compassion towards those that are miserable in any respect, whether it be from their infirmities of body or mind, or from any calamity that befals them from without; it disposes them to look on the case of others as if it were their own; to have an inward feeling of their unhappiness, and consequently to do whatever lies in their power for their release or assistance; to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to visit the sick, to comfort the disconsolate, to instruct the ignorant, to admonish and reclaim transgressors; these are the good fruits which naturally spring from the mercy here mentioned, of which the apostle tells us the wise man is full. True wisdom will be particularly tender and compassionate towards those who have erred from the right path, either in their principles or practice, inclining rather to save than to destroy them, and trying every possible laudable means of bringing them back to a right mind. (*F. Carmichael.*) *Full of mercy and of good fruits*:—Far from being savage, unrelenting, or cruel, it feels the Godlike impressions of pity and compassion towards every proper object, the unfortunate and the miserable; it is touched with a strong sense of the miseries of human nature; it cannot but weep with those that weep, and commiserate and assist the indigent and the distressed; it is not content to afford them the cheap offer of mere verbal pity only, of the eye or of the tongue, but will add the real and substantial one of actual aid in proportion to their wants and its own ability; it will not only be full of mercy but full of good fruits likewise. By which last expression we may observe how valuable these works of mercy are in the sight of God, when He who is the blessed author and adorable fountain of all good calls them good; good by way of eminence, not indeed the only way of doing good, yet a principal one, a way most acceptable to Him, most beneficial to man, good in its nature, in its principle, in its fruits and consequences, good to those who receive, and superlatively good to those who truly and religiously practice it. (*Wm. Thorold, M.A.*) **Without partiality.**—*Superior to a narrow spirit*:—The person who is endowed with this heavenly wisdom is above that narrow and selfish spirit which men who act upon worldly motives are always of, who are inclined to think well of, and to wish and do well to such only as are of the same opinion or party, sect, or persuasion with themselves. No, the truly wise and the good man is a man of a

more enlarged, a more generous, a more Christian spirit and disposition. He is not unmindful indeed of those particular obligations he lies under towards those who are endeared to him by blood, by friendship, by religion. These, all other circumstances equal, will be sure to have the preference, but still they will not so wholly engross his good opinion, his favour, his charity, as to exclude all others from them. No, he will to his power, after the example of his Heavenly Father, be peaceable, he will be gentle, he will be equitable, he will be merciful and charitable to all; and this not out of a motive of vainglory or ostentation, or self-interest, but out of a sincere principle of love to God and to man, without partiality, without hypocrisy, appearing to all what he really is, without disguise, without dissimulation. (*Ibid.*)

The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace.—*Sowing seeds of peace:*—Whatever difficulty there may be in this verse in its detail, its broad intention is quite clear—that "peace" is the seedtime of "righteousness," and not "righteousness" of "peace": that we rather become good because we are at "peace," than that we have "peace" because we are good. "Peace" is the seed. Every truth has in it its higher and its lower range: its higher, which is spiritual; and its lower, which is natural. There is a higher "righteousness," which is between God and the sinner; and there is a lower "righteousness," which is between man and man. There is a higher "peace," which lies in reconciliation with God; and there is a lower "peace," which is the man being in harmony with his fellow-creatures, and at rest with his own conscience. Only in both cases the higher carries the lower. To be "righteous," in God's righteousness, is the surest way to be upright in common life. "Peace" with heaven makes "peace" on earth. The two are wrapped together when we say, "The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace." Let me trace the history or pedigree of "righteousness." God is the One only "Righteous"; and "there is no unrighteousness with God." The "righteous" God made an upright creature in His own image: but He made him free to stand or fall; and, in his freedom, he fell from his uprightness. The "righteous" God willed to restore him. And here is the problem: to restore the rebel and maintain the "righteousness." And He solved it. He, who was Himself "the Just One," His own beloved Son, more than consented to His Father's counsel. And He did it. He went Himself through the whole punishment that was due to all the world. So the law was satisfied; the equivalent was complete and abundant; and it was just with God to forgive the sinner. But here lay another mystery. Christ was not a Man only; He was a Representative Man. He was a Head, and all we His body. What a head does, it is the same as if the body did it. We suffered and died in our Head. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." And man's pardon has become "the righteousness of God." By God's grace a man sees this, feels this, believes this. Then he is in the body. Then that man is forgiven—because that man's sins have been already punished. And much more than this. That man being in Christ, the "righteousness" of Christ—which is "the righteousness of God"—passes on to him. He is covered with it. God sees him in it. He is a justified man. So that, even in the sight of a pure and holy God, that man is "righteous." But what as respects his relative duty to his fellow-men? How does he go down to the lower range? He must be an upright man. Else he is no Christian at all! But let us take the other away; let us see the genealogy of "peace." "Peace" was in heaven, and God placed "peace" in paradise. But sin came, and "peace" flew away. Then God willed to restore "peace." "And the counsel of peace was between them both." He who is "our peace" said, "Lo, I come." And He came. And "made peace by the blood of His Cross." And man became "reconciled to God." Immediately that he was reconciled the Holy Ghost came. And now, man knowing and feeling that he is forgiven, is at "peace" in his own mind. The sacred Dove comes back again, and nestles sweetly in his bosom. Now, see the moral consequence. Man, being at "peace" with man, is gentle, peace-loving, peace-making. For love is the child of "peace." The Church knits herself into unity; and Christians go forth in forgiveness to enemies—in charity to every man—in mission to the world. And thus—according to the pedigree of "righteousness," and according to the genealogy of "peace"—in both ways, "the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace." And who are they that "make peace"? The Holy Trinity—embodied to us in the Person of the blessed Jesus. It is He who "makes peace." He "sowed" it in those tears, and those drops of blood, which fell so thick in the garden and on Calvary. Seeds, often long dawning, never dead; seeds which, when the Spirit

waters them in a man's soul, draw up, and make sweet spring-time, till, in due time, they cluster in the harvest of righteousness: "and the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace." It may be strange, but all experience establishes the fact, that the ministry which speaks most of "peace," that is, of Christ, which imparts "peace," is always the ministry which most checks sin, and raises the moral tone, and promotes, in any people, "righteousness" in all the common relationships of life. I feel that I have very little else to do but to sow "peace." And if you were all at "peace" with God, in your consciences, and with men, my work would be well-nigh done! But not ministers only. You also, by virtue of your common Christianity—you are all to be making "peace." First, you must be yourself at "peace"; at "peace" with God, at "peace" in your own heart, at "peace" with everybody. You must go about with that "peaceful" feeling, that gentle quietness, that subdued tone, which only an interest in Christ can give, and which it never fails to give. Speak to every one about the happy parts of religion. Tell of its "peace." Be everywhere a comforter. Show Jesus in His attractiveness, especially to the world, and to the bad. Deal tenderly. Aim at a holy, loving influence with those that you have to do with. Be always dropping a seed of heaven. And if thereby you be not a reformer of your age (though you may be); or, if you do not die as one who has done great things for God in your day and generation (yet you may have done)—at least you will have been a faithful follower of your meek and blessed Master, and you will have shown His Spirit, and you will have recognised and acted out His fundamental law, that "the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace." (*Jas. Vaughan, M.A.*) *Fruit of righteousness sown in peace:*—These words admit of two different interpretations. As the great design which the apostle has in view is to correct the pride, wrath, and malice which prevail among those he wrote to, which he does by laying before them its bad consequences, strife and confusion, and representing how inconsistent it was with that true and heavenly wisdom which inspires men with gentleness, peace, and mercy: in this verse he may be understood as showing the advantages of following this true wisdom rather than indulging such noxious passions. The fruit, the reward of righteousness is sown in peace; is kept and reserved in a happier, a more peaceful and glorious state hereafter, of them that make peace, that is, for them that are endued with this wisdom, which delights in peace. The fruits are the reward of the toil of the husbandman; these fruits may be said to be sown when that seed is sown which, by the blessing of God, will produce them. The apostle therefore tells us that peace is a seed, which whoever sows, it will by the goodness of God yield to him the fruits of righteousness. Others conceive the apostle here to be answering an objection against what he had said. Shall we by our gentleness and meekness indulge and cherish the wickedness of others? Ought we not rather to use all our zeal to punish and root it out? The truly wise man, says the apostle, by his compassion and meekness, neither favours nor connives at vice and wickedness, but will correct it with such moderation as is consistent with good order and peace, and shall thereby always have most success on the minds of men. Like a wise physician, he will treat his patients softly and tenderly, will not immediately apply the last and most dreadful remedies, but reserve them till he has tried those of a milder nature without success. Thus, in peace, that is, by the most endearing means of persuasion and kindness, in the spirit of meekness, will the wise man who follows peace sow the fruits of righteousness; correct the vices and reform the lives of those who have gone astray, and bring them to the practice of righteousness with infinitely greater success than those whose harshness and severity may frighten men, or raise their hatred and detestation, but will never succeed so as to persuade or gain them. (*F. Carmichael.*)

CHAPTER IV.

VERS. 1–3. **From whence come wars and fightings?**—*Wars and fightings—whence they proceed:*—I. THE QUESTION PROPOSED (ver. 1). We have no very particular information as to the nature of these contests, the parties by whom they were waged, or the matters to which they related. Able interpreters have connected them with

the civil, political conflicts which agitated the Jewish people at this period of their history, and prepared the way for the memorable destruction which soon came on them at the hands of the victorious Romans. But it would appear, from what is added, that they were rather struggles about ordinary temporal affairs—about influence, reputation, position, and especially property, money, gains—what more than once the apostle calls "filthy lucre." What they sought was prosperity of that earthly kind; and all striving to secure it they got into collision—they envied, jostled, assailed, injured one another. Alas! this state of things has not been confined to the early age, nor to Jewish converts. What wars and fightings still among the members of the Church! Oh, what controversies and contentions! What angry passions, bitter rivalries, furious contests among the professed disciples of the same Master, the adherents of that gospel which is all animated with love, and pregnant with peace! II. THE ANSWER GIVEN. 1. The prevalence of lust. And what were these lusts? Just those which are most characteristic of human nature as fallen, and the working of which we see continually around us in the world. There was pride, a high, inordinate opinion of themselves, of their own merits and claims, leading them to aim at self-exaltation, at authority, pre-eminence—envy, grudging at the prosperity of others, prompting efforts to pull them down and climb into their places—avarice, covetousness, the love of money, the desire to be rich, stirring up all kinds of evil passions, and giving rise to crooked designs and plots of every description. These and such like are always the true cause of our wars and fightings. No doubt the world allures, the devil tempts—no doubt there are many incitements and influences at work all around by which Christians are more or less affected. But what gives them their power? "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." It is thronged with lusts, it is inflammable, and hence the spark falling on it is enough to wrap it in the flames of devouring passion. "Which war in your members." These are the bodily organs, and also the mental faculties, especially the former. The lusts are attached to them, connected with them, as the instruments by which they work, through which they come into active and open manifestation. "Ye lust, and have not"—have not what you so strongly and irregularly desire. How often are those who give way to such covetous cravings doomed to bitter disappointment! What the parties had not in this instance were those worldly gains and other advantages on which their hearts were set, and for which they strained and struggled. We have now a farther step, and a terrible one, taken under the influence of this lust. "Ye kill, and desire to have." Ye kill—that is, ye murder." It is possible to kill in other ways than by dealing a fatal blow, giving the poisonous draught, or committing any deed by which a charge of murder could be substantiated. By envious rivalries and bitter animosities by false accusations and cruel persecutions—we may wound the spirit, weaken the strength, and shorten the days of our fellow creatures. We may as truly take away the life as if we used some lethal weapon for the purpose. "And desire to have"—desire in an eager, even an envious manner, as the words signifies; for this was what dictated the murder spoken of, and, remaining after its perpetration, sought, through the medium of it, the coveted object or pleasure. "And cannot obtain." No; not even after employing such dreadful means for the purpose. Ye get not the satisfaction ye craved and expected—often not so much as the thing in which ye looked for that satisfaction. How frequently does this happen! Under the influence of insatiable cravings, men silence the voice of conscience, set at nought the restraints of law, trample on honour, principle, life itself; and, after all, either miss what they dare and sacrifice so much for, or get it only to find that what they imagined would be sweet, is utterly insipid, if not intensely bitter. They lose their pains; their killing, while a crime, proves also a mistake. 2. The neglect or abuse of prayer. They sought not from God the blessings they were so anxious to obtain. Had they taken their requests to God a twofold result would have ensued. Their immoderate desires had been checked, abated—the bringing of them into contact with His holy presence must have had a rectifying influence. Then, so far as lawful, as for their own good and the Divine glory, their petition had been granted. Thus their wars and fightings would have been prevented, their evil tendencies would have been repressed, and the disastrous effects they produced have been prevented. But some might repel the charge and say, "We do ask." The apostle anticipates such a defence, and so proceeds, "Ye ask and receive not." How does that happen? Does it not contradict the explanation of the not having which had now been presented? Does it not run directly in opposition to the Lord's express promise, "Ask, and ye shall receive"? No; for he adds, assigning the reason of

the failure—"Because ye ask amiss," badly, with evil intent. Ye do it in a spirit and for a purpose that are not good, but evil. It is not forbidden to seek temporal gains; but they did it not to apply them to proper objects, but to expend them in selfish, if not impure gratifications. Nothing is more common. Why, we may even plead for spiritual blessings in the same manner. We may supplicate wisdom, not to glorify God by it, but to exalt ourselves—not to benefit our brethren by it, but to make it conduce to our own pride and importance. We may ask pardon merely for the safety it involves, for the comfort it brings, from a regard to ease and enjoyment, and not to any higher and holier purpose. We may make grace the minister of sin, and value it for the release from restraint—the liberty to live as we please which it is supposed to confer. Of course, such prayers are not answered. They are an insult to the Majesty of heaven. They are a profanation of the Holiest. (*John Adam.*) *Serious reflections on war*:—I. This subject naturally leads us to reflect upon THE FALLEN, DEGENERATE STATE OF HUMAN NATURE. What is this world but a field of battle? What is the history of nations, from their first rise to the present day, but a tragical story of contests, struggles for dominion, encroachments upon the possessions of others? II. This subject may naturally lead us to reflect upon THE JUST RESENTMENTS OF GOD AGAINST THE SIN OF MAN. As innocent creatures, under the influence of universal benevolence, would not injure one another, or fly to war, so God would not suffer the calamities of war to fall upon them because they would not deserve it. But alas! mankind have revolted from God, and He employs them to avenge His quarrel and do the part of executioners upon one another. III. The consideration of war, as proceeding from the lusts of men, may excite us to THE MOST ZEALOUS ENDEAVOURS, IN OUR RESPECTIVE CHARACTERS, TO PROMOTE A REFORMATION. Let our lives be a loud testimony against the wickedness of the times; and a living recommendation of despised religion. IV. The consideration of war as proceeding from the lusts of men, may make us sensible of OUR NEED OF AN OUTPOURING OF THE DIVINE SPIRIT. Love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, are mentioned by St. Paul as the fruit of the Spirit, because the Spirit alone is the author of them. And if these dispositions were predominant in the world, what a calm, pacific region would it be, undisturbed with the hurricanes of human passions. V. The consideration of the present commotions among the kingdoms of the world may CARRY OUR THOUGHTS FORWARD to that happy period which our religion teaches us to hope for, when the kingdom of Christ, the Prince of Peace, shall be extended over the world, and His benign, pacific religion shall be propagated among all nations. Conclusion: 1. "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God." 2. "Pray without ceasing." (*S. Davies, M.A.*) *Contention in a community*:—1. Lust is the makebait in a community. Covetousness, pride, and ambition make men injurious and insolent. (1) Covetousness maketh us to contend with those that have anything that we covet, as Ahab with Naboth. (2) Pride is the cockatrice egg that discloseth the fiery flying serpent (Prov. xiii. 10). (3) Ambition. Diotrephes' loving the pre-eminence disturbed the Churches of Asia (3 John 10). (4) Envy. Abraham and Lot's herdsmen fell out (Gen. xiii. 7). 2. When evils abound in a place it is good to look after the rise and cause of them. Men engage in a heat, and do not know wherefore: usually lust is at the bottom; the sight of the cause will shame us. 3. Lust is a tyrant that warreth in the soul, and warreth against the soul. (1) It warreth in the soul; it abuseth your affections, to carry on the rebellion against heaven (Gal. v. 17). (2) It warreth against the soul (1 Pet. ii. 11). (*T. Manton.*) *Lusts the causes of strife*:—"Wars" and "fightings" are not to be understood literally. St. James is referring to private quarrels and law-suits, social rivalries and factions, and religious controversies. The subject-matter of these disputes and contentions is not indicated because that is not what is denounced. It is not for having differences about this or that, whether rights of property, or posts of honour, or ecclesiastical questions, that St. James rebukes them, but for the rancorous, greedy, and worldly spirit in which their disputes are conducted. Evidently the lust of possession is among the things which produce the contentions. Jewish appetite for wealth is at work among them. "Whence wars, and whence fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your pleasures which war in your members?" By a common transposition, St. James, in answering his own question, puts the pleasures which excite and gratify the lusts instead of the lusts themselves, in much the same way as we use "drink" for intemperance, and "gold" for avarice. These lusts for pleasures have their quarters or camp in the members of our body—*i.e.*, in the sensual part of man's nature. But they are there, not to rest, but to make war, to go after, and seize, and

take for a prey that which has roused them from their quiotude and set them in motion. There the picture, as drawn by St. James, ends. St. Paul carries it a stage farther (Rom. vii. 23). St. Paul does the same (1 Pet. ii. 11). In the *Phædo* of Plato (66, 67) there is a beautiful passage which presents some striking coincidences with the words of St. James. "Wars, and factions, and fightings have no other source than the body and its lusts. For it is for the getting of wealth that all our wars arise, and we are compelled to get wealth because of our body, to whose service we are slaves; and in consequence we have no leisure for philosophy because of all these things. And the worst of all is that if we get any leisure from it, and turn to some question, in the midst of our inquiries the body is everywhere coming in, introducing turmoil and confusion, and bewildering us, so that by it we are prevented from seeing the truth. But, indeed, it has been proved to us that if we are ever to have pure knowledge of anything we must get rid of the body, and with the soul by itself must behold things by themselves. Then, it would seem, we shall obtain the wisdom which we desire, and of which we say that we are lovers; when we are dead, as the argument shows, but in this life not. For if it be impossible while we are in the body to have pure knowledge of anything, then of two things one—either knowledge is not to be obtained at all, or after we are dead; for then the soul will be by itself, apart from the body, but before that not. And in this life, it would seem, we shall make the nearest approach to knowledge if we have no communication or fellowship whatever with the body, beyond what necessity compels, and are not filled with its nature, but remain pure from its taint until God Himself shall set us free. And in this way shall we be pure, being delivered from the foolishness of the body, and shall be with other like souls, and shall know of ourselves all that is clear and cloudless, and that is perhaps all one with the truth." Plato and St. James are entirely agreed in holding that wars and fightings are caused by the lusts that have their seat in the body, and that this condition of fightings without, and lusts within, is quite incompatible with the possession of heavenly wisdom. But there the agreement between them ceases. The conclusion which Plato arrives at is that the philosopher must, so far as is possible, neglect and excommunicate his body, as an intolerable source of corruption, yearning for the time when death shall set him free from the burden of waiting upon this obstacle between his soul and the truth. Plato has no idea that the body may be sanctified here and glorified hereafter; he regards it simply as a necessary evil, which may be minimised by watchfulness, but which can in no way be turned into a blessing. The blessing will come when the body is annihilated by death. St. James, on the contrary, exhorts us to cut ourselves off, not from the body, but from friendship with the world. Even in this life the wisdom that is from above is attainable, and where that has found a home factions and fightings cease. When the passions cease to war those who have hitherto been swayed by their passions will cease to war also. (*A. Plummer, D.D.*) *Warrior lusts*:—The word translated "lusts" is used to express the pleasure of the senses, and hence sometimes signifies strong desire for such gratification. In this picturesque sentence, these are represented as warriors spreading themselves through "the members," seizing the body as the instrument for the accomplishing of their designs and the gaining of their ends. It is the desire for greater territories, larger incomes, more splendour, wider indulgence in physical pleasures, greater gratification of their pride and ambition, which lead kings to war. Every war has begun in sin. It is so in religious circles. The pride of opinion, the love of rule, the enjoyment of more renown for numbers and wealth and influence, have led sects and Churches into all the persecution and so-called religious wars which have disgraced the cause of truth, and discouraged the aspirations of the good, and increased the infidelity of the world. (*C. F. Deems, D.D.*) *War*:—But is there nothing to be said in favour of war? There is one thing often said of it—namely, that, in spite of its horror, and folly, and wickedness, it evokes courage, magnanimity, heroism, self-sacrifice. There has been much eloquence expended on this theme; but good Dr. Johnson said all that was necessary on the matter long ago. Boswell writes: "Dr. Johnson laughed at Lord Kames's opinion that war was a good thing occasionally, as so much valour and virtue were exhibited in it. 'A fire,' said the Doctor, 'might as well be considered a good thing. There are the bravery and address of the firemen in extinguishing it; there is much humanity exerted in saving the lives and properties of the poor sufferers. Yet, after all this, who can say that a fire is a good thing?'" But what is the Christian principle about war? For our religion, if it is good for anything, must be good for everything; it must have an authorita-

tive word on this matter. Murder is not less murder because a man puts on a red coat to do it in; it is not less murder because a thousand go out to do it together. There are no earthly orders which may countermand the commandment of God. In the first two centuries of the Christian Church this was so well understood that Celsus, in his attack upon Christianity, says "that the State received no help in war from the Christians, and that, if all men were to follow their example, the sovereign would be deserted and the world would fall into the hands of the barbarians." To which Origen answered as follows:—"The question is—What would happen if the Romans should be persuaded to adopt the principles of the Christians? . . . This is my answer—We say that if two of us shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them by the Father who is in heaven. What, then, are we to expect, if not only a very few should agree, as at present, but the whole empire of Rome? They would pray to the Word, who of old said to the Hebrews, when pursued by the Egyptians, 'The Lord shall fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.'" What Origen and other great teachers said many Christians heeded, and there were men who refused to enter the army, although the penalty of their refusal was death. The Quaker-like sentiment and principle of the Church was changed when the Church was established and protected by Constantine, and from various causes, into which we need not enter, since the discussion would have a somewhat academic tinge, and we are concerned with a practical question. In the Middle Ages soldiering became more reputable than ever through the rise of the Mohammedan power and the institution of chivalry. And for all practical purposes Christendom is still unchristian so far as war is concerned. That is true in spite of all the understandings about the illegitimacy of certain materials and methods, in spite of all the hospital staff and the nurses, and the other efforts to palliate the horrors of sweeping and scientific murder. (*J. A. Hamilton.*) *Men's love of strife:*—Lord Palmerston, in a short letter to Mr. Cobden, said, "Man is a fighting and quarrelling animal." (*Justin McCarthy.*) *Peace:*—Peace among men is the consequence of peace in men. (*Viedebandt.*) *Desire:*—Desires increase with acquisition; every step a man advances brings something within his view which he did not see before, and which, as soon as he sees it he begins to want. Where necessity ends, curiosity begins; and no sooner are we supplied with everything that nature can demand than we contrive artificial appetites. (*Dr. Johnson.*) **Ye lust and have not.**—*Disappointed lust:*—1. Lustings are usually disappointed. God loveth to cross desires when they are inordinate; His hand is straitened when our desires are enlarged. (1) Sometimes in mercy (Hos. ii. 7). Prosperous and successful wickedness encourageth a man to go on in that way; some rubs are an advantage. (2) Sometimes in judgment, that He may torment men by their own lusts; their desires prove their just torture. The blood heated by intemperance, and the heart enlarged by desire, are both of them sins that bring with them their own punishment, especially when they meet with disappointment. Learn, then, that when the heart is too much set upon anything, it is the ready way to miss it. When you forget to subject your desires to God's will, you shall understand the sovereignty of it. Be not always troubled when you cannot have your will; you have cause to bless God. It is a mercy when carnal desires are disappointed; say as David (1 Sam. xxv. 32). It teacheth you what reflections to make upon yourselves in case of disappointment. When we miss any worldly thing that we have desired, say, Have not I lusted after this? Did not I covet it too earnestly? Absalom was the greater curse to David because he loved him too much. Inordinate longings make the affections miscarry. 2. Where there is covetousness there is usually strife, envy, and emulation. Ye lust; ye kill; ye emulate—these hang in a string. As there is a connection and a cognation between virtues and graces—they go hand in hand—so there is a link between sins—they seldom go alone. If a man be a drunkard, he will be a wanton; if he be covetous, he will be envious. 3. It is lust and covetousness that is most apt to trouble neighbourhoods and vicinities (Prov. xv. 27). Covetousness maketh men of such a harsh and sour disposition. Towards God it is idolatry; it robbeth Him of one of the flowers of His crown, the trust of the creature; and it is the bane of human societies. Why are men's hearts besotted with that which is even the reproach and defamation of their natures? 4. Lust will put men not only upon dishonest endeavours, but unlawful means, to accomplish their ends, killing, and warring, and fighting, &c. Bad means will suit well enough with base ends; they resolve to have it; any means will serve the turn, so they may satisfy their thirst of gain (1 Tim. vi. 9). 5. Do wicked men what they can, when God setteth against them their endeavours

are frustrated (Psa. xxxiii. 10). 6. It is not good to engage in any undertaking without prayer. That no actions must be taken in hand but such as we can commend to God in prayer; such enterprises we must not engage in as we dare not communicate to God in our supplications (Isa. xxix. 15). (*T. Manton.*) *Lusting and murder:*—If we remember the state of Jewish society, the bands of robber-outlaws, of whom Barabbas was a type, the "four thousand men who were murderers" of Acts xxi. 38, the bands of zealots and Sicarii who were prominent in the tumults that preceded the final war with Rome, it will not seem so startling that St. James should emphasise his warning by beginning with the words "Ye murder." In such a state of society murder is often the first thing that a man thinks of as a means to gratify his desires, not, as with us, a last resource when other means have failed. (*Dean Plumptre.*) *Was the picture true?*—There was, perhaps, a grim truth in the picture which St. James draws. It was after the deed was done that the murderers began to quarrel over the division of the spoil, and found themselves as unsatisfied as before, still not able to obtain that on which they had set their hearts, and so plunging into fresh quarrels, ending as they began, in bloodshed. (*Ibid.*) *Lusting, yet lacking:*—There is no sowing in a storm. (*J. Trapp.*) **Ye have not, because ye ask not.**—*The causes of spiritual destitution:*—I. THE CAUSE IS SOMETIMES NON-ASKING. There are some blessings that God gives without asking—such as being, faculties, seasons, elements of nature, &c.; others that He gives only for asking—spiritual blessings. 1. What does prayer do? (1) It effects no alteration in the plan of God. (2) It cannot inform the Almighty of anything of which He was before ignorant. (3) It does not give a claim to the Divine favours. 2. But—(1) It does fulfil a condition of Divine beneficence. (2) It does bring the mind into vital contact with its Maker. (3) It does deepen our sense of dependence upon God. (4) It does fill the soul with the idea of mediation; for all prayer is "in the name of Christ." II. THE CAUSE IS SOMETIMES WRONG ASKING. 1. To pray insincerely is to pray amiss. 2. Without earnestness. 3. Without faith. 4. Without surrendering our being to God. (*D. Thomas.*) *Ask and have:*—Man is a creature abounding in wants, and ever restless, and hence his heart is full of desires. Man is comparable to the sea anemone, with its multitude of tentacles which are always hunting in the water for food; or like certain plants which send out tendrils, seeking after the means of climbing. The poet says, "Man never is, but always to be, blest." This fact appertains both to the worst and the best of men. In bad men desires corrupt into lusts: they long after that which is selfish, sensual, and consequently evil. In gracious men there are desires also. Their desires are after the best things—things pure and peaceable, laudable and elevating. They desire God's glory, and hence their desires spring from higher motives than those which inflame the unrenewed mind. Such desires in Christian men are frequently very fervent and forcible; they ought always to be so; and those desires begotten of the Spirit of God stir the renewed nature, exciting and stimulating it, and making the man to groan and to be in anguish until he can attain that which God has taught him to long for. The lusting of the wicked and the holy desiring of the righteous have their own ways of seeking gratification. The lusting of the wicked develops itself in contention; it kills, and desires to have; it fights, and it wars; while, on the other hand, the desire of the righteous, when rightly guided, betakes itself to a far better course for achieving its purpose, for it expresses itself in prayer fervent and importunate. The godly man, when full of desire, asks and receives at the hand of God. I. THE POVERTY OF LUSTING. "Ye lust, and have not." Carnal lustings, however strong they may be, do not in many cases obtain that which they seek after. The man longs to be happy, but he is not; he pines to be great, but he grows meaner every day; he aspires after this and after that which he thinks will content him, but he is still unsatisfied; he is like the troubled sea which cannot rest. One way or another his life is disappointment; he labours as in the very fire, but the result is vanity and vexation of spirit. How can it be otherwise? If we sow the wind, must we not reap the whirlwind, and nothing else? Or, if peradventure the strong lustings of an active, talented, persevering man do give him what he seeks after, yet how soon he loses it. The pursuit is toilsome, but the possession is a dream. He sits down to eat, and lo! the feast is snatched away, the cup vanishes when it is at his lip. He wins to lose; he builds, and his sandy foundation slips from under his tower, and it lies in ruins. Or if such men have gifts and power enough to retain that which they have won, yet in another sense they have it not while they have it, for the pleasure which they looked for in it is not

there. They pluck the apple, and it turns out to be one of those Dead Sea apples which crumble to ashes in the hand. The man is rich, but God takes away from him the power to enjoy his wealth. By his lustings and his warrings, the licentious man at last obtains the object of his cravings, and after a moment's gratification, he loathes that which he so passionately lusted for. Thus may it be said of multitudes of the sons of men, "Ye lust, and have not." Their poverty is set forth in a threefold manner—"Ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain"; "Ye have not, because ye ask not"; "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss." If the lusters fail, it is not because they did not set to work to gain their ends; for, according to their nature, they used the most practical means within their reach, and used them eagerly, too. Multitudes of men are living for themselves, competing here and warring there, fighting for their own hand with the utmost perseverance. They have little choice as to how they will do it. Conscience is not allowed to interfere in their transactions, but the old advice rings in their ears, "Get money; get money honestly if you can, but by any means get money." No matter though body and soul be ruined, and others be deluged with misery, fight on, for there is no discharge in this war. If you are to win you must fight; and everything is fair in war. So they muster their forces, they struggle with their fellows, they make the battle of life hotter and hotter, they banish love, and brand tenderness as folly, and yet with all their schemes they obtain not the end of life in any true sense. Well saith James, "Ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain; ye fight and war, yet ye have not." When men who are greatly set upon their selfish purposes do not succeed, they may possibly hear that the reason of their non-success is "Because ye ask not." Is, then, success to be achieved by asking? So the text seems to hint, and so the righteous find it. Why doth not this man of intense desires take to asking? The reason is, first, because it is unnatural to the natural man to pray; as well expect him to fly. God-reliance he does not understand; self-reliance is his word. Self is his god, and to his god he looks for success. He is so proud that he reckons himself to be his own providence; his own right hand and his active arm shall get to him the victory. Yet he obtains not. The whole history of mankind shows the failure of evil lustings to obtain their object. For a while the carnal man goes on fighting and warring; but by and by he changes his mind, for he is ill, or frightened. His purpose is the same, but if it cannot be achieved one way he will try another. If he must ask, well, he will ask; he will become religious, and do good to himself in that way. He finds that some religious people prosper in the world, and that even sincere Christians are by no means fools in business; and, therefore, he will try their plan. And now he comes under the third censure of our text. "Ye ask, and receive not." What is the reason why the man who is the slave of his lusts obtains not his desire, even when he takes to asking? The reason is because his asking is a mere matter of form, his heart is not in his worship. This man's prayer is asking amiss, because it is entirely for himself. He wants to prosper that he may enjoy himself; he wants to be great simply that he may be admired: his prayer begins and ends with self. Look at the indecency of such a prayer, even if it be sincere. When a man so prays he asks God to be his servant, and gratify his desires; nay, worse than that, he wants God to join him in the service of his lusts. He will gratify his lusts, and God shall come and help him to do it. Such prayer is blasphemous; but a large quantity is offered, and it must be one of the most God-provoking things that heaven ever beholds. II. How CHRISTIAN CHURCHES MAY SUFFER SPIRITUAL POVERTY, so that they, too, "desire to have, and cannot obtain." Of course the Christian seeks higher things than the worldling, else were he not worthy of that name at all. At least professedly his object is to obtain the true riches, and to glorify God in spirit and in truth. Yes, but all Churches do not get what they desire. We have to complain, not here and there, but in many places, of Churches that are nearly asleep and are gradually declining. These Churches "have not," for no truth is made prevalent through their zeal, no sin is smitten, no holiness promoted; nothing is done by which God is glorified. And what is the reason of it? First, even among professed Christians, there may be the pursuit of desirable things in a wrong method. "Ye fight and war, yet ye have not." Have not Churches thought to prosper by competing with other Churches? Is it not the design of many to succeed by a finer building, better music, and a cleverer ministry than others? Is it not as much a matter of competition as a shop front and a dressed window are with drapers? Is this the way by which the Kingdom of God is to grow up among us? In some cases there is a

measure of bitterness in the rivalry. I bring no railing accusation, and, therefore, say no more than this: God will never bless such means and such a spirit; those who give way to them will desire to have, but never obtain. Meanwhile, what is the reason why they do not have a blessing? The text says, "Because ye ask not"; I am afraid there are Churches which do not ask. Prayer in all forms is too much neglected. But some reply, "There are prayer-meetings, and we do ask for the blessing, and yet it comes not." Is not the explanation to be found in the other part of the text, "Ye have not, because ye ask amiss"? He who prays without fervency does not pray at all. We cannot commune with God, who is a consuming fire, if there is no fire in our prayers. Many prayers fail of their errand because there is no faith in them. Prayers which are filled with doubt are requests for refusal. III. THE WEALTH WHICH AWAITS THE USE OF THE RIGHT MEANS, namely, of asking rightly of God. 1. How very small, after all, is this demand which God makes of us. Ask! Why, it is the least thing He can possibly expect of us, and it is no more than we ordinarily require of those who need help from us. We expect a poor man to ask; and if he does not, we lay the blame of his lack upon himself. If God will give for the asking, and we remain poor, who is to blame? Surely there must be in our hearts a lurking enmity to Him; or else, instead of its being an unwelcome necessity, it would be regarded as a great delight. 2. However, whether we like it or not, remember, asking is the rule of the kingdom. "Ask, and ye shall receive." It is a rule that never will be altered in anybody's case. Why should it be? What reason can be pleaded why we should be exempted from prayer? What argument can there be why we should be deprived of the privilege and delivered from the necessity of supplication? 3. Moreover, it is clear to even the most shallow thinker that there are some things necessary for the Church of God which we cannot get otherwise than by prayer. You can buy all sorts of ecclesiastical furniture, you can purchase any kind of paint, brass, muslin, blue, scarlet, and fine linen, together with flutes, harps, sackbuts, psalteries, and all kinds of music—you can get these without prayer; in fact, it would be an impertinence to pray about such rubbish; but you cannot get the Holy Ghost without prayer. Neither can you get communion with God without prayer. He that will not pray cannot have communion with God. Yet more, there is no real spiritual communion of the Church with its own members when prayer is suspended. Prayer must be in action, or else those blessings which are vitally essentially to the success of the Church can never come to it. Prayer is the great door of spiritual blessing, and if you close it you shut out the favour. 4. Do you not think that this asking which God requires is a very great privilege? Suppose we were in our spiritual nature full of strong desires, and yet dumb as to the tongue of prayer, methinks it would be one of the direst afflictions that could possibly befall us; we should be terribly maimed and dismembered, and our agony would be overwhelming. Blessed be His name, the Lord ordains a way of utterance, and bids our hearts speak out to Him. 5. We must pray: it seems to me that it ought to be the first thing we ever think of doing when in need. 6. Alas! according to Scripture and observation, and, I grieve to add, according to experience, prayer is often the last thing. God is sought unto when we are driven into a corner and ready to perish. And what a mercy it is that He hears such laggard prayers, and delivers the suppliants out of their troubles. 7. Do you know what great things are to be had for the asking? Have you ever thought of it? Does it not stimulate you to pray fervently? All heaven lies before the grasp of the asking man; all the promises of God are rich and inexhaustible, and their fulfilment is to be had by prayer. 8. I will mention another proof that ought to make us pray, and that is, that if we ask, God will give to us much more than we ask. Abraham asked of God that Ishmael might live before him. He thought, "Surely, this is the promised seed: I cannot expect that Sarah will bear a child in her old age. God has promised me a seed, and surely it must be this child of Hagar. Oh that Ishmael might live before Thee!" God granted him that, but He gave him Isaac as well, and all the blessings of the covenant. There is Jacob; he kneels down to pray, and asks the Lord to give him bread to eat and raiment to put on. But what did his God give him? When he came back to Bethel he had two bands, thousands of sheep and camels, and much wealth. God had heard him and done exceeding abundantly above what he asked. "Well," say you, "but is that true of New Testament prayers?" Yes, it is so with the New Testament pleaders, whether saints or sinners. They brought a man to Christ sick of the palsy, and asked Him to heal him; and He said, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." He had not asked that,

had he? No; but God gives greater things than we ask for. Hear that poor, dying thief's humble prayer: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." Jesus replies, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Petitionless prayers*:—Suppose that a man takes up his pen and a piece of parchment, and writes on the top of it, "To the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty: the humble petition of So-and-So"; but there he stops. He sits with the pen in his hand for half an hour, but does not add another word, then rises and goes his way. And he repeats this process day after day—beginning a hundred sheets of paper, but putting into them no express request; sometimes, perhaps, scratching down a few sentences which nobody can read, not even himself, but never plainly and deliberately setting down what it is that he desires. Can he wonder that his blank petition and scribbled parchments have no sensible effect on himself nor on any one besides? And has he any right to say, "I wonder what can be the matter. Other people get answers to their petitions, but I am not aware that the slightest notice has ever been taken of one of mine. I am not conscious of having got a single favour, or being a whit the better for all that I have written"? Could you expect it? When did you ever finish a petition? When did you ever despatch and forward one to the feet of Majesty? And so there are many persons who pass their days inditing blank petitions—or rather petitionless forms of prayer. (*J. Hamilton, D.D.*) *Propriety of prayer*:—A gentleman of fine social qualities, always ready to make liberal provision for the gratification of his children, a man of science, and a moralist of the strictest school, was sceptical in regard to prayer, thinking it superfluous to ask God for what nature had already furnished ready to hand. His eldest son became a disciple of Christ. The father, while recognising a happy change in the spirit and deportment of the youth, still harped upon his old objection to prayer, as unphilosophical and unnecessary. "I remember," said the son, "that I once made free use of your pictures, specimens, and instruments for the entertainment of my friends. When you came home you said to me, 'All that I have belongs to my children, and I have provided it on purpose for them; still, I think it would be respectful always to ask your father before taking anything.' And so," added the son, "although God has provided everything for me, I think it is respectful to ask Him, and to thank Him for what I use." The sceptic was silent; but he has since admitted that he has never been able to invent an answer to this simple, personal, sensible argument for prayer. **Ye ask amiss.**—*Requisites of prayer*:—Prayer is the nearest approach that, in our present state, we can make to the Deity. To neglect or shun this duty is to shun all approaches to God. I. ATTENTION AND FERVENCY are principally requisite to render our prayers acceptable to God and beneficial to ourselves. It is not the service of the lips, it is the homage of the mind which God regards. He sees and approves even the silent devotions of the heart. II. PERSEVERANCE is another condition upon which depends the success of our prayers. III. HUMILITY AND SUBMISSION to the Divine will are necessary conditions of our prayers. 1. Humility, because of His infinite greatness and majesty. 2. Submission to His all-wise will, because of our own ignorance. IV. Our prayers to God ought to be accompanied with A TRUST AND CONFIDENCE in His goodness; a confidence that composes our fears, and sets us above all despondency. V. INTEGRITY OF HEART, without which we have reason to apprehend that God will be as regardless of our supplications as we have been of His commandments. (*G. Carr.*) *Conditions of prayer*:—I. THE PROMISE GIVEN TO PRAYER IS CONDITIONAL, AND NOT ABSOLUTE, AS TOUCHING THE THING WHICH IS PRAYED FOR; and therefore we may fail in gaining an answer to prayer in consequence of praying for that which is wrong in itself, or which would be fraught with danger to its possessor. Prayer is not a power entrusted to us, like that of free will, which we may exert for good or evil, for weal or woe; it must be used for good, either present or ultimate. What we pray for, it must be consistent with the Divine perfections to grant. To pray to a Holy God for the fulfilment of some evil desire, and to suppose that He will grant our petition, is to degrade God in a way which He Himself has denounced —"Thou thoughtest wickedly, that I am even such a one as thyself," and to make Him "serve with" us in our "sins." Having seen what we may not pray for, consider what are legitimate subjects for petition. The good things which are given to us by God are either spiritual or temporal; under the former are included our salvation and perfection, and all the means which directly lead to and insure those results—*e.g.*, pardon for sin, strength against temptation, final perseverance; under the latter, "all the blessings of this life." We will take temporal goods first, and spiritual after, reversing the order of importance. Attached to every prayer

for temporal things, then, there must be understood or expressed the clause "as may be most expedient for" us, until we know the will of God concerning the thing we are asking from Him. Spiritual goods differ from the former in two great respects. They must be sought primarily, and prayers for them need not be guarded by any implied or expressed condition. II. THAT THE STATE OF THE PERSON WHO ASKS A BENEFIT IS A MATTER OF CONSEQUENCE may be learnt by analogy from the influence which it possesses with our fellow-men when prayers are addressed to them. We are much affected by the relation of the petitioner to us in granting a favour. To be in a state of grace, to have the privilege of the adopted child, then, is a ground of acceptance with God; whilst, on the other hand, if the heart is set on sin, and has no covenanted relation with God, however right the thing asked for may be, the prayer may be of no avail. Prayer unites the soul to God, but we cannot conceive of that union, unless there is some likeness between the terms of it, "for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" St. Augustine illustrates this truth in the following manner: The fountain, he says, which ceaselessly pours forth its waters will not fill the vessel which has no mouth, or which is inverted, or which is held on one side. In the same way, God is the Fount of all goods, and desires to impart His gifts to all, but we fail to receive them, because our heart is closed against Him, or turned away from Him, or but half-converted towards Him. Whilst the heart is set on earthly possessions, or bent on sin, or has a lingering love for sinful pleasure, it is incapable of receiving and retaining the gifts of God; but to the heart that is whole with Him, He will give out of His fulness. III. THERE ARE CERTAIN CONDITIONS WHICH OUGHT TO ACCOMPANY THE ACT OF PRAYING, IN ORDER TO ENSURE SUCCESS. Prayer is a momentous action, and must therefore be performed in a becoming manner; and a defect in this respect, though the thing prayed for be right, and the soul that prayed be in a state of grace, may hinder the accomplishment of its petitions. 1. The first of these conditions is faith. "If faith fails," says St. Augustine, "prayer perishes." It must be observed, that the faith which should accompany an act of prayer is of a special kind; it does not consist in the acknowledgment of the Unseen, or in the acceptance of revealed truth generally, but has direct reference to the promises of God which concern prayer. Yet it must not be supposed that, in order to pray acceptably, we must always feel quite certain of obtaining our requests; we must feel quite certain that, as far as God is concerned, He has the power to hear and answer prayer, and that He uses it as an instrument of His providence, but that in temporal things, at least, inasmuch as the bestowal of what we ask may not be expedient for us, therefore absolute certainty of gaining it may not be entertained. 2. Another disposition for praying aright, and one which touches so closely on the first as to render its separate treatment a difficulty, is to be found in the exercise of hope. We must not unduly dwell either upon the magnitude of the thing asked, or the unlikelihood of its bestowal, or our unworthiness to receive it, but rather turn to the merits of our Mediator, "in whom," St. Paul says, "we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him"; and to the Fatherhood of God, as our Lord Himself, in the prayer which He has given us for a model, has directed—that this second disposition for praying acceptably may be elicited and sustained. But this confidence must be flanked by another virtue, to hinder it from excess. 3. Though it be true that "the prayer of the timid does not reach the heavens," it is also to be remembered that the prayer of the presumptuous only reaches heaven to be beaten back to earth. Confidence must be held in check by lowliness. 4. There is one disposition more which is necessary, if we would secure the force of prayer—perseverance. God promises to answer prayer, but He does not bind Himself to answer it at the time we think best. There are reasons for delay, some doubtless inscrutable, but others which are in some degree within the reach of our comprehension. Delay may be occasioned by the fact that our dispositions need to be ripened before, according to the Divine Providence, an answer to prayer can be granted; or, again, another time may be better for us to receive the benefit for which we have besought God; or, again, some past sin may for a while suspend the Divine favours, or make them more difficult of attainment, as a needful discipline; or the delay may be for the purpose of heightening our sense of the benefit, when granted, and increasing our gratification in the enjoyment of it. Moreover, the struggle itself in perseveringly pressing upon God our petitions, is lucrative in several ways; it lays up store above, where patient faithfulness is not unrewarded; it has a sanctifying effect, for the inner life grows through the exercise of those virtues which prayer calls into

operation. A third effect of persevering and finally successful petition is to be found in the witness it bears to the power of prayer—a witness to ourselves in the soul's secret experience, and, if known, to others also—for, as in seeking anything from one another, it is not in that which is given at once that we find an evidence of the power of our solicitation, but in that which has been again and again refused, and at last is, as it were, almost extorted from another; so when God grants our requests, after He has long refused to do so, we seem to conquer Him by our entreaties, and thereby the potency of prayer is conspicuously manifested. The conditions of prayer may be summed up in few words—if we turn from sin and seek God, if we turn from earth and seek heaven, if in prayer we exert all our spiritual energies, we shall be heard; and we shall be able from our own experience to bear witness to the power of prayer. (*W. H. Hutchings, M.A.*) *How prayer may be rendered unavailing*:—1. By grieving the Spirit through not feeling our need of His assistance. 2. By lack of reverence. 3. By praying with a fretful and complaining spirit. 4. By thinking more of self than of God. 5. By a want of definiteness. 6. By the absence of earnest desire. 7. By impenitence. 8. By unwillingness to have our prayer answered. We pray for the generous loving Spirit of Christ; then we remember a rival in business, or an enemy who has wronged us—and the spirit of prayer is gone. 9. By being in too great a hurry when we pray. "Fall on your knees, and grow there," says one who has tested the worth of prayer. 10. By neglecting to maintain a state of prayer. The spirit of prayer, like a silvery stream, must run all through our daily life. 11. Through want of co-operation with God in bringing the answer to our own prayer. You pray for the conversion of sinners. Are you living before them in a way that they may have occasion to glorify God? What have you given for the conversion of the heathen? I once endeavoured to secure five hundred dollars from a man in Boston for the work among the heathen. He told me he would make it a subject of prayer. A few days afterwards I saw him, and he gave me one hundred dollars. That same man, a little later, built a residence for seventy-five thousand dollars, and furnished it for one-third as much more. You pray for your city's welfare. How did you vote? (*J. A. M. Chapman, D.D.*) *Praying amiss*:—1. We pray amiss when our ends and aims are not right in prayer. The end is a main circumstance in every action, the purest offspring of the soul. 2. Our ends and aims are wrong in prayer when we ask blessings for the use and encouragement of our lusts. Men sin with reference to the aim of prayer several ways. (1) When the end is grossly carnal and sinful. Some seek God for their sins, and would engage the Divine blessing upon a revengeful and carnal enterprise; as the thief kindleth his torch that he might steal by at the lamps of the altar. (2) When men privily seek to gratify their lusts, men look upon God as some great power that must serve their carnal turns; as he came to Christ, "Master, speak to my brother to divide the inheritance" (Luke xii. 13). We would have somewhat from God to give to lust; health and long life, that we may live pleasantly; wealth, that we may "fare deliciously every day"; estates, that we raise up our name and family; victory and success, to excuse ourselves from glorifying God by suffering, or to wreak our malice upon the enemies; Church deliverances, out of a spirit of wrath and revenge. (3) When we pray for blessings with a selfish aim, and not with serious and actual designs of God's glory, as when a man prayeth for spiritual blessings with a mere respect to his own ease and comfort, as for pardon, heaven, grace, faith, repentance, only that he may escape wrath. This is but a carnal respect to our own good and welfare. God would have us mind our own comfort, but not only. God's glory is the pure spiritual aim. 3. Prayers framed out of a carnal intention are usually successless. God never undertook to satisfy fleshly desires. He will own no other voice in prayer but that of His own Spirit (Rom. viii. 27). (*T. Manton.*) *The missing prayer*:—Prayers miss—1. Because they are too selfish. (1) We set a high value on ourselves, and no dependence upon God. (2) Self seeking is the chief prompting principle. (3) We lack regard for God's glory and our own good. (4) We feel not our own need. 2. Because they are too fretful and complaining. Not a grain of praise or thanksgiving. 3. Because they are too indefinite, vague, doubtful, and calculative. 4. Because they are too insincere, too much in a hurry, and irreverent. 5. Because they are too heartless. (1) The source from which they rise is bad—the heart. (2) The desire (the very soul of prayer) is worldly. No continuous thought of God. (3) Soul earnestness is absent. All is cold, lifeless. (*J. Harries.*) *Prayer*:—Most Christians are alive to the duty of prayer, and believe most firmly in its power. Yet, in the experience

of all, prayer is not prevalent, as it ought. Few but have reason sadly to confess: "We have asked but we have received not." Where, then, lies the fault? Is it with God? No; God's ear is never heavy that it cannot hear. His arm is never shortened that it cannot save. The fault lies with ourselves. It is because we have not asked aright that we have asked in vain. I. THERE MAY BE SOMETHING "AMISS" IN THE SOURCE FROM WHENCE OUR PRAYERS COME. All true prayer must come from the heart. Its own emptiness and want must prompt the cry, else it will not "enter into the ear of the Lord of Sabaoth." Perhaps our hearts are full, and there is no room for the blessing, which we profess to seek, to enter. Full of worldly desires, delights, and passions. In such a case, vain must our asking be—insulting to the God whom we address. II. THERE MAY BE SOMETHING "AMISS" IN THE OBJECTS WHICH OUR PRAYERS SEEK. Perhaps we have no definite object in view whatever. We have not inquired as to our wants ere engaging in the exercise. Utter in God's presence no "vague generalities," which have been well termed "the death of prayer," but plead before Him felt, individual want. But granting that we have a definite object in view, that object may be altogether of a selfish nature. It is something pleasing to ourselves we wish—self-honour, self-pleasure, self-gratification. So intently is our mind fixed upon some object on which our heart is set—so entirely are we wrapt up in the attainment of it—that we forget to ask ourselves whether the gratification of our desire may be conducive to our highest well-being, may be in accordance with the will of God. III. THERE MAY BE SOMETHING "AMISS" IN THE SPIRIT BY WHICH OUR PRAYERS ARE PERVADED. What was said concerning the Israelites with reference to Canaan may be said of our prayers with reference to the audience chamber of God: "They could not enter in because of unbelief." In this—the absence of faith—we have the secret of the non-success of the greater number of our petitions. And our faith must be such as to bring us to the mercy-seat pleading again and yet again the self-same request. Our faith must not fail, if at first asking no answer comes, for we "ask amiss" if we ask not perseveringly. (*W. R. Inglis.*) *The causes of unsuccessful prayer*:—1. We ask amiss, and consequently without success, when we fail to feel the parental love of God. Your approaches to the mercy-seat have been visits of ceremony, rather than affection; your prayers have been elaborations of language, rather than bursts of strong desire. Cold reserve has taken the place of open-hearted confidence; and you have often said only what you thought you ought to feel, instead of saying what you really felt, and asking for what you really wanted. You have treated God as a stranger. You have not confided to Him your secrets. You have not even told Him so much as you have told your father or mother. You have not trusted His mighty love. 2. We ask amiss if, in our prayers, we fail to realise the mediation of Christ. Though children, we are rebels; and there is no rebel so sinful as a rebel-child. We have forfeited the original rights of children, and can approach God no more directly, but only mediately. You close your prayers with the formula, "We ask all these things for Christ's sake"; but in religion meaning is everything, and what do you mean? Do you truly renounce dependence on yourself, and rely alone on the worthiness of Jesus? Do you make His name your grand argument, and only hope? Does the fact of His mediation have to you the force of a reality? Do you put all your prayers into His censer, that they may be offered as His own? 3. We ask amiss when we ask for wrong things. The heart will ever give a bias to the judgment. What we know depends upon what we are. In our case the heart is wrong; the judgment, therefore, is likely to be wrong; and as a further consequence, we are likely to ask for wrong things. In us there is at once the inexperience of childhood, and the darkness of a perverted nature; and, naturally, the things we wish for are not always the things a loving Father could bestow. In this world of illusions, and from this heart of darkness, we often ask for a temptation, or for a sorrow, or for a curse, when, deceived by its wrong name or fascinating aspect, we think it would be a glorious boon. Where and what should we now have been if all our prayers had been answered? There can be no mistake in the judgment of the "only wise"; no unkindness in "love"; no unfaithfulness in Him whose name is "faithful and true." What if your prayers had been heard? Agrippina implored the gods that she might live to see her infant Nero an emperor. Emperor he became, and from his imperial throne plotted that mother's death. 4. We ask amiss, when our prayers are wanting in intensity. "A thing may be good in itself," remarks a Puritan father, "yet not well done. A man may sin in doing a good thing, but not in doing well. When Cicero was asked which oration of Demosthenes he

thought best, he said, 'the longest.' But if the question should be, which of prayers are the best, the answer then must be 'the strongest.' Therefore, let all young converts who are apt to think more than is meet of their own enlargements, endeavour to turn their length into strength, and remember the wide difference between the gift and the grace of prayer." 5. We "ask amiss" if we are satisfied with devoting hurried and infrequent periods of time to the exercise of prayer. True, prayer consists not in telling off a long rosary of solemn words; and that length which is simply the result of formal routine, or verbal fluency, is to be condemned without reserve; but this does not render it the less important that we should have seasons, long and frequent as circumstances will allow, which shall be regarded as sacred to prayer; stated seasons, when, like the prophet in his cave, or the priest in the holiest place, the soul is to be alone with God, to speak and to be spoken to, to rise above the life of the senses, and thus to cultivate a sacred intimacy with Him who is invisible. Many a man, if he dared to give his thoughts expression, would say, "I have so much to do that I really have no time for prayer." Luther thought differently when he said, "I have so much to do that I find I cannot get on without three hours a day of praying." No time for prayer! But the scholar must have time to read his books, and the sailor to consult his compass. Every man must have time for his own vocation; and your vocation is prayer. As a man lives by his labour, a Christian lives by his faith, and prayer is but the act by which faith draws the spirit's supplies of life from God, the Source. 6. You should also be reminded that the dominion of some particular sin may often rob your prayers of their efficacy. 7. "We ask amiss" when we ask for a blessing on some sinful deed, or on something which we do for a sinful end. A Roman robber is said thus to have prayed to the goddess Laverna: "Fair Laverna, give me a prosperous robbery, a rich prey, and a secret escape. Let me become rich by fraud, and still be accounted religious" (Horace, Ep. I., Lib. i. 16, 60). The Pharisees, those Brahmins of ancient Israel, "devoured widows' houses," and yet, "for a pretence, made long prayers," no doubt trying to believe that prayer sanctified their fraud, and had a virtue to secure its prosperity. Many a man, who wears a worthier name than they, will pray, when, if he had but courage to analyse his prayer, he would find that he is virtually asking God's blessing on some sin. He will pray when he sets out on some enterprise which must prove a temptation to himself, or which tends to the injury of others; he will pray as he begins some act of strife or litigation; he will pray when he is about to engage in some commercial dishonesties, made "respectable" by custom, or disguised by some gentle name; and, while he cannot afford, or will not dare to consider the question of their Christian lawfulness, he prays that God may bless him in his deed; and the desire of his heart is that he may still be "counted religious." But even though the thing we seek be intrinsically good, if our motive in seeking it be doubtful, our prayers will be unavailing. Not only must we know what we ask, but why we ask it. You may do right to ask for health; to ask for the powers of industrial efficiency; to ask for social influence; to ask God to "speed the plough" of worldly toil; for there is no evil inherent in the nature of these things; but if you ask simply with a view to purposes of pride or pleasure, God will be silent. (*C. Stanford, D.D.*) *Hindrances to the efficacy of social prayer*:—1. The comparatively small numbers who sustain it may help to account for the comparatively slight and partial results of social prayer. As every power must be stronger in its collective than in its separate existence, in its aggregate than in its individuality — and will have augmented force in the degree of its increasing accumulation—efficacious as is solitary prayer, social prayer has a heightened efficacy; and if "the prayer of one righteous man avail much," the prayers of many avail more. When, therefore, we "forsake the assembling of ourselves together"—when we leave them to be sustained by a limited and variable attendance—what wonder is it if we find that in proportion as they lose in social force, they die in spiritual effect? There is yet another affecting consideration. When all the inhabitants of a certain district are summoned for the purpose of sending a petition to the legislature, but only a few respond; the inference is, that, whatever may be the feeling of a few individuals, the community itself is indifferent to that petition, and it is, therefore, set aside as a thing of utter insignificance. On the same principle, when a Church is summoned by its executive ministry to weekly meetings for prayer, and only a few members attend, is it not a fair inference that the Church itself is indifferent to those prayers? They may, indeed, be earnestly presented by individuals, but the whole society is not identified with their presentation; and if God dealt with us, as man

deals with man, we could not feel surprised if such prayers of the Church were rather regarded as an assertion of its indifference, than an expression of its strong desire. 2. Want of agreement in spirit, on the part of those who meet to pray, may sometimes hinder the success of social prayer. If, while one prays aloud, the rest are prayerless; if, instead of pouring their desires along the channel of his language, they are the listless victims of unsettled and dispersive thought, before God there is no prayer meeting, but only one solitary prayer. Let every man, if possible, sign every petition—sign it with his individual mind—and make it his own, or else let all the non-consenting multitude separate, each man to "mourn apart," and to offer his sacrifice in solitude. 3. Much of what frequently enters into the exercise of social prayer, is no prayer at all, and is therefore followed by no definite results. Shall the Church only be in earnest when in sorrow, and do we require persecution to teach us how to pray? 4. Another cause of ineffectiveness may be the frequent want of suitable gifts on the part of those who lead the devotion. When alone with God, the language of silence, or of confused, broken, almost silent speech, tell all that need to be told; but it is different in social prayer; there, the "gift of utterance" is required, and the prayer utterer, like the preacher, must find fit words, and seek the gift no less than the grace of prayer. (*Ibid.*) "*Ye ask, and receive not*":—The words are obviously written as in answer to an implied objection: "Not ask," a man might say; "Come and listen to our prayers; no one can accuse us of neglecting our devotions." Incredible as it might seem that men plundering and murdering, as the previous verses represent them, should have held such language, or been in any sense men who prayed, the history of Christendom presents but too many instances of like anomalies. Cornish wreckers going from church to their accursed work, Italian brigands propitiating their patron saint before attacking a company of travellers, slave-traders, such as John Newton once was, recording piously God's blessing on their traffic of the year; these may serve to show how soon conscience may be seared, and its warning voice come to give but an uncertain sound. (*Dean Plumptre.*) *The Dead-prayer Office*:—What becomes of all the unanswered letters? Many of them find their way to the Dead-letter Office. Some never reach the person for whom they are intended because the postage is not paid; some fail because they are directed to the wrong office; some cannot be sent because the address is illegible; and some because the matter enclosed is not such as may be sent by post. All these are examined at different offices, and finally they fall into the Dead-letter Office. Some of the reasons assigned why letters go to the Dead-letter Office will hold good of unanswered prayers. But no really valuable prayer with a heart's message in it ever fails of its destination or goes unanswered. *Wrong praying*:—Sometimes we ask for things which would be very hurtful to others, though they might be gain to us. A poor boy needed a sovereign to enter a mechanical institute, where he would have great advantages. He only heard of it a short while before the opening of the term, and he did not see how he could get the money in time. His father could not afford to give it to him; he tried in vain to raise it. He was too proud to ask a friend for it; so he prayed God that he might somewhere find the sovereign he needed. He did not find it. Now, was there anything wrong in the prayer? At first sight it looks simple and harmless enough, doesn't it? But think for a moment. Would not some one have to lose the sovereign before the lad could find it? That puts the matter in a very different light. This poor lad was asking God to take the money out of some one's pocket and put it into his. But it surely is not fair to ask God to help us at the expense of other people. (*J. Thomson.*) *Little sins*:—We may be asking of God, and yet, at the same time, clinging to some one sin—perhaps some very small thing in itself, as we call it, but enough to interrupt the current between us and God. It does not take such a very large thing to interrupt the electric current. A whole train was stopped not long ago because some small insect had got where it ought not to have been. It stopped the electric current that turned a certain disc to show the engineer whether or not he was to go on. That little insect stopped the current and the whole thing went wrong; the engineer stopped the train, which was not necessary at all. So it does not take a very obviously visible sin to break the communication between God and us. (*Theodore Monod.*) *Thoughtful prayer*:—The father of Sir Philip Sidney enjoined upon his son, when he went to school, never to neglect "thoughtful prayer." It was golden advice, and doubtless his faithful obedience to the precept helped to make Philip Sidney the peerless flower of knighthood and the stainless man that he was—a man for whom, for months after his death, every gentleman in England wore mourning. (*Baxendale's*

Anecdotes.) *Aimless praying:*—I think that most men, when they pray, are like an archer who shoots in the dark. Some one tells him that if he will strike the target placed in a certain hole, he shall have such a reward; and he lets fly his arrow into the hole, without being able to see the object which he wishes to hit, hoping that he may hit it and that the reward will be forthcoming. And we take our desires as arrows, and, without seeing any target, fire, and fire, and fire, till our quiver is empty, hoping that we may hit something, and that some benefit may revert to us. Many men pray, and pray, and pray, till they are tired of praying, without any perceptible result, and then say, "It is of no use; it is fantasy and folly." Some men pray, not because they think they will hit anything, but because it makes them feel better. Very few men pray intelligently. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Foolish prayers unanswered:*—One of Æsop's fables tells how a herdsman who had lost a calf out of his grounds sent to seek it everywhere, but not finding it betook himself to prayer. "Great Jupiter," said he, "if thou wilt show me the thief that has stolen my calf I will sacrifice a kid to thee." The prayer was scarcely uttered when the thief stood before him—it was a lion. The poor herdsman was terrified, and his discovery drove him again to prayer. "I have not forgotten my vow, O Jupiter," he said, "but now that thou hast shown me the thief, I will make the kid a bull if thou wilt take him away again." The moral of the fable is that the fulfilment of our wishes might often prove our ruin. Our ignorance often betrays us into errors which would be fatal if our prayers were granted. It is in kindness to us that they are refused.

Ver. 4. **The friendship of the world is enmity with God.**—*The friendship of the world enmity with God:*—I. WHAT WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND BY THE FRIENDSHIP OF THE WORLD. 1. In what sense the word "world" is to be taken. (1) "The world" is often put to signify the wicked men of the world, whether unbelievers or believers, of evil and profligate lives (1 Cor. xi. 32). (2) It is sometimes put to signify the vicious actions and customs of the world (Rom. xii. 2; Jas. i. 27; Tit. ii. 12; 2 Pet. ii. 20). (3) It is likewise used to signify the things of the world and the enjoyment of them, viz., the riches, honours, and pleasures of it, and, in one word, everything belonging to it which men are apt to be pleased with (Matt. xvi. 26; Gal. vi. 14). It is this that is chiefly intended here. 2. What degree of friendship with the things of the world is here condemned. (1) When we love them more than we do God, our Saviour, religion, and our souls, or indeed with any degree of nearness or equality to them. (2) When we love them more (though vastly short of God, our Saviour, our souls, our religion, and the spiritual rewards of it, if such a thing could possibly be supposed) than they in themselves really deserve to be beloved, and for other ends and purposes than God has designed them for; when we love them as our own, as bringing mighty delights with them, as being certain, permanent, durable goods. II. SOME MARKS OR SIGNS BY WHICH WE MAY CERTAINLY KNOW WHETHER WE ARE SUCH FRIENDS OF THE WORLD AS ST. JAMES CONDEMNS. If, therefore, we find our thoughts and affections chiefly taken up with the things of this world; if the main bent of all our studies and endeavours tends this way; if for the sake of these things we attempt such difficulties, run such hazards, as we would not for the sake of anything else whatsoever, not even for God's and our own soul's sake, venture upon; if our hearts are rather set upon making ourselves or our children rich and great than wise and good; if we suffer ourselves to give way in the cause of God and religion, and let this man's greatness and the other man's wealth, this secular inconvenience and that consideration of worldly gain, keep us from doing our duty or frighten us from opposing wickedness—if this, or anything like this, be our case, there is no room left to dispute what principle we are governed by, but the world, which so plainly shows its authority over us, must have us. III. FOR WHAT REASONS SUCH A FRIENDSHIP OF THE WORLD MUST NEEDS BE ENMITY WITH GOD. 1. You cannot but see how unreasonable, ill-proportioned, and unjust a love this is. It robs God; prefers the creature to the Creator, shadows to substances, &c. It reflects upon God's honour and disparages His wisdom by perverting the designs of it. 2. You cannot but see how vastly it is below the nature and dignity of man, who was made and is fitted for much nobler enjoyments. 3. You cannot but see how directly contrary and repugnant this is to the very nature and design of the Christian religion; to the example of our blessed Saviour, who declared both in word and deed that He was not of the world; to our own constant professions of being subjects of a kingdom that is not of this world; to the great end of our Lord's coming, which was to save us from this evil world, to chase us out of it, and

to make us a peculiar people to Himself, that should not mind earthly things; to His most plain and frequent commands, &c. 4. You cannot but see how plainly this tends to wear away and utterly extirpate all sense and regard of God and religion out of our minds. (*Wm. Dawes, D.D.*) *Worldliness*:—1. Worldliness in Christians is spiritual adultery. It dissolves the spiritual marriage between God and the soul. To let the world share with God is an evil, but to prefer the world before God is an impiety. 2. Women have special need to take heed of worldly pleasures and lusts: "You adulterers and adulteresses." 3. To seek the friendship of the world is the ready way to be God's enemy. God and the world are contrary: He is all good, and the world lieth in wickedness; and they command contrary things. The world saith, "Slack no opportunity of gain and pleasure; if you will be so peevish as to stand nicely upon conscience, you will do nothing but draw trouble upon yourselves." Now, God saith, "Deny yourself; take up your cross; renounce the world." Well, now, you see the enmity between God and the world. (1) Think of it seriously when you are about to mingle with earthly comforts and delights, and can neglect God for a little carnal conveniency and satisfaction; this is to be an enemy to God, and can I make good my part against Him? He is almighty, and can crush you (Ezek. xxii. 14). And He is a terrible enemy "when He whetteth His glittering sword" (Deut. xxxii. 41). Nay, if none of all this were to be feared, the very estrangement from God is punishment enough to itself. (2) Learn how odious worldliness is; it is direct enmity to God, because it is carried on under sly pretences. Of all sins this seemeth most plausible. (*T. Manton.*) *The world or God*:—Man is a creature perpetually balancing himself between the impulses of hate and love. In the affections of the soul no man liveth to himself. We must go beyond ourselves for information, for inspiration, for enjoyment. Likes occasion dislikes, and between these two poles all mankind dwell. When desire is normal it centres in God, and the soul comes into harmony with the universe. When we love the Creator supremely, we must receive delight from every part of the creation in the degree its Lord designed. The love of God is inclusive of the love of all that is good. Instead of narrowing, it expands infinitely our capacity of happiness. It awakens the dullest soul to a consciousness of the beautiful and the sublime in nature. It sanctions with the loftiest motives the pursuit of knowledge. It pronounces a blessing even on those lesser gifts which minister to the gratification of bodily appetite. All these contribute to his pleasure whose chief delight is in the Maker of all. Godliness has not only the promise of the world that now is, it has whatever is excellent in that world. Lovely as this earth may appear to the believer, his controlling impulse is not love of the world, but love of God. If, on the other hand, our desires turn away from the great Father, they must rest on something He has made. It may be a person, it may be wealth, art, pleasure, fame; in any case the result is the same. We have wrecked the universal order; we have assailed the symmetry and splendour of the cosmos. We have turned things upside down. We have put the less in the place of the greater. We have deified the material and dethroned the eternal. Such an affection is in its essence exclusive and intolerant. We may love God and enjoy all else, but the converse of the proposition is never true; the friendship of the world is enmity with God. We all must love; the only question is, Shall our affections ennoble, bless, glorify the soul? or shall they isolate, degrade, blast it for ever? Shall this world or shall the Almighty demand our highest regard? In our senses we can make but one response. Our real difficulty is with the perilous fascination that is an attribute of carnality. He who sets his heart on things temporal, who rests his chief happiness here, who feels he would give up everything rather than the pleasures of sense, loves the world and hates God. In particular, we ought not to put an extravagant estimate on things of the earth. The chief danger of living to a moral intelligence lies in unconsciously magnifying the importance of temporalities. We cannot see how we can get along without these imposing advantages. Health lies piled up around us. Success flits like a vision ahead. We easily come to believe that life devoid of these is not worth the living. It is always natural to exaggerate the worth of agencies that we have found efficient. It is too often taken for granted that with each stroke of fortune there is an increase of happiness, with each promotion in office an increment of comfort, with each addition to the income a further escape from care. There are millions who believe in all sincerity that if they can only get along in the world pleasure is assured, reputation will come as a matter of course, popularity will drop like ripe fruit, honour rise like a growing plant; even the service of God will be rendered easier and more effective. Whether such attain their purposes or not,

their desires have overflowed the banks and threaten destruction. The world is toned out of all reason and justice. God is forgotten, even despised, in the comparison. We must guard against immoderate exertion to obtain worldly good. It is folly for one to shatter health to gather gold. It is miserable infatuation for one to destroy his mind to retain a place of endless perplexities. Above all, it is appalling unwisdom for one to fill his soul with remorse that he may cram his safe with securities. Whoever takes or would take success on such terms is as one giving dollars in exchange for pennies, as one trading off white, flashing, flawless diamonds for pebbles by the roadside. To what shall we compare his foolishness? Like the toys that amuse children for an hour and are then flung aside spoiled, broken, insipid, joyless, such are most of the ambitions of men. Too often we resemble those who should erect conservatories to raise one flower, or support great stables to speed a horse for a few seconds, or exhibit a prodigal hospitality to secure a single influential friend, or collect costly pictures to afford entertainment for an hour, or circumnavigate the earth to supply matter for a few conversations, or run for Congress to be noticed in the papers, or import extravagant dresses for a three-line description in a fashion journal. In the name of all that is rational, why this mighty labour for so mean a prize? Why this incessant, immense, incredible work that is done under the sun, which, though a man may labour to seek it out, he shall not be able? Beware of overrating the value of temporal good. There are some things money cannot buy. In all the shops of earth you will find no counter over which money may be exchanged for bodily health, or mental capacity, or peace of soul, or lost time, or neglected opportunities. After all the praise of all the ages, what can this dearly-prized gold buy but a bed to sleep in, a suit to wear, a plateful to eat? We are not to deplore unreasonably its loss. The world is rapidly slipping from us, or we are steadily, swiftly fading from it. No matter how much we have here, we cannot retain it long. Think of yourself, shorn of wealth, deprived of friends, failing in health, what would you have left? If we do not stand ever ready to sacrifice money for the relief of suffering, for the purposes of benevolence, we love it more than God. If, when bankruptcy comes, life sinks into sullenness, envy, bitterness, we loved luxury more than the Lord of all. If death alarms, if the only consolation is the throwing back a lingering, despairing look on pleasures for ever past; if the principal torment is the anticipation of a mysterious future, then, too, the friendship of the world has wrought the enmity of God. Never was friendship more injudicious, never was hostility more unjust. No man can exhibit greater folly than he who, to please and enjoy this fading earth, forgets, affronts, defies the Lord of heaven. The world is insufficient, unsubstantial, deceptive, evanescent. God is infinite, omnipotent, eternal, able to bestow on man fulness of knowledge and perfection of happiness, granting us in His light to see light, and bidding us draw with joy out of the wells of salvation. "What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Every voice in the universe calls upon us to direct love aright. "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," and all the world we should have will be added. Make the contrary choice, and the only issue can be disaster, defeat, and the horror of a great darkness. Who will die for ever for the friendship of this poor world? (*S. S. Roche.*) *Worldly friendship enmity to God*:—I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN BEING A FRIEND OF THE WORLD. To be a friend of the world, we should be inclined to think, at first view, would be rather estimable than otherwise. Ought not every Christian to be a friend to his fellow-man? Should we not cultivate dispositions of love, benevolence, and kindness towards all? Yes. But to be a friend of the world, in the sense of the text, is totally different from this. It implies—1. Love. If you love the world, you are, in the sight of God, the friends of the world. Sinners love those who, like themselves, are destitute of the grace of God in the heart. 2. Association. Friends consort together; they are frequently found in each other's company; not merely because duty leads them there, or business calls them, but because inclination draws them towards one another. 3. Conformity. Friends conform to each other. There is a mutual forbearance with each other's inclinations, rules, and customs. 4. Assimilation. Friends resemble each other in the selection of those things most likely to contribute to their comfort and happiness. II. CONFIRM THE STATEMENT MADE IN THE TEXT: he is the enemy of God. 1. This is an awful fact; and in illustration of it, we remark, that such a man is—(1) An enemy to the law of God. Nothing can more fully prove an individual to be an enemy, than his systematic attempts to set at nought those precepts and injunctions which he is aware that it is his duty as well as his privilege to obey (Rom.

xii. 2; 1 Thess. v. 22; Exod. xxiii. 2). (2) An enemy to the grace of God. He refuses to yield to the striving of the Holy Spirit, and strengthens the principles of depravity in his nature, and plunges still deeper into the abyss of sin and guilt. (3) An enemy to the will of God. He is continually endeavouring to accomplish his own gratification in those things which the Judge of all the earth has prohibited. (4) An enemy to the cause of God. By this is meant the work which Jehovah is carrying on throughout the world for the salvation of all mankind; the means which He has adopted, and the plans which He has set forth, for the rescue of immortal souls; thus bringing them from the galling yoke of Satan into the liberty and privileges of the gospel. (5) An enemy to the people of God. It is gratifying to the wicked to throw obstacles in their path to the kingdom of heaven; and, if possible, to turn them altogether out of the way of salvation. 2. What is implied in being an enemy of God. (1) The character is at once dishonourable and disgraceful. Such a person is at variance with all goodness, excellence, and truth; all that angels admire, extol, and love; all that excites joy, triumph, and endless gratitude in the breast of redeemed spirits, who "circle His throne rejoicing." (2) The enemy of God is guilty of the foulest ingratitude. Is not the Lord Jehovah our best friend, constantly loading us with benefits? (3) The enemy of God is miserable. The deepest despair of the lost soul arises from being for ever excluded from God; and though the wicked experience not the anguish of the damned, it is because their probationary state is not yet terminated, and they are still in a world where mercy triumphs, and where vengeance is not speedily executed. (*R. Treffry.*) *The world's friends, and the friends of God:*—The question sounds harsh on the ears, and wounds the feelings of many who hear it. And yet it comes from that same blessed One who tells us, "God so loved the world," &c. It must be love, the perfect love in its free outflowing, the love which seeks and works out the whole good of its objects, Divine love itself, which appeals to our own conscience: "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" A question of this form must require an affirmative reply; and the next words supply it. But do our heart and conscience give that expected answer? First, what is this "world," which a friend of God may not love? We are sure it cannot be simply the fair creation which Himself pronounced to be very good. And we are equally sure it cannot be simply the social relationships in which we stand. The bonds of family life, the ties of friendship, the claims of human society, springing from His fatherly love, are redeemed in Jesus Christ, are sanctified by His Spirit, and are constantly upheld by His Word and providence. If in any sense these human relationships come under the language of the text, it must be in some faulty and perverse reference in which we have learned to regard them. Now, this false view of things about us is noticed in the expressions used in this chapter. "The lusts that war in your members." "Ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." And the strong, and, as we should say, the opprobious name used in this text, points to the same false view and false use of the objects and relationships by which we are surrounded. St. John, in his first Epistle, speaks in very similar language (ii. 15, 16). 1. "The lust of the flesh"; when our ruling motive in the use of these things is to gratify the appetites and passions of the body, not to supply its necessities, not to keep it in health, and to fit it for its proper work. And not only bodily passions or desires. When we remember how the flesh is opposed to the spirit in the New Testament, we see that the word includes in it very much at least of the evil which St. Paul ascribes to the soul—the strong active desires of our nature so far as they are corrupt. 2. Again; the world in us is partly "the lust of the eye." It may be asked why this one of the bodily senses is singled out for separate mention. And, if the answer is sought in our own self-questionings, the question is wisely asked, and will find its answer more and more constantly. For who can estimate the power of the eye to receive pure and healthy impressions of truth and love, of gentleness and meekness, of self-denying simplicity, and of heaven-born purity? 3. Once more; the world in us is partly "the pride of life"—the pride of this world's existence, as the heart fastens upon outward show of visible and tangible objects, wealth, respect and homage from without, reputation, or whatever else it may be, as far as these exalt oneself above another, and consequently in some sense distinguish and separate men by these outward distinctions. This world-worship may assume an unselfish character. The process may be pushed forward for others, not for ourselves. But still it is a world which no friend of God may love, whether in himself or in another. So St. John's description is realised not only within us, but without us, in the outward

world itself. Are there not many objects around us, and many arrangements of things whose very purpose and almost only effect is to foster those sinful propensities; schemes carefully devised for this very end; some in a more refined manner; some more coarsely; the former only the falser for their apparent refinement; the latter repulsive at first sight or embrace, gradually habituating the body and the soul to the very coarseness of their vice? But view these arrangements and fashions of things in their most refined outward form; shed over them the lustre which the most refined art can supply; give them the outline of beauty, the harmony of colour and of sound, sweetness of melody, gracefulness and life of graceful movement, the charm of sympathy in pleasure, and the responsive enjoyment of friendship or of love. And is it to feed any one of these three, the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, and the pride of life? Or, in St. James's words, do you ask for them that you may consume them on your own desires? Then what have you done? You have taken fragments of God's beautiful world, elements of His beautiful order; you have misshaped and miscombined them, though in forms beautifully false; you have expelled Him from the work of your own skill and taste; and you have made a world, the friendship of which is ruin to yourself and enmity with Him. But we must go a step further in testing the true and the forbidden use of human art. Let us take the case where the purpose is an intellectual gratification. When form and colour and sound are results of pure and simple intellectual taste, and occasions of pure and simple intellectual enjoyment, is this a world of which we may be friends? The question almost answers itself! If we make a world of art for ourselves, or a world of intelligent thought and speculation, or accept the creation of some other more accomplished than ourselves, is it really a new world? or is it truly and honestly a part of God's world or God's order? Where is His place in it? Is He acknowledged or expelled? Nay, is He, after all, the centre and life of that world? Do all its parts and all its subordinate order point directly and tend to Him? I do not ask if we are at every moment consciously realising His presence in it. But does it tend to bring us to Him, and to reveal Him to us? This right tendency may be more or less direct or indirect. But it must exist, it must be an essential element, in true intellectual exercise. But what of the more common enjoyment of natural beauty, enjoyment which is open even to uninstructed and uncultivated minds? Here, too, is the same distinction. Men speak of looking up from nature to nature's God. It may be a true expression: it may be only a mask. The passive enjoyment of natural beauty is not looking up to God at all: it is personal gratification, perhaps of the body, perhaps of the soul. This passive enjoyment, when rightly used and controlled and directed, may be the first step of a real ascent from nature to nature's God. But who and what is the God to whom we thus ascend? Is He infinite greatness, and skill immeasurable by us, acting in ways so various and so beautiful that we are lost in the contemplation? Is He untold goodness whose love to His creatures shine through every one of the natural beauties which we admire and love? And is this all? I fear our friendship of this world is enmity with God. The blind sense of immeasurable greatness leads only to idolatry, to worship of visible or invisible creatures, or of the thoughts of our own hearts. The blind sense of untold goodness takes away the thought of sin, the consciousness of warfare against God, and wraps us up in weak and godless sentiment. Our God in such case is at the very best some ancient Father of gods and men, or some Hindoo abstraction of the Supreme; or even, perhaps, the deification of some form of natural beauty, or some image of our own hearts. It may seem that we have dwelt too much on the negative side of this great Christian principle. But, surely, the direct positive principle has not been wanting. Our safety is this. "The Word of God abideth in us." That Word of God is Jesus Christ Himself; Jesus Christ revealing Himself, revealing the Father, working by His Spirit. Enthrone Him in your heart. Present yourself to Him a living sacrifice, body, soul, and spirit, and you are safe. For you will find Him everywhere, in the world without, in the world within. Friendship and love, art and science and nature, all will discover Him when once you have found Him in yourself, and will bind you to Him more and more closely. And He will shed upon them the pure and gentle light of His own love, which will save you from the false friendship of the world, will cheer you under all its disappointments and deceits, and lead you through this world to another world, where all objects of love and friendship are pure as He is pure, and Himself is visibly enthroned above them all. (*J. F. Fenn, M.A.*) *Friendship with the world*:—I. THE WORLD, THE FRIENDSHIP OF WHICH IS COURTED BY TREACH-

EROUS AND LUKEWARM CHRISTIANS. II. THE MANNER IN WHICH THAT UNSANCTIFIED FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD WHICH IS CONDEMNED IN THE TEXT MANIFESTS ITSELF. And here we must guard, both on the right hand and on the left. To keep ourselves "unspotted from the world" we are not to go out of the world. Let it be also understood that this friendship with the world is not to be avoided by surliness of manners; not by indifference to the good opinion of the world itself. We are to "please all men"; only we are to remember to do it "for their good to edification." The culpable courting of the world's friendship here condemned manifests itself—1. In being unwilling to encounter reproach and difficulty for Christ's sake. 2. In hiding our opinions, and suffering men to go on in error and spiritual danger, that we may keep up their society. 3. In preferring some interest, some honour, to adherence to conscience. 4. In such obsequiousness to the world's maxims and principles as to lead to at least doubtful compliances. III. THE AGGRAVATION OF THE CRIME CHARGED. Here these friendships with the world which betray Christ are marked by two opprobrious characters. 1. Spiritual adultery. This implies abnegation of God. 2. Enmity to God. The Bible becomes dull; prayer becomes irksome; and final apostasy is often the sad consequence of worldly compliances. IV. THAT MOST EXCELLENT WAY WHICH THE APOSTLE'S DENUNCIATION SUGGESTS. He would have us decide. The benefits of decision are numerous and great. 1. It is ordinarily attended with less difficulty than a vacillating and hesitating habit. 2. It is a noble object to aspire to fidelity to God. 3. There is an interesting reciprocation. If we are God's people, He is our God; and we have everything to expect from Him. 4. The real pleasure which decision opens are many and great. The conscience is at rest; we have unbounded confidence towards God; and the unclouded prospect of heaven is opened before us. 5. The comforting sense of acting according to our real circumstances as responsible dying men, men who are to be judged. (*R. Watson.*) *The contrariety betwixt the world and God:*—1. In the repugnancy of their natures. God is by His nature, pure, holy, undefiled, without contagion of sin, and without permission of any evil; but the world is altogether wicked, defiled with sin, full of all contagion, and deadly poison of iniquity. 2. As their natures are contrary, so are their precepts contrary. God commandeth mercy, liberality, pity, compassion; the world persuadeth cruelty, covetousness, hardness of heart, violence. God commandeth holiness to be fruitful in all good works, to His glory, and to increase therein to ripeness, and a full measure in Jesus Christ. But the world moveth us to filthy conversation, to defile ourselves with carnal lusts and all ungodliness. 3. As their precepts are contrary, so are the qualities of them which love the one and the other contrary. The lovers of God must be led by the Spirit of God, and bring forth the fruits thereof, as love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, but the servants and lovers of the world are possessed with cruelty, mercilessness, wrath. The lovers of God are pure, unrebukable, blameless before Him in love, serving Him in spirit and in truth, but the servants of the world are corrupt, deceitful from the womb, defiled with sin, flattering God with their mouth, and dissembling with Him in their double tongue. 4. Finally, the very love itself is in quality contrary. For the love of God is pure, chaste, holy, spiritual, but the love of the world is impure, unclean, profane, and sensual; wherefore no man can love God and the world. (*R. Turnbull.*) *The friendship of the world—enmity with God:*—Are we God's people? Let us then realise the closeness and sacredness of our relation to Him. He will not allow any other being or object to share along with Him the throne of the heart, but resents every attempt and suggestion of the kind. And forget not that the world is a foreign and hostile power. Friendship with it is enmity with Him. The two are irreconcilable. Many try to please both, and fancy themselves successful. But they are grievously mistaken, for every step in its direction carries them so far away from Him, and all submission to the one is rebellion against the other. Let Christians beware of its influence, for it is stealthy and deceitful. The best defence and preservative is to have the heart filled to overflowing with the love of God—so shall the evil spirit not find the house empty, but full, and be unable to effect an entrance. Are some of you not God's people? See how you may be admitted into His friendship; yea, how you may have Him, your Maker, as your husband. Surely it were a blessed thing to be thus united to one so great and gracious—one who can supply our every want, and deliver us from every evil—one who can be infinitely more to us than the nearest and dearest of earthly relatives. His grace alone can draw us into and fix us in this state of spiritual wedlock. And how are any made its subjects? It is only in the way of being abased, emptied of our own self-sufficiency,

divested of all fancied merit, and laid at the feet of Jesus. (*John Adam.*) *Drawn to the world:*—A weeping-willow stood by the side of a pond, and, in the direction of that pond, it hung out its pensive-looking branches. An attempt was made to give a different direction to these branches. The attempt was useless: where the water lay, thither the boughs would turn. However, an expedient presented itself. A large pond was dug on the other side of the tree; and, as soon as the greater quantity of water was found there, the tree, of its own accord, bent its branches in that direction. What a clear illustration of the laws which govern the human heart! It turns to the water—the poisoned waters of sin perhaps, but the only streams with which it is acquainted. (*New Cyclopædia of Illustrations.*) *Dark heavenward:*—When the moon shines brightest towards the earth, it is dark heavenward; and on the contrary, when it appears not, it is nearest the sun and clearest toward heaven. (*Archbishop Leighton.*) *The world:*—The world! the world! 'tis all title page! there's no contents. The world! it all depends on a foolish fancy! The world! it is all deceit and lies. The world! it is all vexation—in getting, in keeping, in losing it; and whether we get or lose, we are still dissatisfied. The world! a very little cross will destroy all its comforts. The world! 'tis only a tedious repetition of the same things. The world! will yield us no support or consolation when we most want it, namely, in the horrors of a guilty mind, and in the approaching terrors of death. The world! is unsuited to the powers, infinite passions, and immortal capacities of a soul. The world! is fickle, variable, and unstable as the wind; 'tis always fickle, always changeable, always unstable; there is no steadfastness in its honours, riches, pleasures; 'tis all a lie, all a lie for ever. The world! it never satisfies; we ever wish for change, whether we are high or low, rich or poor; we are always wishing for some new variety to cheat the imagination; the witchcraft of polluted pleasure decays in a moment, and dies. The world! its pleasures are exceedingly limited, and under most painful restraints, attended with bitter remorse, and followed with a horrible dread of bad consequences; the pleasures of impurity are mixed up with cursed disgusts and self-loathings, and have most dreadful damps and twinges of mind when the momentary witchcraft of pleasure is gone for ever. (*J. Ryland.*)

Ver. 5. **The Spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy.**—*The Spirit's jealousy:*—St. James probably meant to give the sense of Scripture, and not to quote the exact words. Scripture teaches us the truth that "the Spirit which dwelleth in us lusteth to envy," or rather, "desireth enviously." I. The class of passages to which St. James seems to refer would include those in which God speaks of Himself as a "jealous" God, and impresses upon the minds of the Israelites the undivided nature of the worship He demanded from them. In such passages God is described as requiring the entire affections of His people. His feeling at the withdrawal of these affections from Him in any degree is spoken of as "jealousy." The meaning of the text will then be, "Do you suppose that the Scriptures mean nothing when they speak of the Spirit of God dwelling in you as requiring absolute rule in your hearts, and longing eagerly after you, even to something like envy of any other influence which is gaining the mastery over your hearts?" The word here translated "lusteth" is rendered "long after," where St. Paul says to the Philippians, "God is my record how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ." II. This meaning of the text will be found, I think, to harmonise with the context. He asks, "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" and adds, "whosoever, therefore, will be"—lays himself out to be—"the friend of the world is the enemy of God." You must choose between the two. "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." "Do you think that the Scriptures speak to no purpose when they tell you that God requires your heart in a way which can only be described by saying that His Spirit longeth after you with enviousness and jealousy?" III. This same view of religion is, as you know, continually brought before us in Scripture. Our Lord tells us that "no man can serve two masters." With a view to testing this singleness of heart in those who desire to be His followers He gave to different persons different commands. He desired one who wished to be with Him to go home to his own house. He called upon the young man who had great possessions to abandon them and follow Him. This unreserved surrender of self to Him was the "one thing needful." Different courses of conduct would test the "willingness" of different persons according as their circumstances or dispositions were different; but in all His disciples the same readiness was necessary in the days when He walked this earth. In all His disciples the

same disposition is necessary now. The design of the gospel is not to set us free on the earth to do as we please; but to place us in our true position as adopted children of God—to turn the heart wholly to Him so that we should not merely have His law written for us as something outside us and hostile to us—as a set of rules for slaves and bondsmen—but written by His Holy Spirit in the fleshy tables of our hearts, as the directions to which our renewed affections would turn with delight. IV. Nor indeed would any other view of the claims and operation of the Holy Spirit be at all consistent with what we observe of all ruling influences in our minds. We all have some predominant desire or tendency which brings into subjection our other desires and tendencies, and to which they yield. This ruling principle exerts an influence upon everything we do; our other tendencies, as it were, group themselves around it, receive its instructions, and do its bidding. Everything is viewed through it as a medium. You all know what this is. And if any one of you has taken the trouble to ascertain what is, in your own case, the ruling tendency of your mind, you will know that it is a jealous tendency—that it "lusteth or longeth after you enviously." V. Now if the love of God—a looking to the things not seen—if holiness be our character, we must expect the Holy Spirit to exert such an influence over us as we know other powers to exert over those upon whose characters we decide by our knowledge of their ruling disposition. We must expect the indwelling Spirit to desire no rivalry—to be satisfied with nothing short of "bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." But what is wonderful is, that persons coming to Church and receiving the Bible—persons who are shocked at open wickedness, and who fancy themselves shocked at it because it is spoken against in God's Word—what is wonderful, I say, is that such persons can pass over as idle words these assertions of the nature of the Spirit's claim on their whole heart, in the practical recognition of which consists that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." Of course a view of religion so fundamentally wrong as to ignore this high notion of the yearning and jealous love of God for those in whom He vouchsafes to dwell would necessarily taint and nullify every supposed religious act of him who, in spite of Scripture, resolved to entertain it. But it is in the particular act of prayer that St. James in the passage before us asserts its ruinous tendency. Let us, then, in conclusion, see how it operates to render prayer ineffectual, and to make what ought to be our solemn service an abomination unto the Lord. Prayer may be viewed in either of two ways. 1. It is a means by which God has appointed that we shall receive that continual supply of grace and strength which is essential to the support of our spiritual life. It is thus a source of benefit and blessing for present use. Besides this, the act of prayer is—2. In itself a training for that higher and more enduring communion with Him which we hope one day to enjoy in His Kingdom. No man prays to any purpose except he prays with a sincere wish—a wish far beyond all other wishes—that God would make him better; that God would do this—do it from the moment the prayer is uttered—and do it evermore unto the end. This must be the sincere and heartfelt longing of every one who hopes to "receive anything of the Lord." This is precisely what, from the nature of the case, the man who is "double-minded" cannot have. (*J. C. Coghlan, D.D.*) *The yearning of the Divine Spirit over us:*—The better MSS. give a different reading of the first words: "The Spirit which He planted [or made to dwell] in us." If we adopt this reading, it makes it all but certain that what is predicated of the Spirit must be good, and not evil. The Greek word for "lusteth" conveys commonly a higher meaning than the English, and is rendered elsewhere by longing after (Rom. i. 11; Phil. i. 8, ii. 26; 2 Cor. ix. 14), or "earnestly desiring" (2 Cor. v. 2), or "greatly desiring" (2 Tim. i. 4). The verb has no object, but it is natural to supply "us." Taking these data we get as the true meaning of the words: "The Spirit which He implanted yearns tenderly over us." The words that remain, "to envy," admit of being taken as with an adverbial force: in a manner tending to envy." The fact that "envy" is elsewhere condemned as simply evil, makes its use here somewhat startling. But the thought implied is that the strongest human affection shows itself in a jealousy which is scarcely distinguishable from "envy." We grudge the transfer to another of the affections which we claim as ours. We *envy* the happiness of that other. In that sense St. James says that the Spirit, implanted in us, yearns to make us wholly His, and is satisfied with no divided allegiance. The root-idea of the passage is identical with that of the jealousy of God over Israel as His bride (Jer. iii. 1–11; Ezek. xvi; Hos. ii. 3), of His wrath when the bride proved faithless. (*Dean Plumptre.*)

Ver. 6. **But He giveth more grace.**—*The greatness of the Divine gifts a source of Christian encouragement:*—I. HE GIVETH MORE GRACE THAN WE DESERVE. That may seem a self-evident proposition. It is like saying He giveth what is undeserved to the undeserving—grace that is entirely beyond and above deserving, above all human merit of every kind. Grace is grace. Ah, how apt are we to forget this. We are so accustomed to its gifts and mercies that we seem to ourselves to have established some kind of right to them. We are so brought up among the precious things of God's kingdom that we never pause to think that these are the fruits of amazing surpassing love. We shall never grow in grace as we ought until we have better perceptions of its true quality. It is from first to last to the undeserving. All its gifts of unbounded goodness are the unmerited expression of Divine pity and love. II. HE GIVETH MORE GRACE THAN WE DESIRE. For we do desire it; if we be gracious persons at all, it is one of the laws of our life. Just as the seed peeps upward from the soil to see the sun as it begins to live anew—just as rivers run to the ocean, as the sun hasteth to his going down, as ships speed on to their haven, as doves fly to their windows, as the exile sighs for his native land, as the weary pilgrim longs for his home, as each man seeks his own company—so the heaven-born soul riseth to things above; the things that she desires. Have you no desire? Ah! then you are not yet a new creature. If we have no spiritual desires we have no spiritual life. We are very apt to commit mistakes as to the strength of our desire for grace. We are very apt to mistake both ways, sometimes to think it is stronger than it is, and sometimes to think it is weaker than it is. We have some temporary vehemence of affection; we mistake that for a settled desire, but God does not. He knows exactly how much there is of thirst and longing in our souls for purity, light, and love, and all that we understand by grace. He knows whether we really do wish to have more of His presence in our life, and how much. We come asking to be received as hired servants in His great house, and He makes us sons. We stand knocking at the door of the temple, hoping to be admitted to the outer court, and He makes us priests. We stand by the palace of the great King, trembling and afraid to enter, and there is no more spirit in us; when, lo! we are carried by the power of His grace into the presence of the King. Thus He conquers us with lovingkindness. "He giveth more grace"—more than we desire. III. HE GIVES US MORE GRACE THAN WE KNOW. We are here only amid beginnings. We have the best things only in seed and germ. The precious things of the Christian resemble the farmer's seed-corn. He lays it aside; it seems but little, but it will make his fields green next spring, and yellow next harvest, and fill his garners with plenty. Now, so the Christian has everything here, but it is in seed. The seed is precious seed, however, and although he goes forth weeping, sometimes, to sow it, he will doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. Much of our joy hereafter will be the joy of admiration, the joy of surprise. We shall say, with wonder, "Was I so rich and did not know it? Had I the germ of all this in store and yet thought of it so lightly? How could I despond, and weep and tremble as I did? But this tearful state of experience is now ended, and here I see, with adoring gratitude, that God was giving me more grace than even then I knew." IV. HE GIVETH ALL GRACE—MORE GRACE THAN WE USE. All grace is for use, not for holding. It is likened by our blessed Lord Himself to talents, one, two, five; given to every man severally according to the man's ability and according to the Master's will. It is not for holding, but for casting, as we have said, like seed-corn into the field of life. There is not one of these talents of which the Master will not require an account, not one which we may hide in the ground. And yet is not this last what we are so apt to do? The evils of this course are manifest. First, we deprive ourselves of the blessedness of giving, and then we deprive others of the blessedness of receiving. But there is more evil than this, and worse. It is more than disuse of talents; it is disease, it is corruption; it is decay, destruction, death, coming by misuse. The gold and silver pieces which the miser hoards up will not, when produced years afterwards, be in the shining state they would have been by wear; and so when the talents committed to the Christian, which have been disused for a long lifetime, are brought out at last, they will not come out in the clear shining state in which they were; and the Master may then say, "Was this what I gave you these talents for? How is the fine gold become dim? I gave you pure knowledge that it might become still purer and wider, ever brightening towards perfect knowledge, and now it is all mingled with error, and the shadow of spiritual ignorance seems to have been deepening instead of passing away. I gave you a

clear conscience, and left it free, and you have dimmed and fettered it—fresh sympathies with all the ardour of heaven, and now you bring them back weakened and petrified. I gave you a bright eye, apt for the darting glance, and now it is dim as an old man's vision. I gave you these talents to spend and use, and so increase; but this is only the rust of them, and it will eat a man's flesh as it were fire." We all have more grace than we use, but we ought to use it far more than we do. The only preparation for receiving grace is—what?—coming to receive grace. The only way in which we can be graciously better is by beginning to be better at once, and believing in God's willinguess to help us. God only requires on our parts more receptive hearts—the willing heart of love. "He giveth more grace" to such. Let us have grace then whereby we may serve God. (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*) *The gift of grace*:—I. THE GRACE OF GOD. 1. Grace denotes favour; that kind of favour, more especially, which flows from the mind of God into the heart of guilty man—all that we understand by "the riches of goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering"; all that awakens, informs, humbles, consoles, animates, and makes meet for "the inheritance of the saints in light." 2. The importance of grace is unspeakable. Who but the partakers of grace can perform one duty in a right manner? 3. Wide and glorious are the operations of Divine grace. It transforms rebels against God into loyal subjects, and the enemies of those around them into ardent friends. It shuts the gates of hell, it consecrates the whole course of life, and it insures, as well as promises, the bliss of immortality. II. THE MANNER OF BESTOWING GRACE. "He giveth grace." 1. Grace is indeed an absolute donation. Could we prefer a claim, we should receive, not a gift, but a debt. 2. In God is the fountain of grace, from which it emanates in every direction; and hence all that share the blessing ascribe it to Him alone, saying, "Of His grace have all we received." III. The grace of God in THE ABUNDANCE OF ITS COMMUNICATIONS; that is, an abundance which daily becomes larger and larger; "He giveth more grace." 1. More is necessary. As the Christian advances in life, he has new duties to perform, new trials to bear, new temptations to encounter. 2. More is desired. It is the tendency of grace, as of everything in nature, to seek after its own increase. 3. More grace is provided. All our wants as Christians have been foreseen equally with those by which we can be affected as creatures. Conclusion: 1. Why do so many remain destitute of grace? They are either careless, and insensible of their need of it; or they are too proud to receive it. 2. Who, then, are made partakers of grace in its amplest communications (Isa. lxvi. 2; 1 Pet. v. 5)? 3. Why should we rest satisfied with the highest measures of grace already bestowed? We are not straitened in God, but in ourselves; we "have not, because we ask not." 4. The time is at hand when grace will be dispensed no longer. (*O. A. Jeary.*) *Divine grace*:—The world gives a little that it may give no more; but Christ gives "that He may give." He gives a little grace that He may give grace upon grace. He gives a little comfort that He may give fulness of joy. Souls that are rich in grace labour after greater measures of grace out of love to grace, and because of an excellency that they see in grace. Grace is a very sparkling jewel, and he who loves it and pursues after it for its own native beauty has much of it within him. (*T. Brooks.*) *The abundance of grace*:—The fountain of God's grace is not as a little scanty spring in the desert, round which thirsty travellers meet to strive and struggle, muddying the waters with their feet, pushing one another away, lest those waters be drawn dry by others before they come to partake of them themselves; but a mighty, inexhaustible river, on the banks of which all may stand, and of which none may grudge, lest, if others drink largely and freely, there will not remain enough for themselves. (*Abp. Trench.*) *More and more*:—See the bounty of God—ever giving and ever ready to give more! I. OBSERVE THE TEXT IN ITS CONNECTION. 1. It presents a contrast. "The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy"; on God's part this is met by, "but He giveth more grace." 2. It suggests a note of admiration. What a wonder that when sin aboundeth, grace still more abounds! 3. It hints at a direction for spiritual conflict. (1) We learn where to obtain the weapons of our warfare: we must look to Him who gives grace. (2) We learn the nature of those weapons: they are not legal, nor fanciful, nor ascetical, but gracious. (3) We learn that lusting after evil must be met by the fulfilment of spiritual desires and obtaining more grace. 4. It encourages us in continuing the conflict. 5. It plainly indicates a victory. God will not give us up, but will more and more augment the force of grace, so that sin must and shall ultimately yield to its sanctifying dominion. II. OBSERVE THE GENERAL TRUTH OF THE TEXT. God is ever on the giving hand. 1. He giveth

new supplies of grace. 2. Larger supplies. 3. Higher orders. 4. He giveth more largely as the old nature works more powerfully. This should be—(1) A truth of daily use for ourselves. (2) A promise daily pleaded for others. (3) A stimulus in the contemplation of higher or sterner duties, and an encouragement to enter on wider fields. 4. A solace under forebodings of deeper trouble in common life. 5. An assurance in prospect of the severe tests of sickness and death. III. BRING IT HOME BY SPECIAL APPROPRIATION. 1. My spiritual poverty, then, is my own fault, for the Lord giveth more grace to all who believe for it. 2. My spiritual growth will be to His glory, for I can only grow because He gives more grace. Oh, to grow constantly! 3. What a good God I have to go to! (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Continual grace:*—I have grace every day! every hour! When the rebel is brought, nine times a day, twenty times a day, for the space of forty years, by his prince's grace, from under the axe, how fair and sweet are the multiplied pardons and reprievals of grace to him! In my case here are multitudes of multiplied redemptions! Here is plenteous redemption! I defile every hour, Christ washeth; I fall, grace raiseth me; I come this day, this morning, under the rebuke of justice, but grace pardoneth me; and so it is all along, till grace puts me into heaven. (*Samuel Rutherford.*) *Need of more grace:*—Were you to rest satisfied with any present attainments to which you have reached, it would be an abuse of encouragement. It would be an evidence that you know nothing of the power of Divine grace in reality, for—

"Whoever says, I want no more,
Confesses he has none."

Those who have seen their Lord, will always pray, "I beseech thee, show me Thy glory." Those that have once tasted that the Lord is gracious, will always cry, "Evermore give us this bread to eat." (*William Jay.*) *More grace wanted:*—When Lord North, during the American War, sent to the Rev. Mr. Fletcher, of Madeley (who had written on that unfortunate war, in a manner that had pleased the minister), to know what he wanted, he sent him word, that he wanted but one thing, which it was not in his lordship's power to give him, and that was more grace. **God resisteth the proud.**—*How God resisteth the proud:*—1. He resisteth them by punishing them for their pride against Him, as He did the builders of the turret of Babel. 2. Sometimes He resisteth the proud by hindering their purposes by some means unlooked for, as 2 Kings xix. 9; Acts iv. 21. 3. God resisteth the proud when He turneth their devices upon their own necks, and maketh them fall into the same mischiefs and snares which they have prepared for others (Esther vii. 9). 4. God resisteth the proud by confounding their counsels, enterprises, and devices, as appeareth in proud Achitophel and others; as in the invincible navy of the proud Spaniards sent against little England, so confounded and in greatest part destroyed by the mighty hand of God. 5. God resisteth the proud by removing and taking away from them the things whereof they have been proud. Some are proud of riches, as he that said to his soul (Luke xii. 20). Him God resisted by removing him and his riches. Some are proud of beauty, whom God resisteth by sending sickness or other means to hinder and remove that from them. Some are proud of their wit; those He resisted by causing them to fall either by palsy or such like into doting folly. Some are proud of their strength, which languishing sickness abateth. Some are proud of their power, as Nebuchadnezzar, Senacherib, Antiochus, Pompey, Alexander, and the like, whom God resisteth, partly by taking away life, partly by removing their power, wherein they trusted from them. 6. God resisteth the proud when He turneth their ambition and vainglory into ignominy and shame. So God resisted Simon, the wicked sorcerer and deceiver. 7. God resisteth the proud in destroying their remembrance and cutting off their posterity from the earth for their pride and wickedness. Thereof the holy prophet David may be understood. The face of the Lord is against them which do evil, to cut off their remembrance from the earth. 8. God resisteth the proud by sending fear and terror into their hearts, whereof see Job xv. 20–25, xviii. 7–10; 2 Kings vii. 6; Psa. lxxvi. 5; Isa. x. 33, xix. 16. 9. God resisteth the proud and wicked when He armeth one proud and wicked man against another, and causeth them to destroy one the other, as 2 Chron. xx. 22; Isa. xlxix. 26, xx. 2. (*R. Turnbull.*) *The cure of pride; or, the lesson of humility:*—I. Pride is a FOOLISH thing, and for this reason we ought to try to get rid of it. Kings and princes, and persons in high stations, are often proud of the positions they hold. If they obtain those places because they are wise and good, it is God who gives them the wisdom and

the goodness they have. And if He has given these good things, then it is foolish to be proud of them. But if they get these places without being wise or good, then surely it is still more foolish to be proud of them. How many persons are proud on account of their wealth. But even this money is not theirs. It is God's. Now suppose a merchant should give twenty pounds to one of his clerks, and send him out to buy certain things, with directions to come back as soon as he got through, and give an account of how the money had been spent. And suppose that clerk should feel proud of what his employer had entrusted to him, and should boast about it to his friends. Would you not think that very foolish? Certainly. And yet, if we feel proud on account of the money we have, this is just what we are doing. Another thing that persons are proud of is their dress. This is the most foolish of all things to be proud of. Instead of feeling proud of our dress, we ought rather to be ashamed of it. Our clothing is the proof that we are sinful, fallen creatures. And then, if we but remember where our clothing came from, we shall see how foolish it is to be proud of it. II. The second reason why we ought not to be proud is because it is UNPROFITABLE. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." We resist our enemies; and God resists the proud because He regards them as His enemies. Who would wish to be the enemy of God? Do you think it would pay to have God for an enemy? There is nothing in the world so profitable to us—nothing that is worth so much—nothing that pays so well as the grace of God. We read in another place that God "filleth the hungry with good things, but the rich He sends empty away." III. The third reason why we ought not to be proud is because it is DANGEROUS. We learn from the Bible that pride is a great sin; and nothing in the world is so dangerous as sin. And it is because pride is so sinful that we find such words as these in the Bible about it: "The Lord hateth a proud look" (Prov. vi. 17); "The proud in heart are an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. xvi. 5). In Grecian story there is a fable about a man named Dædalus and his son Icarus, which shows the danger of pride. The fable says that Dædalus made wings for himself and his son, so that they might have the pleasure of flying. When the wings were finished, he fitted them on very carefully with wax. Then they took their flight in the air from the island of Crete. Dædalus was humble-minded, and did not attempt to fly very high. He got on very well, passed safely over the sea, and reached the town of Cumæ in Italy, near Naples, where he built a temple to one of the gods. But Icarus his son was a proud young man. He resolved to fly a great deal higher than his father. He went up nearer and nearer towards the sun, till the warmth of its beams melted the wax. Then his wings fell off, and down he fell, head over heels, into the sea. That part of the Mediterranean in which he fell was called the Acarian Sea. It is said to have been so named in memory of that proud young man. (*R. Newton, D.D.*)

God's abhorrence and defiance of the proud:—God abhors other sinners, but against the proud He professes open defiance and hostility. This was the sin that turned angels into devils. You may trace the story of pride from paradise to this day. Other sins are more hateful to man, because they bring disgrace and have more of baseness and turpitude in them, whereas pride seems to have a kind of bravery in it. But the Lord hates it, because it is a sin that sets itself most against Him. Other sins are against God's laws, but pride is against God's sovereignty. Pride does not only withdraw the heart from God, but lifts it up against God. Other sins are more patient of reproof, for conscience will frequently consent to the reproofs of God's Word; but pride first blinds the mind, and then arms the affections—it lays the judgment asleep, and then awakens anger. (*T. Manton.*)

But giveth grace unto the humble.—*Humility a means of contentment:*—God gives grace to the humble. He holds them with complacency, often prospers their undertakings, and causes them to find various advantages in this temper of mind so agreeable to Him. Among these advantages contentment holds a foremost place. I. The humble man is more CONTENTED WITH GOD, with His revelations, commands, ordinances, and dispensations, than he would and could be without the aid of this virtue. Humility prompts him to fall prostrate in the dust before the Most High and to adore Him as the All-wise and All-gracious, even there where he perceives naught but darkness around him. II. The humble man is more CONTENTED WITH HIMSELF than he would and could be without the assistance of that virtue. Not that he imputes to his good qualities, his merits, a higher value than they properly profess, or satisfies himself with any, however low, degree of wisdom and virtue; but he is more contented with himself, inasmuch as he voluntarily submits to the limitations of his nature and his present state, little as it may be in

itself and in comparison with what superior beings may be able to do and to enjoy. III. For the same reason the humble man is more CONTENT WITH THE STATION HE OCCUPIES in the world and in society than he would and could be without the aid of his virtue. He knows that he everywhere finds opportunities and motives to unfold his mental powers, to be useful to his brethren, to exercise himself in obedience to God, and thus to render himself capable of higher occupations and dignities in a better world; and this ennobles and refines all that he does in his opinion, and induces him to do everything with care and conscientiousness. IV. The humble man is far more CONTENTED WITH HIS FELLOW CREATURES than he would and could be without the aid of this virtue. The more modest the opinion he has of himself, of his talents, of his merits, the less does he expect any particular respect, reverence, or submission from others; the less does he imagine he has any right to it; the less does he insolently avail himself of any pre-eminence which he really has. V. The humble man is more CONTENTED IN PROSPERITY AND IN AFFLUENCE than he would and could be without the aid of this virtue. VI. The humble man is likewise more CONTENTED IN MISFORTUNES OR IN ADVERSITY than he would and could be without the aid of this virtue. He knows that as a man he is a frail creature, liable to innumerable accidents, that he has no real claim to an uninterrupted succession of prosperous days and favourable events, and that it is incompatible with the present condition of mankind; and the more sensibly he feels all this, the less is he surprised when such misfortunes actually befal him, if bad and good days alternately succeed in the course of his life. (*G. J. Zollikofer.*) *The humble are the fittest recipients of grace:*—Lumps of unrelenting guiltiness are as vessels closed up, and cannot receive grace; humility fitteth a man to receive it, and maketh a man to esteem it. The humble are vessels of a larger bore and size, fit to receive what grace giveth out. You may learn hence why humble persons are most gracious, and gracious persons most humble. God delighteth to fill up such; they are vessels of a right bore. The valleys laugh with fatness when the hills are barren; and the laden boughs will bend their heads, &c. (*T. Manton.*) *Humility:*—It seems hard that the very grace said to be the most difficult to acquire should often make those who have won it of least account in the world. If it be so in this life, humility will only cry the louder from the grave. No force is ever lost. Sooner or later it will come upon us in all its power. *Humiliation:*—It is with us as with the reeds which grow by the riverside; when the waters overflow, the reed bows its head and bends down, and the flood passes over it without breaking it, after which it uplifts its head and stands erect in all its vigour, rejoicing in renewed life. So is it with us; we also must sometimes be bowed down to the earth and humbled, and then arise with renewed vigour and trust.

Vers. 7–10. **Submit yourselves therefore to God.**—*Submitting ourselves to God:*—I. THE DUTY OF SUBMITTING OURSELVES TO GOD. This submission has its commencement and abiding root in the reception of Christ as a Saviour. The natural heart rebels against a gratuitous justification, against the renunciation of every personal claim, and the acceptance of a salvation for which we are wholly indebted to the mercy of God and the merit of Jesus. It cannot brook the humiliation of taking all as a free gift—of standing on what is not our own, but another's, and of having nothing to boast of, nothing to glory in, but that despised object, the Cross. When we receive Him as the end of the law for righteousness, the old, proud, stubborn spirit yields, is dispossessed, and a new, meek, compliant one succeeds. The surrender thus made is not a temporary or an isolated thing; no, it is both permanent and productive—it abides and fructifies. It leads to a lasting and unlimited submission. II. THE MANNER IN WHICH, OR THE STEPS BY WHICH, THIS SUBMITTING OF OURSELVES TO GOD IS EFFECTED. 1. We must withstand Satan. If we yield a single step, he will instantly press his advantage. Instead of submission here, our constant watchword is to be resistance—uncompromising, unceasing, growing resistance. But in order to success, let us always remember two things, which are of the last importance in this contest. We must encounter him in Divine strength. A heavenly panoply is provided for us, and no other can enable us to conquer. We must, above all, take the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit. The Divine Word, firmly believed and wisely applied, is invincible. 2. We must approach God. Thus only can we be enabled to resist the devil. Not otherwise can we render submission and have it accepted. He will meet your advance. He will not keep aloof from you, whatever your past inconsistency, unfaithfulness—

your going back to the world, your covetous, adulterous solicitation of its friendship. Does this imply that it is not God but man himself who takes the initiative and the lead in the matter? Does he make the first advance? No; it is always and necessarily from God. He is ever the prime mover, not only preceding but actuating us; not only drawing nigh before us but prompting, causing our drawing nigh, whensoever anything of the kind really takes place. His grace brings us; His Spirit sweetly yet efficaciously disposes and enables us to approach. He must visit and quicken us before we turn our faces, or take a single step Zionward. But coming near to God implies certain feelings and exercises—a state of mind and heart suited to a proceeding so decisive and momentous. There must be preparatory to it, or rather involved in it, the putting away of sin. Hence James couples with the call to draw nigh to Him the injunction, "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded." We are certainly not to interpret this in the sense that we can enter the holiest only after we have thus purged away our filthiness. In that case we should never approach God at all; for it is only by coming to Him that we can get the strength necessary for the purpose. We can sanctify ourselves by His grace alone—by it sought and obtained. But we are to draw nigh ever with sincere desires to be delivered from all sin; and not less with strenuous endeavours actually to forsake every evil way, to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. There must also be godly sorrow for sin. The renunciation of it can be made only through unfeigned and profound contrition. We cannot put this evil thing away without grieving over it, feeling how bitter and dreadful it is, how dishonouring to God and destructive to ourselves. A great variety of expression is here employed to intimate that the repentance must be real, deep, thorough. "Be afflicted"—be distressed, be wretched. Let sin weigh heavily upon you, making you sad, miserable in spirit. "Mourn and weep." Be not sullen. Keep not silence. Let not emotion be shut up, but allowed to flow forth in all its natural and proper channels. "Let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness," or humiliation. The term literally signifies the casting down of the eyes, which is indicative of dejection or shame. Having thus unfolded the steps by which they were to render submission, he returns to the point from which he started. "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up" (ver. 10). The one exhortation is substantially the same as the other. We are to abase ourselves, to cast away our pride, to come down from our loftiness. We are to do it before God, in His presence. And what encouragement have we to comply with the call in the assurance, the promise by which it is accompanied? "And He shall lift you up." He shall honour you here and hereafter, conferring on you, as His children, present grace and future glory—now the foretastes, then the full fruition of heavenly blessedness. (*John Adam.*) *The reason why many cannot find peace:*—We frequently meet with persons who tell us that they cannot find peace with God. They have been bidden to believe in the Lord Jesus, but they misunderstand the command, and, while they think they are obeying it, they are really unbelievers; hence they miss the way of peace. They attempt to pray, but their petitions are not answered, and their supplications yield them no comfort whatever, for neither their faith nor their prayer is accepted of the Lord. Such persons are described by James in the third verse of this chapter. We cannot be content to see seekers in this wretchedness, and hence we endeavour to comfort them, instructing them again and again in the great gospel precept, "Believe and live"; yet as a rule they get no further, but linger in an unsatisfactory condition. We will go to the root of the matter, and set forth the reason for the lack of peace and salvation of which some complain. I. First hearken to THE COMPREHENSIVE COMMAND. "Submit yourselves therefore to God." According to the connection, the fighting spirit within many men shows that they have not submitted themselves to God; lusting, envy, strife, contention, jealousy, anger, all these things declare that the heart is not submissive, but remains violently self-willed and rebellious. Those who are still wrathful, proud, contentious, and selfish, are evidently unsubdued. A want of submission is no new or rare fault in mankind; ever since the fall it has been the root of all sin. Man wants to be his own law, and his own master. This is abominable, since we are not our own makers; for "it is He that hath made us and not we ourselves." The Lord should have supremacy over us, for our existence depends on His will. The hemlock of sin grows in the furrows of opposition to God. When the Lord is pleased to turn the hearts of opposers to the obedience of the truth, it is an evident token of salvation; in fact, it is the dawn of salvation itself. To submit to God is to find

rest. The rule of God is so beneficial that He ought readily to be obeyed. He never commands us to do that which, in the long run, can be injurious to us; nor does He forbid us anything which can be to our real advantage. All resistance against God must, from the necessity of the case, be futile. Common sense teaches that rebellion against Omnipotence is both insanity and blasphemy. And then let it always be known that submission to God is absolutely necessary to salvation. A man is not saved until he bows before the supreme majesty of God. Now, it is generally in this matter of submission that the stumbling-block lies in the way of souls when seeking peace with God. It keeps them unsaved, and as I have already said, necessarily so, because a man who is not submissive to God is not saved; he is not saved from rebellion, he is not saved from pride, he is still evidently an unsaved man, let him think whatever he will of himself. 1. Now, in the saved man there is and must be a full and unconditional submission to the law of God. If you say in your heart, "He is too strict in marking sin, and too severe in punishing it," what is this but condemning your Judge? If you say, "He calls me to account for idle words, and even for sins of ignorance, and this is hard," what is this but to call your Lord unjust? Should the law be amended to suit your desires? Should its requirements be accommodated to ease your indolence? 2. And before a man can have peace with God he must submit himself to the sentence of the law. If your plea be "not guilty," you will be committed for trial according to justice, but you cannot be forgiven by mercy. You are in a hopeless position; God Himself cannot meet you upon that ground, for He cannot admit that the law is unrighteous and its penalty too heavy. 3. A man must next submit himself to the plan of salvation by grace alone. If you come with anything like a claim the Lord will not touch the case at all, for you have no claim, and the pretence of one would be an insult to God. If you fancy you have demands upon God, go into the court of justice and plead them, but the sentence is certain to be against you, for by the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified. 4. You must also submit yourselves to God's way of saving you through an atoning sacrifice and by means of your personal faith in that sacrifice. 5. And then there must be full submission to God in the matter of giving up every sin. Either you must cast sin out of your heart or it will keep you out of heaven. 6. If we would be saved there must be submission to the Lord as to all His teachings; a very necessary point in this age, for a multitude of persons, who appear to be religious, judge the Scriptures instead of allowing the Scriptures to judge them. 7. And now I must ask another question of you who desire peace and cannot find it: have you submitted yourself to the providential arrangements of God? I know persons who have a quarrel with God. He took away a beloved object, and they not only thought Him unkind and cruel at the time, but they think so still. Like a child in a fit of the sulks, they cast an evil eye upon the great Father. They are not at peace, and never will be till they have owned the Lord's supremacy, and ceased from their rebellious thoughts. If they were in a right state of heart they would thank the Lord for their sharp trials, and consent to His will, as being assuredly right. Yield yourselves unto God, and pray to be delivered from future rebellion. If you have submitted, do so yet more completely, for so shall you be known to be Christians when you submit yourselves unto God. II. Now consider the other and FOLLOWING PRECEPTS. I think I am not suspicious without reason when I express a fear that the preaching which has lately been very common, and in some respects very useful, of "only believe and you shall be saved," has sometimes been altogether mistaken by those who have heard it. Repentance is as essential to salvation as faith: indeed there is no faith without repentance except the faith which needs to be repented of. A dry-eyed faith will never see the kingdom of God. A holy loathing for sin always attends upon a childlike faith in the Sin-bearer. Where the root grace of faith is found other graces will grow from it. Now notice how the Spirit of God, after having bidden us submit, goes on to show what else is to be done. He calls for a brave resistance of the devil. 1. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." The business of salvation is not all passive, the soul must be aroused to active warfare. I am not only to contend with sin, but with the spirit which foments and suggests sin. I am to resist the secret spirit of evil as well as its outward acts. "Oh," saith one, "I cannot give up an inveterate habit." Sir, you must give it up; you must resist the devil or perish. "But I have been so long in it," cries the man. Yes, but if you truly trust Christ your first effort will be to fight against the evil habit. Ay, and if it is not a habit merely, nor an impulse, but if your danger lies in the existence of a cunning spirit who is

armed at all points, and both strong and subtle, yet you must not yield, but resolve to resist to the death, cheered by the gracious promise that he will flee from you. 2. Next the apostle writes, "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you." He who believes in Christ sincerely will be much in prayer; yet there are some who say, "We want to be saved," but they neglect prayer. 3. The next precept is, "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners." What! does the Word of God tell sinners to cleanse their hands and purify their hearts? Yes, it does. When a man comes to God and says, "I am willing and anxious to be saved, and I trust Christ to save me," and yet he keeps his dirty, black hands exercised in filthy actions, doing what he knows is wrong, does he expect God to hear him? If you do the devil's work with your hands, do not expect the Lord to fill them with His blessing. 4. Then it is added, "Purify your hearts, ye double-minded." Can they do this? Assuredly not by themselves, but still in order to peace with God there must be so much purification of the heart that it shall no longer be double-minded. When you cease trying to serve two masters, and submit yourselves unto God, He will bless you, but not till then. I believe that this touches the centre of the mischief in many of those hearts which fail to reach peace; they have not given up sin, they are not whole-hearted after salvation. 5. Then the Lord bids us "be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness." I grieve to say that I have met with persons who say, "I cannot find peace, I cannot get salvation," and talk very prettily in that way; but yet outside the door they are giggling one with another, as if it were matter of amusement. What right have you with laughter while sin is unforgiven, while God is angry with you? Nay, go to Him in fitter form and fashion, or He will refuse your prayers. Be serious, begin to think of death, and judgment, and wrath to come. 6. Then the Lord sums up His precepts by saying, "Humble yourselves in the sight of God." There must be a deep and lowly prostration of the spirit before God. If your heart has never been broken, how can He bind it up? If it was never wounded, how can He heal it? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *On submission to God*:—I. THE DUTY REQUIRED. We are to submit ourselves unto God. 1. The first step in submission to God has respect to the truths of revelation. The cordial reception of these, however sublime or profound, however obscure or clear, lies at the foundation of all personal religion. It is no degradation of our reason to make it submissive to what God has spoken, although we may not be able fully to understand it in all its bearings. God only wise must know better than man, and therefore the scholar must bow, and not the Teacher. 2. But the submission particularly intended here, has respect to the discipline of God. Does any one ask for illustration? It was displayed by Aaron who held his peace when his two sons fell in death, judicially smitten down by the righteous decree of God. It was evinced by king Hezekiah, who, when the prophet announced the impending destruction of the monarch and his throne, replied to the terrible intelligence—"Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken." It was exhibited in the placid spirit of the sorrow-smitten David, when, amidst the cursings of Shimei who was a ringleader in the conspiracy of Absolom, he said to his faithful servant Abishai—"Let him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him." It was seen in the meek and placid spirit of Eli when rebuked for his remissness of parental authority, and the ephod was to be taken from his family, he exclaimed in words of exemplary resignation, "it is the Lord, let Him do as seemeth Him good." It was apparent in the conduct of Job, when messenger after messenger brought him the dismal tidings of the destruction of his cattle, his servants, and his children, "he fell down upon the ground and worshipped, and said—the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." And more than all, it is the spirit and temper of Him who said—"The cup which My father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" Such are instances of resignation. It is the filial submission of the will and the heart to a parent's conduct. It is the enlightened and sanctified acquiescence of our inner nature with the dealings of God, under the conviction that all His ways are just and good, and that He has our welfare in view by every trial He sends us. II. THE GROUNDS ON WHICH THE DUTY OF SUBMISSION IS COMMENDED AND REQUIRED. 1. The first is the universal disposal of a righteous and gracious providence. There is no truth clearer to the thoughtful mind than this, that nothing can be beyond the notice or the power of God; and yet there is no truth less practically received by a large part of mankind. 2. Submission is our duty—our reasonable duty, as sinful and dependent creatures. Can a child span with its little fingers the vast expanse of the heavens? Can a mortal hand grasp

the globe in its palm? Just as easily can our finite minds take in the entire scheme of Him who is wonderful in counsel and mighty in working. 3. The third ground of submission is the great doctrine of redemption. The love of One who has loved us, suffered and died for us, snatched us from the verge of everlasting woe, placed us beneath the light of the loving-kindness and tender mercy of God, called us to seek and find, if we will, a crown of heavenly glory—may well constrain us to submit for a little while to a discipline which He judges necessary to train us for the inheritance He has procured for all the redeemed. 4. Another consideration on which this duty is founded is that repining is as fruitless as it is sinful. (*H. Hunter.*) *Humble submission to God*:—1. The thing enjoined is submission to God, proceeding from humility, than which nothing is or can be more acceptable unto Him, nothing more commendable among men. Men submit themselves unto God divers ways. (1) In obediently and reverently yielding themselves to His Word and will, in hearing what He commandeth and carefully performing what He enjoineth. (2) As by obeying His will men submit themselves unto God, so by yielding themselves to God's pleasure, to do with them after His will, men likewise submit themselves unto Him. (3) Neither thus only submit men themselves unto God, but also when they bear with patience the cross which the Lord layeth upon them, then submit men themselves to God. 2. The next thing in this first part of duty is the contrary: we must submit ourselves to God, but we must resist the devil also. Wherein we are taught whither all our strivings must tend, even to the withstanding of Satan, with whom we have continual war, and therefore ought we wholly to bend ourselves with all might against him. (1) Now the devil is sundry ways resisted of men, first by faith in Jesus Christ, wherewith we are armed, stand fast without wavering, and thereby resist the assaults of Satan. (2) As we resist him by faith, so also we resist him by prayer, when in our manifold temptations we fly by prayer unto God for succour against the devil—our ancient enemy. (3) Moreover the saints resist the devil when they earnestly give themselves over to the study of virtue and practice of godliness, serving the Lord in righteousness and true holiness of life. Hereby all entry for Satan is shut up; hereby all holes of our hearts are stopped so that he cannot invade us. (4) Satan is, besides this, resisted of the saints when they oppose the law and commandment, the will and the Word of God, to his suggestions and wicked temptations. (5) To conclude, this our enemy is resisted by the aid of God's Spirit, and by the presence of His power, whereby we subdue our enemies, therefore we are exhorted to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Therefore is the spirit of power, the spirit of might, the spirit of wisdom, the spirit of strength, the spirit of fortitude, promised by Christ, that by the help thereof, not only our mortal enemies, but our ghostly adversaries, might be resisted by us. (3) The precept and the contrary being thus set down, the third thing in the former part of duty is the reason of the contrary, why we should oppose ourselves unto Satan and set ourselves to resist him. Which reason is drawn from hope of victory: if we thus and by all means resist him then is he put to flight. Wherefore he may be compared to the crocodile who, as it is affirmed, fleeth away when a man turneth boldly unto him, but followeth very fiercely when he is not resisted. So Satan, that old dragon, that cruel crocodile, fleeth when he is resisted, but followeth us hardly when we give place unto him. (*R. Turnbull.*) *Unconditional surrender*:—This advice should not need much pressing. "Submit yourselves unto God"—is it not right upon the very face of it? Is it not wise? Does not conscience tell us that we ought to submit? Does not reason bear witness that it must be best to do so? "Submit yourselves unto God"—it is what angels do, what kings and prophets have done, what the best of men delight in—there is therefore no dishonour nor sorrow in so doing. All nature is submissive to His laws; suns and stars yield to His behests, we shall be but in harmony with the universe in willingly bowing to His sway. "Submit yourselves unto God"—you must do it whether you are willing to do so or not. Who can stand out against the Almighty? "Submit yourselves unto God" is a precept which to thoughtful men is a plain dictate of reason, and it needs few arguments to support it. Yet because of our foolishness the text enforces it by a "therefore," which "therefore" is to be found in the previous verse—"He resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God." His wrath and His mercy both argue for submission. The Romans were wont to say of their empire that its motto was to spare the vanquished, but to war continually against the proud. This saying aptly sets forth the procedure of the Most High. He aims all His arrows at the

lofty, and turns the edge of His sword against the stubborn; but the moment He sees signs of submission His pity comes to the front, and through the merits of His Son His abounding mercy forgives the fault. Is not this an excellent reason for submission? I. To THE PEOPLE OF GOD, "Submit yourselves unto God." He is your God, your Father, your Friend, yield yourselves to Him. What does this counsel mean? 1. It means, first, exercise humility. The right position of a Christian is to walk with lowly humility before God, and with meekness towards his fellow-Christians. The lowest room becomes us most, and the lowest seat in that room. 2. Let us next observe that our text bears a second meaning, namely, that of submission to the Divine will—that of course would strike you in the wording of the verse, "Submit yourselves therefore to God." Be willing to accept whatever God appoints. It is a happy thing when the mind is brought to submit to all the chastisements of God, and to acquiesce in all the trials of His providence. Knowing as we do that all these things work together for our good, and that we never endure a smart more than our heavenly Father knows to be needful, we are bound to submit ourselves cheerfully to all that He appoints. Though no trial for the present is joyous, but grievous, yet ought we to resign ourselves to it because of its after results. 3. It means also obedience. Do not merely passively lie back and yield to the necessities of the position, but gird up the loins of your mind, and manifest a voluntary and active submission to your great Lord. It is not ours to question, that were to become masters; but ours it is to obey without questioning, even as soldiers do. Submission to our Lord and Saviour will be manifested by ready obedience: delays are essentially insubordinations, and neglects are a form of rebellion. 4. "Submit yourselves to God" by yielding your hearts to the motions of the Divine Spirit; by being impressible, sensitive, and easily affected. The Spirit of God has hard work with many Christians to lead them in the right way; they are as the horse and the mule which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle. There is the stout oak in the forest, and a hurricane howls through it, and it is not moved, but the rush by the river yields to the faintest breath of the gale. Now, though in many things ye should be as the oak and not as the rush, yet in this thing be ye as the bulrush and be moved by the slightest breathing of the Spirit of God. The photographer's plates are rendered sensitive by a peculiar process: you shall take another sheet of glass and your friend shall stand before it as long as ever he likes, and there will be no impression produced, at least none which will be visible to the eye; but the sensitive plate will reveal every little wrinkle of the face and perpetuate every hair of the head. Oh, to be rendered sensitive by the Spirit of God, and we can be made so by submitting ourselves entirely to His will. II. I desire now to address myself TO THOSE WHO ARE NOT SAVED, but have some desire to be so. You tell me that you have been anxious about your soul for some time, but have made no headway. It is very possible that the reason is this, that you have not submitted yourself to God; you are trying to do when the best thing would be to cease from yourself and drop into the hand of the Saviour who is able to save you, though you cannot save yourself. For a proud heart the very hardest thing is to submit. "How, then, am I to submit?" says one: "To what shall I submit, and in what respects?" 1. Well, first, submit thyself, if thou wouldest be saved, to the Word of God. Believe it to be true. Believing it to be true, yield thyself to its force. 2. Yield thyself, next, to thy conscience. He was a fool who killed the watch-dog because it alarmed him when thieves were breaking into his house. If conscience upbraid thee, feel its upbraiding and heed its rebuke. It is thy best friend; faithful are its friendly wounds, but the kisses of a flattering enemy are deceitful. 3. God also sends many messengers. To some of you He has sent the tenderest of monitors. Hearken to their admonitions and regard their kind warnings, for they mean good to thy soul. Remember, God has other messengers whom He will send if these loving ones do not suffice. He will soon send thee a sterner summons. Be not so foolish as to provoke Him so to do. 4. Moreover, submit yourselves to God, since He has, perhaps, already sent His messengers in sterner shapes to you. It was but a few days ago that you lost your old friend. Is there no voice from that new-made grave to you? Methinks your friend in his sudden end was a warning to you to be ready for the like departure! You have also yourself suffered from premonitory symptoms of sickness; perhaps you have actually been sick, and been made to lie where your only prospect was eternity; a dread eternity, how surely yours. I charge you, hear the voice of these providences; listen to these solemn calls, 5. Above all, I pray you submit yourselves, if you are conscious of such things, to the whispers of God's

Holy Spirit. The worst man that lives has his better moments, the most careless has some serious thoughts: there are lucid intervals in the madness of carnal pleasure. At such times men hear what they call "their better selves." It is hardly so. I prefer to call it the general reprovings of God's Spirit in their souls. "Submit yourselves to God." If you ask me again, "In what respect am I to submit myself?" (1) I answer, first submit yourself by confessing your sin. Cry *peccavi*. Condemn yourself and you shall not be condemned. Confess the indictment to be true, for true it is, and to deny it is to seal your doom. (2) Next, honour the law which condemns you. Do not persevere in picking holes in it and saying that it is too severe, and requires too much of a poor fallible creature. The law is holy, and just, and good. (3) Next, own the justice of the penalty. Confess with thy heart, "If my soul were sent to hell it is no more than I deserve." It will go well with you when you make a full capitulation, an unconditional surrender. Fling wide the gates of the city of Mansoul, and admit the prince Emmanuel to rule as sole sovereign in every street in the city. Thou shalt find grace in the sight of the Lord if thou wilt do this. (4) Furthermore, submit yourself to God's way of saving you. Now God's way of saving you is by His grace, not by your merits; by the blood of Jesus, not by your tears and sufferings. He bids you trust His Son Jesus; will you do so or not? If you will not, there is no hope for you; if you will, you are saved the moment that you believe—saved from the guilt of sin by trusting Jesus. (5) You must also surrender yourself at discretion to His method of operating upon you. He tells thee plainly, "If thou believest on the Lord Jesus Christ thou shalt be saved." Wilt thou believe or no? For if thou dost not, neither dreams, nor visions, nor terrors, nor anything else can save thee. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Submission to God:* —1. Man must "submit himself" to God as the God of the gospel. In dealing with men as sinners, the offended, but most merciful, Majesty of heaven has proposed certain terms as those on which alone He will receive any guilty soul into peace and favour with Himself. These terms are admirably fitted to harmonise the salvation of the sinner with the righteousness of God's government and the threatenings of His law. But pride, and other feelings, in the human heart, are wont to rise up against them. Many "going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." But submission to this righteousness must be realised in all who would be justified. 2. Man must submit himself to God as the Lawgiver. In offering pardon Heaven does not absolve the sinner from the moral obligation of the law. Naturally, man rises up, both against the duties which the law prescribes, and against the law which prescribes them; and even where some general submission is indicated towards both, particular parts are apt to be resisted and opposed. But the law of God is wise, and right, and good, in all its principles (chap. ii. 11). The more arduous are as truly matters of obligation as the more easy duties. And man, as under law to God in all things, must in all things "submit" himself to Him. 3. Man must "submit himself to God" as the God of providence. Many are the considerations by which this threefold submission to God might be enforced. (1) Among these is the character of God Himself—more especially His rightful supremacy, His unerring wisdom, His unsullied justice, His irresistible power, His generous love, and His unswerving faithfulness, alike to the threatenings and the promises which He addresses to His creatures. (2) Here, by the connective word "therefore," the oracular saying, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the lowly," is brought to bear, as an enforcement, on the rule, "Submit yourselves to God." And the argument is both clear and strong. If "God sets Himself in battle array against the proud," shall a man proudly refuse to submit to Him? If "God giveth grace to the lowly," shall not the creature yield meek submission to the Creator, and cast himself in dust and ashes at His feet? (*A. S. Patterson, D.D.*) *Submission to God:*—I. EXPLAIN THE NATURE OF THE SUBMISSION HERE ENJOINED. 1. We should submit to God in His authoritative sway. 2. We should submit to God in His gracious influences. 3. Submit yourselves to God in His providential dispensations. II. URGE THE REASONS FOR REDUCING IT TO PRACTICE. 1. We urge it from a consideration of the greatness and goodness of the Being to whom you are called to submit. 2. We urge it on the ground of relationship and obligation. 3. We urge it for the sake of your personal happiness. 4. We urge it from a consideration of the punishment which inevitably follows the crime of non-submission to God. (*Sketches of Sermons.*) *The duty and advantages of submission to God:* —I. SOME PARTICULARS IN WHICH WE ARE TO EXERCISE SUBMISSION TO GOD. 1. We are to submit to God with respect to His providential dispensations towards us.

2. We are to submit to His commands. We may object; we may try to find excuses for disobedience, but till we thus unreservedly submit to God, He will treat us as rebels against His authority. II. A FEW OF THE REASONS WHY WE SHOULD THUS SUBMIT TO GOD. 1. We must submit, because we can make no resistance to any of His appointments. 2. It is good for us to submit ourselves unto God, because He knows what is best for us. 3. The consequences of thus submitting to Him are—(1) Peace in this world. (2) Happiness in the world to come. (*B. Scott, M.A.*) *Submission to God:*—There is a threefold submission to God: of our carnal hearts to His holiness; of our proud hearts to His mercy; and of our revolting hearts to His sovereignty; and all this that we may be pure, humble, and obedient. (*T. Manton.*) *Submission to God:*—The submission that makes no merit of its cross; that does not venture to choose one lighter than the Lord lays on us; that does not seek the ability to bear it in the delirium of pleasure, or the drugs of the world, or the deadening influence of time and change; that does not compare your cross with those borne by others, or ask an explanation of it till the day break and the shadows flee away, but bears it all with a child's love for His sake who did not impose it till He had borne all the weight and sharpness of all the world's crosses together—this is the victory. The earth has no fatal fear, and no insupportable sorrow in it after you have come to this; you are free in a boundless liberty, strong in immortal strength, and at peace in a peace too deep for the understanding to explain, or any sufferings to disturb. (*Bp. Huntington.*) *Submission to God:*—It is no less our interest than our duty to keep the mind in an habitual frame of submission. "Adam," says Dr. Hammond, "after his expulsion, was a greater slave in the wilderness than he had been in the enclosure." If the barbarian ambassador came expressly to the Romans to negotiate, on the part of his country, for permission to be their servants, declaring that a voluntary submission, even to a foreign power, was preferable to a wild and disorderly freedom, well may the Christian triumph in the peace and security to be obtained by an unreserved submission to Him who is emphatically called the God of order. *Submission to God's will:*—Payson was asked, when under great bodily affliction, whether he could see any particular reason for this dispensation. "No," replied he, "but I am as well satisfied as if I could see ten thousand; God's will is the very perfection of all reason." *Christian submission:*—Few things are easier than to perceive, to extol the goodness of God, the bounty of Providence, the beauties of nature, when all things go well, when our health, our spirits, our circumstances, conspire to fill our hearts with gladness, and our tongues with praise. This is easy, this is delightful. None but they who are sunk in sensuality, sottishness, and stupefaction, or whose understandings are dissipated by frivolous pursuits; none but the most giddy and insensible can be destitute of these sentiments. But this is not the trial, or the proof. It is in the chambers of sickness; under the stroke of affliction; amidst the pinchings of want, the groans of pain, the pressures of infirmity; in grief, in misfortune; through gloom and horror—that it will be seen, whether we hold fast our hope, our confidence, our trust in God; whether this hope and confidence be able to produce in us resignation, acquiescence, and submission. And as those dispositions, perhaps from the comparative perfection of our moral nature, could not have been exercised in a world of unmixed gratification, so neither would they have found their proper office or object in a state of strict and evident retribution—that is, in which we had no sufferings to submit to but what were evidently and manifestly the punishment of our sins. A mere submission to punishment, evidently and plainly such, would not have constituted—at least, would very imperfectly have constituted—the disposition which we speak of—the true resignation of a Christian. (*Paley.*) *Yielding ourselves up to God:*—Here is a physician who has for months been tracing an obscure disease, from which he has been suffering, to its secret cause. Very acute has been the reasoning process by which he has been approaching to a certain conclusion as to the nature of the disease. At last the cause is plain. And what does he find? That an operation is necessary if he would regain health. He cheerfully puts himself into the hand of others; suffers them to reduce him to unconsciousness; leaves himself entirely in their hands; and by and by he wakens up to find, by means he had no consciousness of, the obstacle removed, and his way open to returning health. This is a rational and sober-minded process right through. And when we—convinced of our morally diseased condition, which makes it impossible for us to enter into a full and hearty appropriation of salvation—yield ourselves up in self-despair, that God may work in us to will and do, the spirit of

our action is precisely that of the physician. Presently we waken up to the first glad consciousness of faith, to the joy of surrender, to the dawning realisation of a new life—begotten to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. **Resist the devil, and he will flee.**—*The right warfare*:—I. HERE YOU HAVE AMPLE SCOPE FOR YOUR FIGHTING INSTINCTS. "Resist the devil"—1. As you find him on the arena of your own soul. The most terrific battles are fought within, the most illustrious victories are won there. 2. As you find him in the arena of society. He is not only in the grosser habits of life, and the corrupter institutions of society, but in literature, friendships, and even religions. II. HERE YOU HAVE GLORIOUS ENCOURAGEMENT FOR YOUR FIGHTING INSTINCTS. "He will flee from you." 1. You are provided with armour before which he must flee. 2. You are associated with allies before whom he must flee. 3. You are commanded by a leader before whom he must flee. (*Homilist.*) *Resist the devil*:—I. THE FOE. 1. His power. Can suggest ideas to the mind. Inflame the evil desires of the soul. 2. His diligence. Continually going about as roaring lion. If repulsed a hundred times, he tries again. 3. His malice. Envies all human happiness. 4. His policy. Crafty and subtle. 5. His experience. Has long studied human nature, and practised the art of deceiving mankind. II. THE FIGHT. "Resist"—not dispute. To parley with him is to be conquered. 1. General orders. (1) Be sober. Physically. Mentally. Pride, anger, love of pleasure, incapacitate the soul for this warfare. (2) Be vigilant. His time is always ready. (3) Be united. Call in all your allies. Stand shoulder to shoulder. 2. Tried weapons. (1) Word of God. (2) Past experience. (3) Earnest prayer. 3. Invincible armour (Eph. vi. 10–18). III. THE FLIGHT. 1. This promise imports temporary flight. In this life, he flees only to rally his forces and return. But constant resistance, while it strengthens the Christian, weakens the adversary. 2. This promise implies final flight (Rom. xvi. 20). Lessons: 1. A Christian's life is no easy one. 2. A Christian's life is a most blessed one. (*R. J. Griffin.*) *Resistance of evil*:—Nothing is more plainly taught in the Scriptures than that men are exposed to Satanic influence. If God "worketh in Christians to will and to do," Satan is the "spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience." If the sanctified are said to be "filled with the Holy Ghost," "why," said Peter to Ananias, "hath Satan filled thy heart?" This is the being, then, whom we are commanded to resist. 1. And, among other reasons for so doing, I will mention, first, this—our ability to do it. We can resist evil. No one is compelled to sin. To each proposition of virtue and vice you finally say "Yes" or "No." Nothing brings out so sharply the personality of man as some act of sin. It brings him out into the foreground as an agent. He has the universe as the witness to his conduct. His decision is *his* decision, and against God, in whom all which is assailable by vice finds expression. I wish each of you, in whatever you may purpose of evil, to feel this. Upon the edge of this terrible ability to resist God plant yourself, and behold the abyss at your feet. 2. Out of this thought comes also what might be called the hopefulness of morality. The assurance, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you," is a blessed and needed one. The thought that you can succeed in keeping your hand and heart clean is a constant inspiration to persevere. The contest, as waged by every man and woman against evil, is no longer a heavy, dragging spiritless contest, but a brave and hopeful one. The current we stand in is deep, swift, and hissing; and who of us, at times, is not swayed and staggered by it? But there is no reason why, by care and effort—a careful placing of the feet, and keeping our powers well collected—we cannot make headway against it. We do make headway. The Light that has come into the world, and shined upon so many hearts, is quickening the germinal capacities of man for virtue. The race is slowly but surely forging ahead. The waters behind are white with the freshening breeze; and the purposes of God, like a mighty wind, will put an increasing pressure upon the sails, and blow them grandly along. As a fleet of great merchantmen, impelled by the steady trade winds—their yards like bars of gold, their ropes like lines of ruby—go sailing at morning towards the east and the rising sun; so the race, in all its powers and motives, will be grandly luminous as it moves on into the light of the millennium. To live ignobly is, therefore, to live unworthy of your clearest possibilities. In the waters of this assurance the dirtiest may wash and be cleansed. Only "resist evil," only stand firm, only try, and whatever of good you in your better moments crave will come to you, and abide with you, as the light of the sun to-day comes to the earth, eliciting its manifold fruitage, and illuminating it from pole to pole. Yea, your life shall be like a globe belted and zoned with expressions of life; and never shall there be an hour when some portion of it shall

not be in flower and fruitfulness. 3. But again: the wisdom of this injunction, "Resist the devil," is seen when you reflect that in resistance, and resistance alone, is safety. Between this and some other course there is no election; you must fight, or die. On some streams you can drift; but, in the rapids which plunge hellward, no man can lie on his back, and float; he must keep in quick nervous action, or sink. (*W. H. H. Murray.*) *The Christian champion*:—The enemy who meets me fairly on the field of battle is very different from the assassin who steals upon me in the dark, when unprepared, to rob me of my life. The one I may overcome, but the other nothing can shield me from but the all-watchful providence of my God. Now Satan is the assassin, and not the open enemy; how, then, is he to be resisted? 1. In the first place, we must resist him boldly and at once. There must be no parleying with him, no yielding to him even in the slightest thing, no shrinking from his attack: to shrink from him is only to make him more bold, while to resist him, resting simply on the atonement of Jesus, is to drive him from us, vanquished and overcome. 2. In the next place, we must resist the devil constantly; because he is unceasing in his assaults, we are never safe from him, no, not for an instant, under any circumstances or in any place. 3. In the next place, we must resist the devil "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." All other resistance is utterly vain: we have no power in ourselves. 4. In the next place, we must resist Satan clad in the whole armour of God (Eph. vi. 11, 13). Mark it well, it is not a part, but the whole armour which is to be put on; not one part of that armour must be missing, or we at once expose a point of attack to our adversary. Mark again, the armour must be put on; it is not give us to look at, but to use. Mark again, whence is this armour to be obtained? only from heaven. 5. Yet once more, we must resist the devil watchfully and prayerfully. (*A. W. Snape, M.A.*) *Resist the devil*:—1. This resistance must extend to all the variety of his temptations. We must beware of resisting him in one or more, and making this a kind of compensation for yielding to him in others. 2. He applies his temptations to those lusts and passions of the old nature which remain in us, and especially to those which, by the study of our character, he knows to be the strongest, and most apt to yield—those which "most easily beset us." The most effectual resistance we can make to him, therefore, is a constant and strenuous opposition to these—whichsoever of them we are conscious, from our experience, have most power within us. And, as his temptations are often sudden—meant to take us at unawares—this vigilance over our own hearts must be constant and unremitting—"lest he find us off our guard." 3. The resistance must be made in the strength of God. (*R. Wardlaw, D.D.*) *The devil put to flight*:—Luther says: "Once upon a time the devil said to me, 'Martin Luther, you are a great sinner, and you will be damned!' 'Stop! stop!' said I; 'one thing at a time; I am a great sinner, it is true, though you have no right to tell me it. I confess it. What next?' 'Therefore you will be damned.' 'That is not good reasoning. It is true I am a great sinner, but it is written, "Jesus Christ came to save sinners"; therefore I shall be saved! Now go your way.' So I cut the devil off with his own sword, and he went away mourning because he could not cast me down by calling me a sinner." *Answer to the devil*:—A minister asked a little converted boy, "Does not the devil tell you that you are not a Christian?" "Yes, sometimes." "Well, what do you say?" "I tell him," replied the boy, "whether I am a Christian or not is none of his business." (*New Cyclo. of Illustrations.*) *Temptation sometimes subtle*:—If any temptation to spoil your purposes happens in a religious duty, do not presently omit the action, but rather strive to rectify your intention and to mortify the temptation. St. Bernard taught us this rule: for when the devil, observing him to preach excellently, and to do much benefit to his hearers, tempted him to vain-glory, hoping that the good man to avoid that would cease preaching, he gave this answer only, "I neither began for thee, neither for thee will I make an end." (*Jeremy Taylor, D.D.*) *Fighting the devil*:—He who would fight the devil with his own weapons must not wonder if he finds him an over match. (*R. South.*) *Resist*:—In an old tower on the Continent they show you, graven again and again on the stones of one of the dungeons, the word "Resist." It is said that a Protestant woman was kept in that hideous place for forty years, and during all that time her employment was in graving with a piece of iron, for any one who might come after her, that word. It is a word that needs to be engraven on every young man and young woman's heart. It represents the highest form of courage which to them is possible—the power to say "No" to every form of temptation. (*J. C. Lees, D.D.*) *The devil to be resisted*:—A gentleman, who has spent many years of his life in capturing wild

animals, says of the wolf, that, when attacked, he will first note the earnestness with which the enemy presses the attack, and, if he shows great determination, he scampers away. But if he detects the least fear in his pursuer's movements, he will defend himself with great bravery. The same way with old Satan: he tempts us by first placing some trivial thing in our path; and if we offer no resistance, he suddenly attacks us with all his force, and overcomes us.

Ver. 8. **Draw nigh to God.**—*Draw nigh to God:*—I. THE DUTY here required of us by the apostle principally implies a life of prayer and devotedness to God, as contrasted with the careless indifference or the dull formality of nominal or pretended Christians. II. THE ENCOURAGEMENT given to perform this duty. What great reason have we to be animated in our Christian warfare by the presence and support of the Lord of hosts! III. THE IMPORTANCE of obeying this injunction to our final happiness and security. (*John Grose, M.A.*) *The reasonableness and blessedness of prayer:*—Worshipping with a pious heart is evidently the manner of drawing nigh to God, which the apostle had in mind when he penned the text. Under the Jewish dispensation, drawing near to God in worship was a more literal thing than it is under the Christian dispensation. In the temple, God had His dwelling-place as a King in His palace. It will not be understood from this that Jewish worship was only of this outward, ceremonial character. The heart was required of them as well as of us (Isa. xxix. 13, 14). Nevertheless, under the Christian dispensation, the worship of God is more strictly of a spiritual character. The duty of worshipping God is no less the dictate of reason and of common sense, than of Scripture. It has been the sentiment of mankind, universally, that children ought to cherish peculiar respect for their parents. So men have always deemed it proper to specially regard and honour those high in authority. Can those who thus honour parents and magistrates deny the obligation to do homage to Him who is at once their Maker, their Sovereign, and their Judge? Prayer. I. ITS REASONABLENESS. 1. God has enjoined it. It must be counted reasonable to do what God has commanded, and most unreasonable to disregard His positive injunctions. "Men ought always to pray and not to faint."—"Continuing instant in prayer."—"Pray without ceasing." 2. The reasonableness of prayer may be shown from the example of the Saviour. 3. The reasonableness of prayer is manifest when we consider what we are—(1) As needy and dependent creatures. Every hour of our lives brings with it wants which must be supplied, or we suffer and die. (2) As sinful and unworthy creatures. No one has, or can have, any other idea of prayer, than as being addressed to the mercy of God; and when that mercy invites us freely to come and make known our desires, it is most unreasonable in us not to avail ourselves of the privilege. (3) As dying and accountable creatures. Who can feel easy in view of future accountability, whose heart has never been sufficiently grateful to acknowledge the Divine goodness, nor sufficiently humble to confess its sins and seek the Divine forgiveness? 4. As showing the reasonableness of prayer, consider the benefits of a persevering attendance on this duty. Prayer is the way to a life of communion with God—a means of keeping up an acquaintance with, and of growing in the knowledge of God. It is a most excellent, yea, an essential means of nourishing the new nature, and of causing the soul to prosper. It is a good preservative from sin; as it is said, "praying will make us leave sinning," or "sinning will make us leave praying." II. THE BLESSEDNESS OF PRAYER. 1. This may be seen by considering the nature of the exercise itself. Prayer usually embraces three things—praise, confession, and supplication. The ascription of praise to God is certainly a delightful exercise to every grateful heart. A grateful heart is burdened with a sense of obligation until it finds relief in rendering a tribute of thanks to Him who is the Giver of every good and every perfect gift. Confession of sin is a part of prayer full of blessedness. What a blessed hour was that to the poor prodigal when he came to himself, and said, "I will arise and go to my father." Supplication, too, as a part of prayer, is a blessed exercise. 2. We may learn the blessedness of prayer by its effect on the character of him who offers it, and also by the blessings bestowed in answer to it. (*F. Snyder.*) *Draw nigh to God:*—I. SHOW WITH WHAT TEMPERS AND DISPOSITIONS OF MIND WE MUST DRAW NIGH TO GOD. 1. If we are truly and devoutly desirous of drawing nigh to God, one of our earliest considerations will naturally be, how unfit we are to come to Him. This will lead us to a serious examination of ourselves: to a review of our past conversation; and a comparison of it with the rule of His commandments. 2. We must draw nigh to God with firm resolutions of continuing, through His grace, in His service during our whole lives. 3. We must draw nigh with sincerity.

By sincerity I mean here a desire to know and do the whole will of God. II. THERE ARE PROPER PLACES AND TIMES, AS WELL AS DUE DISPOSITIONS, OF DRAWING NIGH TO GOD. 1. Can we approach without ardent love? 2. It becomes us, when drawing nigh to God, to cherish the spirit of obedience. 3. Our most intense desires should ascend above all temporal blessings. II. THE PROMISE AFFORDED. 1. Several things are implied in this promise. (1) It imports the manifestation of His presence. He is ever nigh, but He makes Himself known in a gracious manner only to those who seek Him. (2) It implies infinite condescension. 2. Several benefits are imparted by the fulfilment of this promise. (1) The mind derives from it pure and sacred pleasure. "A soul in converse with her God is heaven." (2) A state of security ensues. If God draw nigh to us, it is not to forsake us immediately afterwards. But if God be with us, we have nothing to fear. III. CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PERFECTIONS OF GOD AND HIS RELATIONS TO US, AS MOTIVES AND INDUCEMENTS FOR DRAWING NIGH TO HIM. 1. In coming to God, we come to Him who is the blessed and only Potentate; the King of kings, the Lord of lords; who only hath immortality; who, by His word, framed the worlds; and, by the same word of power, upholdeth all things; in whom we live, and move, and have our being. 2. In coming to Him, we come to our Redeemer. 3. In coming to Him, we come to our Judge. (*T. Townson, D.D.*) *The approach of a devout mind to the Almighty*:—1. There are certain indispensable prerequisites. (1) We must possess a knowledge of God. (2) We must be convinced of our dependent state. (3) We must embrace the plan of reconciliation by Jesus Christ. 2. There are certain dispositions which must be the accompaniments of prayer. (3) Communion begets resemblance. And can we have been often with the holy God, and not be holy? (*O. A. Jeary.*) *Drawing near to God*:—1. Touching the commandment, and the precept enjoined, is to draw near to God. That we are commanded to draw near unto God, doth it not insinuate unto us that naturally we are estranged and alienated from Him? (Isa. lix. 2; Jer. v. 25). 2. To which short precept is set down a like promise: draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Which promise is as a reason to move us to draw near to God. He is ready to offer Himself, and is pressed at hand to all such as come near unto Him, to make them to feel the comfort of His presence. God may be said to draw near to man divers ways. (1) By the manifestation of His majesty, as to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and others (Gen. xii. 7, xvii. 1, xviii. 1, xxvi. 1, xxviii. 13, xxxii. 24; Exod. xxxiii. 23, xxiv. 1, iii. 2). (2) He draweth near also unto man by the revelation of His will. He drew nearest thus to Israel His people, to whom He gave His law and statutes, whereby He became familiar unto them. (3) By the graces of His Spirit, which imparting unto men He draweth near thereby unto them (John xiv. 18; Matt. xxviii. 20; Acts ii. 1, iii. 3). (4) God draweth near to men by pouring out His temporal benefits upon them, health, wealth, honour, and sending them deliverance out of their trouble (Deut. iv. 7; Phil. iv. 5; Psa. lxix. 18, cxix. 151, xxxiv. 18, xlvi. 1). (5) God draweth near unto men in offering His mercy, showing His favour, assisting with His help, multiplying His lovingkindness unto them. (6) God finally draweth near unto us in a spiritual union with man, through the incarnation of Jesus Christ, whereby God is united unto us and we to Him, by which means God dwelleth among us, and is made manifest in the flesh, as St. John and St. Paul speak. And therefore Christ is Emmanuel. Where, then, the apostle saith draw near to God, and He will draw near to you, he speaketh chiefly of drawing near by His grace, favour, mercy; who enlargeth His lovingkindness towards all those which with reverence and fear draw near unto Him. 3. These things thus set down, in the last place we are taught how we should draw near to God, which the apostle expresseth in these words: "Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purge your hearts, you double-minded." (1) Men draw near to God by outward profession, though it be not always in sincerity of heart. Thus did the people of Israel in outward profession, and with their mouths, draw near to God, which as a token of hypocrisy is condemned (Isa. xxiv. 13, lviii. 2, 3). (2) Men also draw near to God by faith in Jesus Christ, whereby they have entrance unto Him (Rom. v. 1). (3) Men draw near to God also by prayer, whereby we ascend, as it were, to heaven, and approach near to the presence of God. (4) Neither do men draw near to God by prayer only, but also by repentance, which is a returning again to God, whom, through the sins and iniquities of our lives, we have left and forsaken. (5) Men are said, moreover, to draw near to God when they seek to His holy ark, when they run to His Word to ask counsel. (6) By reposing all trust and confidence in God, and clinging constantly unto Him, whereof Psa. lxxiii. 28. (7) Of none of all these the apostle here seemeth

to speak properly, but of another drawing near, which is by purity and sincereness of life, whereof chiefly in this place he speaketh, which he commendeth unto us in these words, "Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purge your hearts, you double-minded," which I take not for a new precept, but with Bede and others as the manner of performing that which is now enjoined. Let us then consider the place—1. In calling them sinners he meaneth not them which are subject by natural infirmity to the committing of sin, as all men are so long as they rest and remain upon the face of the earth, but hereby he noteth their heinous and horrible iniquities. 2. By wavering or double-minded he noteth the shameful hypocrisy which was crept in, even into their lives, which made some show of religion, and had a pretence of godliness, but in their hearts were full of ungodliness. 3. The words bearing this signification, the matter followeth, that men in purity and sincerity of their lives draw near unto God, which consisteth in two things. (1) In cleaning of their hands. (2) In purging of their hearts before God. (*R. Turnbull.*) *Communion with God*:—I. THE MEANING. We are to understand it as conveying a gracious promise of conscious and sensible communion with the Father of our spirits. II. THE MANNER. 1. The sinner must draw nigh unto God by the way of His own appointment, and that way is Christ. 2. In drawing nigh unto God a sinner must have a sense not only of his own unrighteousness, but of his own helplessness. 3. You must draw nigh to God in all His ordinances. 4. With clean hands and a pure heart. III. THE MOTIVES. 1. The graciousness of the invitation. 2. The greatness of the benefit to be secured. 3. The certainty of the result. 4. The dreadful consequences of continued estrangement. (*Alex. Hislop.*) *Communion with God*:—If you saw two persons working together in the same shop, or the same field, both blessed with the faculty of speech, and delighting to converse with all others, but never conversing with each other, what would be your conclusion? That they loved each other? By no means; but the reverse. If you saw one person using every art to please another, and to draw him into conversation, and the second person avoided his presence, and refused intercourse, what would you think? That the second person loved the first? Surely not. It is our pleasure to be in the society of those we love, and to converse with them. Prayer is speaking to God. Worship is coming into His presence, and waiting upon Him—is listening to His voice. *Approaches to God*:—The mother of Artaxerxes was wont to say, that they who would address themselves unto princes must use silken words: surely he that would approach unto God must consider, and look as well to his words as to his feet. He is so holy and jealous of His worship, that he expects that there should be preparation in our accesses unto Him: preparation of our persons by purity of life (Job xi. 13); preparation of our services by choice of matter (John ix. 1); preparation of our hearts by finding them out, stirring them up, fixing them, fetching them in, and calling together all that is within us to prevail with God. (*Bp. Reynolds.*) **Let your laughter be turned to mourning.**—*Carnal joy exchanged for godly sorrow*:—1. It is a good exchange to put away carnal joy for godly sorrow; for then we put away a sin for a duty, brass for gold; yea, we have that in the duty which we expected in the sin, and in a more pure, full, and sweet way. God will give us that in sorrow which the world cannot find in pleasure; serenity, and contentment of mind. When the world repenteth of their joy, you will never repent of your sorrow (2 Cor. vii. 10). The saddest duties are sweeter than the greatest triumphs, and the worst and most afflicted part of godliness is better than all the joys and comforts of the world. It is better to have your good things to come, than here (Luke xvi. 21). 2. An excellent way to moderate the excess of joy is to mix it with some weeping. The way to abate one passion is to admit the contrary: in abundance there is danger; therefore in your jollity think of some mournful objects. (*T. Manton.*) *Mourning for sin*:—Mourn savourly and soakingly, with a deep and downright sorrow, so as a man would do in the death of his dearest friend. The Greek word, πενθήσατε, imports a funeral grief. (*J. Trapp.*) *Laughter turned to mourning*:—Turn all the streams into one channel, that may drive the will, that may grind the heart. Meal was offered of old, and not whole corn. (*Ibid.*) **Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and He shall lift you up.**—*Living as in God's sight*:—The heart is naturally at enmity with God. Hence humility is the first of Christian virtues: not that God wishes to see us debased, but that self-abasement is in accordance with the truth of our character, and is the way to exaltation. To use a very rude metaphor, just as a man cannot go up another hill till he has gone down the one on which he happens to be, so a soul cannot be exalted in God until it has thoroughly come down from self. And what

is that exaltation which God accomplishes for the soul? It must be the only true and permanent exaltation. Exaltation in Satan's kingdom must be debasement, for it is exaltation in sin, and sin depresses and debases. The exaltation, then, in this case must be an illusion. The true exaltation must be in the truth. It must be in the region where God dwells. It must be in righteousness and holiness. Such an exaltation implies satisfaction and joy. It also implies its own continuance, because of its Divine character. It is man's finality in the kingdom of God as contrasted with his finality in the kingdom of Satan. There is one phrase especially in our text on which we desire to lay stress: "In the sight of the Lord." Our humility is to be wrought in His sight. This implies, in the first place—1. That the humility is not a humbling of ourselves before our fellow-men. The abjectness and servility of one man to another are not pleasing to God. If we injure our fellow-man, we are to take the attitude of penitence before him. But, this exceptional case aside, no man is to humble himself before his fellow-man. 2. The believer's humility is therefore, in the second place, a true humility. It will not do to present to God the outward prostration for the inward repentance, the words of humility for the self-renunciation of the heart. A true humility is alive, and bears fruit in a new and holy life. A true humility sees the truth regarding itself, that the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked, and cries out for God. The man abandons self for God. He abhors self, and finds a refuge in Jesus Christ, who is made unto him wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. This is the glorious "lifting up" which always accompanies a true humility. "What!" says an objector, "is that a true humility which is humble in order to be exalted?" Yes, it is. It would not be if the exaltation were to be in the line of the humility; that is, if the man was to be exalted in the very pride from which he humbles himself. But when the man is to be exalted by the Divine grace and the Divine Spirit, that is a true humility which foresees this exaltation, and acts in view of it. It is not a humility of despair, but of faith. It know its own worthlessness, but it knows also the Lord's grace. 3. The believer's humility, being in the sight of the Lord, implies a life in the sight of the Lord. He sees Him who is invisible, and his motives come from that source, so invisible to the world. The Lord's light shines on him, and that light reveals sin in the heart. He is never found justifying himself, or flattering himself with human purity and excellence. His comfort comes from no such proud and false source, but from resting his evil heart on the pardoning and cleansing love of his Redeemer. And in that love he finds a true holiness springing up in his soul. 4. The believer's humility implies a life of prayer. We cannot see God without praying to Him as the source of pardon and holiness, the only guardian and guide of the soul. (*H. Crosby, D.D.*) *Humility explained, and its necessity enforced*:—Humility stands opposed to pride. And as pride consists in our entertaining higher ideas of ourselves than truth will warrant, and in our presuming upon these, both in feeling and in practice, as if they were just and correct, so humility consists in our entertaining accurate notions of what we really are in relation to some one above us, and in preserving that station which a regard to our real merits requires us to occupy, as to the sentiments we cherish and the conduct we maintain, with respect to those under whom we are placed. The humility inculcated in my text is humility in reference, not to another creature more exalted than ourselves, but to God, who is immeasurably exalted above all creatures. And in this simple relation, even though we had done nothing to offend Him, humility is at once graceful and necessary; for, as we owe everything to Him, and as we depend upon Him for everything, it would be presumptuous, undutiful, to have one thought towards Him or to make one movement before Him, which proceeded on the supposition that we were not so indebted and so dependent. But the humility enjoined upon us not only respects our relation to God as His creatures, whose every faculty must be traced to Him—it also respects our relation to Him as His sinful creatures—who are thus removed at a still greater distance from Him than they naturally were, and liable to His high and holy indignation. When we exhort you to be humble, we do not exhort you to think yourselves worse or meaner than you really are. We only exhort you to form a just and precise valuation of what you really are, as compared with what you ought to be, according to the rule which has been Divinely enacted, and to maintain the conduct which such an appreciation is calculated to produce. And this exhortation is highly important in the first place, because, unless we have just notions of what we are as sinners, we can neither perceive the value, nor be prepared for the reception of any scheme that may be

devised for our deliverance; and in the second place, because, among the principles of our fallen nature, pride is that which has perhaps the greatest ascendancy over our minds, and prevents us from giving heed to those considerations which go to determine what we really are, and by doing so, to fix us at our proper level. The great and vital fact with respect to you is, that you are stained with sin. There may be an endless variety in the mode and in the measure of sinning with which different individuals are chargeable. Do not suppose that you have any refuge in the paucity of your misdeeds. It is the nature of sin itself, and not its multiplicity merely, which subjects you to degradation. It is its power in the soul, and not its actual and manifold exhibition in the outward conduct, by which you are debased. But which of you can venture to say that your transgressions are few in number? Consider the extent—the strictness—the spirituality of that law to which you are subject. That is the measure of your sinfulness; and if your humility should be in proportion to your sinfulness, what limit can be set to it? Humility, however, is so mortifying to the human mind, that before it can obtain a settlement there, every attempt is made to discover reasons for believing that it is neither necessary nor appropriate. And one of the most common refuges in which the natural pride of man fortifies itself, is the self-righteous plea of what is called innocence and amiableness of character. Granting that you are as harmless as amiable, as deserving of esteem as you are thought to be, still it is all unavailing. The essential excellence of what is done by a moral agent, consists in its recognition of the existence, and in its submission to the will of Him who ruleth over all. And yet God has not been in all your thoughts, and God has not been in all your ways. And the pervading guilt which such a consideration throws into it is incalculably aggravated by your not only resting upon its merits with satisfaction, but actually supposing it sufficient to secure the favour of that very Being whom it has so dishonoured, neglected, and disowned. But we must not neglect to remind you of that affecting display of the evil of sin, and of the degradation of the sinner, as these appear in the sight of the Lord which has been made in the Cross of Christ. Could such a sacrifice as this, think you, have been demanded by "the Father of mercies," the possessor of infinite wisdom, the God of righteousness and justice, if it had not been necessary for the purpose for which it was required—the expiation of human guilt, and the deliverance of those to whom it attached, from the degradation and the ruin into which it had brought them? Had we nothing more to tell you than that you are sinners, it would only fill you with mortification, hopelessness, and anguish. But after having told you all that we can add intelligence as plensing as that which went before it was painful. We can speak of blessings that are to follow in its train, and that are sufficient to compensate you a thousand-fold for all the distress which may have been inflicted upon your feelings by our delineations of the abject state to which you are reduced as transgressors. We would persuade you to humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, that He may, in consequence, "lift you up." This is the arrangement established by the Author of salvation. The humility that is enjoined is connected with the privilege that is to follow it, in another way than that of either natural or acquired right. The connection is just as necessary, but it is of a different kind. When the sinner is made humble, he is merely undergoing a part of that moral process which must take place, in order that he may be raised from the death of sin to the life of holiness and peace. If you feel and cherish that humbleness of mind which just conceptions of your guilty and depraved and wretched condition are calculated to generate; and if in the midst of this self-reproach you are ready to throw your fortunes unreservedly upon the merits of that dispensation which Divine grace offers to you as your all-sufficient refuge, then there is no insuperable barrier between you and the salvation which you need. The devices of God's wisdom become acceptable to you, the offers of His mercy become welcome to you, the hopes of His favour become precious to you, the whole manifestation of His redeeming love becomes available to you. (*A. Thomson, D.D.*) *Humility in God's sight*:—In one of our western cities is a physician who is very skilful in doctoring the human eye. I went one day into his office. On the wall was a large painting of an eye. It seemed to look at me when I went in. I could get into no part of the room without the eye seeing me; and the last thing that I saw as I went out was that eye looking at me. I have often thought of that picture, and said to myself, that in some such way God's all-seeing eye follows me all my life through. And it makes me feel humble, and leads me to be careful; humble, because I must be so small, so weak, and so wicked in God's sight; care-

ful, for surely I shall want God to see only that which will please Him as He shall look me through and through. (*J. G. Merrill.*) *Deep root, tall growth:*—As a tree, the more deeply it is rooted in the earth, the taller it groweth and mounteth the higher; even so a man, the more humble and lowly that he is, the more and higher doth the Lord exalt him. *Christian humility the way of an exaltation:*—Our humiliations work out our most elevated joys. The way that a drop of rain comes to sing in the leaf that rustles in the top of the tree all the summer long, is by going down to the roots first, and from thence ascending to the bough. (*H. W. Beecher.*)

Vers. 11, 12. **Speak not evil one of another.**—*Evil speaking:*—1. Wilful false accusation. This may be held as the very worst form of it. It involves two evils —one of heart and one of conduct—malice and falsehood. 2. The exaggeration of faults that are real. Few things are more common than this. It springs from the same odious principle of malice. 3. The needless repetition of real faults. The principle of this is still the same. 4. The whispering of slander, with the simulation of regret. Oh, there is nothing so nauseous as this. The whisperer must first be sure that doors are all close, and no one within hearing. He is so sorry to have anything to say such as he is about to disclose: begs it may be held confidential, and go no further, while he himself carries it further, the very next person he meets. 5. There is often in the representations given a colouring—in which there is no direct falsehood, but such an artful leaving out of one circumstance, and qualifying another, and giving prominence to a third, as to amount to a thorough misrepresentation of the sentiments or the actions reported, and to convey quite a different impression of them from the reality. Just as two painters may produce two pictures, each containing the very same objects, which shall yet, by the different arrangement of these objects, in foreground and background positions, and various lights and shades, be so thoroughly different, that the sameness of the objects contained in them shall never be observed. 6. Lastly, as connecting the subject with what immediately follows, harsh uncharitable judging of the conduct of others: "He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother." What means this judging? We may first reply, negatively, that it does not mean our simply forming an opinion of the conduct of others by the standard of God's law. This we cannot but do. (1) But first: we must not judge beyond the law, pronouncing sentence on our brother in matters which the Divine law does not embrace in its prohibitions or its requirements; in matters which it leaves indifferent. When we do this we are presumptuous. We go quite out of our province. (2) Then, secondly: we must not judge without sufficient evidence. We must not pronounce our sentences on suspicion, or surmise, or vague and unexamined rumour. (3) Further, we ought not to judge with undue severity, giving sentence with a rigour beyond the real desert of the offence; excluding from our judgment all alleviating circumstances. (4) We must not judge motives, the secret principles of action. These are beyond the range of our cognisance. The general interdiction of "evil-speaking" and "judging" is here enforced by a special consideration—"He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law." How is this? 1. The law itself prohibits such evil-speaking and judging. If, then, in despite and defiance of such intimations of God's will, we persist in "speaking evil of our brother, and judging our brother," we are, in the very fact, "speaking evil of the law and judging the law." We are speaking evil of it, as an over-stringent law, laying an interdict on what we see no harm in indulging. We "judge" it as being too severe and rigid in its judgments. In doing what it condemns, we condemn it. 2. When, on the other hand, we go beyond the law—judging our brother in matters which the law has left open—matters in which neither doing nor refraining to do is any violation of law; as in the case of meats and drinks and days—we then "speak evil of the law, and judge the law" on a ground the very opposite of the former. We condemn it as not being sufficiently stringent; as leaving things indifferent, which ought not to be so left. 3. The remarks apply, in their full force, to the great general law of love. To that law the apostle had before adverted—"If ye fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well." Of this law the practical counterpart, in the terms of our Divine Master Himself, is —"Therefore, whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." Now it is plain that to the spirit and the letter of this law all "evil-speaking" and all such "judging" as has been described is utterly opposed. When, therefore, we indulge in such evil speaking,

we condemn, as laying too stringent a restraint upon us, even this Divinely excellent and self-recommending law, in which the elements of equity and love are so admirably combined. We in effect judge and censure this law, as laying unbearably stern restrictions upon the evil propensities of our nature. (*R. Wardlaw, D.D.*) *Judging our brethren*:—I. WHAT IS HERE FORBIDDEN. It is speaking evil of, and judging our brethren. It is bringing charges against, and passing sentences on, our fellow-men, and especially our fellow-Christians, for they are the brethren here referred to by the apostle. It is depreciating and denouncing them —their actions, motives, designs, characters. 1. As to speaking. "Speak not evil one of another," that is, from a spirit of enmity or envy, from the lusts warring in the members, do it not except under necessity, with some such sanction as we have referred to; in which case it is but uttering the truth, bearing a faithful testimony, not speaking evil in the ordinary and bad sense of that expression. 2. As to judging. We are repeatedly warned against such judging (Matt. vii. 1, 2; Rom. xiv. 3, 4; 1 Cor. iv. 5). We must often pronounce on conduct, and the Scripture has laid down the rule according to which we are to decide. When it is applied, certain inferences as to character and state are legitimate, inevitable. But here we are to proceed with the greatest caution. Are the actions such as they are represented, or appear to us as being? Are we not regarding them with prejudiced minds, with jaundiced eyes, under some perverting or obscuring influence? Are we not mistaken? do we know all the circumstances? Then, though they may be wrong, are they not partially explained by the peculiar position, temperament, and temptations of the parties? Can they not be accounted for without supposing a radical want of sound principle, of Christian spirit? Then let us never forget our own feeble powers and narrow views, our tendency to limit the range of Christian faith and practice; to make a great deal of some elements, and little or nothing of others, which yet may be as prominent, or even more so, in Scriptural representation and requirement. Let us also remember that there is a region which we cannot enter, and where much may be concealed of which we can take no cognisance —a region where all the springs of action, the principles of conduct lie, that of motive. We are not to ascend the throne, we are not to usurp the Divine prerogative of judgment. II. WHY IT IS FORBIDDEN. 1. Because it involves a condemnation of the Divine law. The law here is the moral law as animated, unfolded, regulated by the gospel. Now, speaking evil of a brother is speaking evil of the law, for the brother may be all the while keeping it, and the conduct condemned may be exactly that which it demands, dictates. When the charges made are false —as in such cases they so often are—when the dispositions or actions found fault with are not wrong but right, when they are prompted and regulated by the very law itself, then abuse of the one is abuse of the other. 2. Because it amounts to a usurpation of the office of the only Lawgiver. One acting thus does not apply it to himself, and regulate by it his own speech and behaviour. He withdraws from its control, he goes directly and flagrantly in opposition to its authority; for it forbids and condemns this way of dealing with our brother. (*John Adam.*) *Detraction*: —1. A detractor is wont to represent persons and actions under the most disadvantageous circumstances he can, setting out those which may cause them to appear odious or despicable, slipping over those which may commend or excuse them. 2. He is wont to misconstrue ambiguous words, or to misinterpret doubtful appearances of things. 3. He is wont to misname the qualities of persons or things, assigning bad appellations or epithets to good or indifferent qualities. 4. He doth imperfectly characterise persons, so as studiously to veil or faintly to disclose their virtues and good qualities, but carefully to expose, and fully to aggravate or amplify any defects or failings in them. 5. He is wont not to commend or allow anything absolutely and clearly, but always interposing some exception to which he would have it seem liable. 6. He is ready to suggest ill causes and principles, latent in the heart, of practices apparently good; ascribing what is well done to bad disposition, or bad purpose. 7. He derogateth from good actions by pretending to correct them, or to show better that might have been done in their room: it is, said he, done in some respects well, or tolerably; but it might have been done better, with as small trouble and cost: he was overseen in choosing this way, or proceeding in this manner. 8. A detractor not regarding the general course and constant tenor of a man's conversation, which is conspicuously and clearly good, will attack some part of it, the goodness whereof is less discernible, or more subject to contest and blame. 9. The detractor injecteth suggestions of everything anywise plausible or possible, that can serve to diminish the worth of a person, or value of an action,

which he would discountenance. I. THE CAUSES OF DETRACTION. 1. Ill nature and bad humour: as good nature and ingenuous disposition incline men to observe, like, and command what appeareth best in our neighbour; so malignity of temper and heart prompteth to espy and catch at the worst. 2. Pride, ambition, and inordinate self-love. 3. Envy. 4. Malicious revenge and spite. 5. Sense of weakness, want of courage, or despondency of his own ability. 6. Evil conscience. 7. Bad, selfish design. II. IT DOTH INVOLVE THESE KINDS OF IRREGULARITY AND DEPRAVITY. 1. Injustice: a detractor careth not how he dealeth with his neighbour, what wrong he doeth him. 2. Uncharitableness: it is evident that the detractor doth not love his neighbour, for charity maketh the best of everything; "charity believeth everything, hopeth everything" to the advantage of its object. 3. Impiety: he that loveth and reverenceth God will acknowledge and approve His goodness, in bestowing excellent gifts and graces to his brethren. 4. Detraction involveth degenerous baseness, meanness of spirit, and want of good manners. 5. In consequence to these things, detraction includeth folly; for every unjust, every uncharitable, every impious, every base person is, as such, a fool; none of those qualities are consistent with wisdom. III. THE FOLLY OF it will particularly appear, together with its depravity, by THE BAD AND HURTFUL EFFECTS which it produceth, both in regard to others and to him that practiseth it. 1. The practice thereof is a great discouragement and obstruction to the common practice of goodness; for many, seeing the best men thus disparaged, and the best actions vilified, are disheartened and deterred from practising virtue, especially in a conspicuous and eminent degree. 2. Hence detraction is very noxious and baneful to all society; for all society is maintained in welfare by encouragement of honesty and industry. 3. Detraction worketh real damage and mischief to our neighbour. 4. The detractor abuseth those into whose ears he instilleth his poisonous suggestions, engaging them to partake in the injuries done to worth and virtue, causing them to entertain unjust and uncharitable conceits, to practise unseemly and unworthy behaviour toward good men. 5. The detractor produceth great inconveniences and mischiefs to himself. He raiseth against himself fierce animosity—hence are they stirred to boil with passion, and to discharge revenge on the detractor. 6. The detractor yieldeth occasion to others, and a kind of right to return the same measure on him. 7. Again the detractor, esteeming things according to moral possibility, will assuredly be defeated in his aims; his detraction in the close will avail nothing, but to bring trouble and shame on himself; for God hath a particular care over innocence and goodness, so as not to let them finally to suffer. (*I. Barrow, D.D.*) *Evil-speaking*:—The original of this evil is from Satan, and the pedigree of evil speech is to be derived from the devil, the great dragon, the old serpent. This is he that begetteth all slanderous persons; he it is who raiseth these motions in our hearts, and bloweth the flame of these affections in the minds of the wicked. This is that poison of Apis, the venomous serpent which lurketh under the lips of the reproachful slanderer. These wound and slay at hand, and far off, at home and abroad, the quick and the dead; these spare neither prince nor people, neither priest nor prelate, neither friend or foe, rich nor poor, base nor honourable, man nor woman, one nor other, these destroy whole houses and families. Now the common causes for which men speak evil of one another are chiefly these five: 1. Men slander and speak evil of—thereby to be revenged of—such as either have done them hurt, or else are thought to have done them injury. Thus men and women, not able with violence to make their part a good, use their slanderous tongues as instruments and weapons of their revenge. 2. As desire to be avenged pricketh men forward to this mischief, so also desire of gain moveth men thereunto, for we see sometimes that the bringing of others by slander into contempt may breed our commodity wherewith all we moved, give over our tongues as weapons and instruments of slander. 3. Neither for these causes only do we speak evil of our brethren, but also stirred up by envy; for the graces and benefits of God poured in plentiful manner upon our neighbours, whereat we being moved through envy, we speak evil of them as unworthy of those graces and benefits received. 4. And as for these causes men are moved to slander, so through desire that men have to please others they give themselves to slander. Now it is the nature of many men to delight in hearing others slandered, whose humour flatterers following do therefore often slander their brethren. 5. Finally, and that which properly concerneth this place, our evil speaking proceedeth of pride, and therefore as a mischief and effect of pride it is here condemned. For as the ape and raven think their own young ones fairest and best favoured, yet is there not a more deformed thing almost among

beasts than the ape, neither a fouler among the birds than the young raven; so men like their own doings, be they never so bad, and condemn all others in comparison of themselves. This mischief is manifold, and sundry ways are men said to speak evil one of another. 1. When men misreport of us, and charge us with that which is not true, then speak they evil of us. 2. Neither thus only speak men evil one of another, but also when they amplify, exaggerate, aggravate, and make the infirmities and faults of men far greater by their reports than indeed they be, to make them odious in the sight of men; as when our neighbour is something choleric and hasty to report him to be so mad, furious and headstrong, that none can abide it. 3. Besides this, men speak evil of their brethren when they blaze abroad the secret sins and infirmities of their brethren—when they should have covered them in love—only to discredit and defame the offenders. 4. Again, men sin by speaking evil of their brethren when they deprave the good deeds and well doings of them, when they extenuate and make less than indeed they be. 5. Not thus only, but also when men excel in learning, be singular for virtue, renowned for faith, or any such gift and grace of God's Spirit. To diminish and extenuate these things and make them, by our envious reports, far less than indeed they are; what is this then but evil speech here condemned? Wherefore as to exaggerate and amplify the vices so to extenuate the virtues and good gifts in the saints is and to be accounted a kind of slander and evil speech also. 6. Moreover, men speak evil, though they speak that which is true, touching the sins and infirmities of their brethren, when they speak those things, not for love of the truth, but for the slandering of the person which hath offended. 7. Finally, this evil is committed when in the pride of our hearts we would have all men live according to our pleasures and wills, which, when they do not, we arrogantly condemn them, we slanderously report of them, we maliciously censure them, we rashly judge them. And this evil he dissuadeth by four reasons. 1. From the violating God's law, which is broken and violated of us when in the pride of our minds we condemn and speak evil of our brethren. How doth the law sustain injury in thus injuring of our brethren! How is it violated, how is it evil spoken of and condemned when our brethren are evil spoken of and condemned by us! God's law teacheth us not to condemn nor to speak evil of the brethren. When, notwithstanding this law, we do and will speak evil and condemn our brethren then we speak evil of the law and condemn it in effect. Because we will not be bridled thereby. Now, whoso speaketh evil of and condemneth any law, speaketh evil of and condemneth him whose law it is; proud and wicked men then speaking evil of the law of God, and condemning it, speak thereby evil of God and condemn Him by whose finger this law was written. And thus blasphemously speak we evil of God and presumptuously also prefer we our wits and wills before God's, and as wiser than God, we in all impiety condemn Him of folly. And to find fault with the wisdom of God, and to speak evil of His eternal Spirit and the unsearchable counsels of His heart, to take upon us to control and correct His laws, statutes and ordinances, what intolerable impiety, what desperate iniquity, what singular ungodliness were it! 2. A second reason why we should not speak evil of, or condemn the brethren, is drawn from the duty of the saints, it is the duty of God's children to do the law, not to judge or condemn it. We may not speak evil of the brethren, because in so doing we are not doers of the law which duty requireth, but judges, which becometh not the saints. 3. A third reason why men may not proudly condemn and arrogantly judge their brethren is drawn from the usurping of the office of God and of Christ. 4. The fourth reason why we should not speak evil, or rashly condemn our brethren, is from the frailty of our own common state and condition. There is no better bridle to the heady and hasty judging of other men than to be plucked back by the reins and bit of our own frailty, and view of our own infirmities, which thing greatly abateth our pride, assuageth our hatred, cooleth our courage, and tempereth the hastiness of our judgments against our brethren. When the peacock beholdeth his tail, beset with such varieties of beautiful colours, then he swelleth in pride, contemning and condemning all other birds in comparison of himself; but when he looketh upon his black feet and vieweth the deformity thereof, his comb is something cut and his courage abated. So when we lift up our eyes to the graces and gifts which God bestowed upon us, then we wax proud and insolent; but when we cast our eyes down upon the manifold infirmities whereunto we are subject, then is our pride abated and our insolency of spirit diminished, and we made more moderate and temperate in judging of our Christian brethren. (*R. Turnbull.*)

Evil speaking:—I. IN WHAT WAYS THIS EVIL MAY BE COMMITTED. II. SOME OF THE

DETESTABLE QUALITIES AND BAD CONSEQUENCES WHICH ATTEND THIS PRACTICE. 1. It spends much precious time in a very unprofitable and sinful manner. 2. It is a practice which leads people to form false judgments of one another, and is apt to expose those who do so to danger or contempt. 3. This practice necessarily causes the worthy or the innocent to suffer. 4. It is a practice which, in all its parts, tends to sow enmity among men. 5. It is a practice which causes much uneasiness to those who engage in it. 6. It is often the cause of the greatest cruelty and injustice to innocent persons. 7. This practice is one of the most mean and disgraceful possible. (*The Christian Magazine.*) *Evil speaking*:—I. AS TO ITS ORIGIN. Calumny, like every other evil that embitters the happiness or tarnishes the present good name of mankind, may finally be traced to the original corruption of human nature and to the want of that abiding principle of true religion which alone can ensure the mastery over every evil propensity and fit all, individually, to comport themselves aright in the ever-varying and multifarious relations of social life. Of the secondary and more immediate causes, however, of this baneful and prevailing vice, idleness, envy, revenge, malice, and spiritual pride may perhaps, without much uncharitableness in the supposition, be naturally assigned as the chief and most common sources from whence it flows. It has often been said that when the devil finds a man idle he generally sets him to work; for as the mind of man is essentially active, and cannot long bear the languor and irksomeness of mere idleness, so when he is not habitually employed in the acquisition of learning and knowledge, the pursuits of science, the cultivation of the fine arts, or engaged in one or other of the more common yet not less useful occupations of humble life, he will most likely soon become busied in pursuits of an opposite kind! And hence mere idleness is not only a useless, but even a highly dangerous state of existence—an inlet to every evil which can either disgrace or embitter the life of man; and to none does it afford a more ready and direct access than to that of calumny. But to a habit of idleness may be mentioned also envy as not an unfrequent cause of evil speaking among mankind. Fallen perhaps, through habits of idleness and dissipation, from that rank in society which greater prudence and exertion might have enabled him to maintain, or, finding himself outstripped in the journey of life by those who were but his equals or even inferiors in the outset, and whom, but for his own misguided conduct, he might still have equalled or surpassed, the man in whose bosom is fanned the spark of envy sickens at the sight of that prosperity which he cannot reach vilifies as crooked and suspicious that line of conduct by which it has been obtained; affects to undervalue that happiness which worldly success seems to confer; ascribes to penuriousness of disposition or to an unaccountable flow of good luck whatever a more amiable or generous mind would naturally be disposed to set down to the credit of commendable economy united to a system of virtuous and undeviating industry. But, farther, revenge also not unfrequently prompts men to the indulgence of evil speaking. Few modes of attack seem to unite so completely safety to the assailant and injury to the person assailed as that which is presented through the medium of calumny; and hence it is so frequently adopted by the cold-blooded, cowardly, malicious, and revengeful! No matter how innocent and unoffending, how distinguished and exemplary, may be the object of their hatred, to have incurred their displeasure, however unwittingly, is cause sufficient for letting loose all the envenomed shafts of slander! But yet farther. There are some who appear to indulge in a habit of evil speaking for whose conduct no possible reason can be assigned but the innate malice of their hearts or the secret desire of mischief. Such are those who, without any personal provocation or the least shadow of excuse, wantonly attack without discrimination the characters of all around them. Human only in appearance, they are in heart and dispositions but demons in disguise. But yet farther again. The only remaining topic, to which we here claim your attention, as one of the many sources from which a habit of evil speaking may sometimes proceed, is that of spiritual pride. Nothing has a stronger tendency to render a man arrogant and contemptuous in his conduct towards others than a false idea of his own superior attainments in knowledge and in religion; while, at the same time, not a surer evidence can well be given of the presence of ignorance and of the want of the true spirit of the gospel. II. And hence we would remind you that calumny or evil speaking IS A MEAN AND COWARDLY VICE. If you would blush to have your names associated with the thief and the robber, can you for a moment think it less mean or less criminal to assassinate the character of your neighbour, which to every good man is dearer than life? To filch from him that which constitutes his most valued possession, which, to many, is all they have whereon to depend for the support of

themselves and family, and to all is absolutely necessary to the true enjoyment of the good things of this life with which Providence may have blessed their condition? But we would have you to recollect, farther, that evil speaking is not only mean and cowardly in the extreme, but is also characterised by the blackest injustice. Is it justice, though he may in some instances have failed in duty towards us, to represent him as deficient in all, to go about privily slandering him in his absence, fabricating stories to his hurt, without once, perhaps, having acquainted him with the cause of our displeasure; to condemn him, in short, without a hearing in his defence, and for that, too, of which perhaps the cause lies chiefly with ourselves? III. Let us now ADDUCE A FEW CONSIDERATIONS WHICH NATURALLY, AS WELL AS POWERFULLY, OUGHT TO LEAD ALL MEN TO GUARD AGAINST OR TO FORSAKE A HABIT SO ODIOUS AND UNCHRISTIAN. And these are chiefly suggested to us by the concluding word of our text, namely, that we are "brethren." 1. We are brethren by creation. To indulge, therefore, in calumny and malignant sarcasm against our fellow creatures is a gross and unnatural perversion of all those exalted faculties by which our race has been distinguished—a habit which at once degrades us beneath the rank of the lower animals, and insults the wisdom and majesty of God the Creator, by thus vilifying the noblest of His works. 2. We are brethren in the original corruption of our nature. 3. We are brethren by one common faith in Christ Jesus. Therefore, if we are really Christians, one temper, one spirit of peace, must pervade the whole. Seeing also that we look for the coming of Christ and the glorious fulfilment of His promises, "let us therefore fear lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of us should seem to come short of it" through lack of brotherly love. (*Chas. Hope.*) *On evil speaking* :—I. THE EXTENT OF THIS PRECEPT. 1. This precept does not extend so far as to hinder us from telling another man his faults with a view to his amendment. 2. It is no crime to descant upon the faults of our neighbour which are public and notorious; for where can be the harm for any man to talk of what every one knows? 3. Though nothing can justify ill-grounded uncharitable opinions, yet in cases where we have sufficient information a wide difference is to be made between what we say in a mixed company and what we disclose to a particular friend, who is virtually under a covenant with us not to betray our private conversation. 4. Nor do we act contrary to this precept when we are called upon by lawful authority to speak what we know against a criminal. 5. We are so far from acting against the precept of my text, that it is an act of charity as well as justice to strip the wolf of his sheep's clothing, which he has put on to make a prey of the innocent and unsuspecting. 6. Though it is our duty not to speak ill of any man, without some of the above reasons, yet it does not follow that we ought to speak well of everybody promiscuously and in general, because we ought to make a distinction where there is a difference. II. THE CAUSES OF EVIL SPEAKING. 1. An affectation of wit. 2. Hastiness or precipitancy in judging before we know the whole of the case. 3. Malice. 4. Envy. 5. Little personal animosities. 6. An ill life in general. Those who know a great deal of ill of themselves are apt to suspect ill of everybody else. 7. Talkativeness. III. THE UNREASONABLENESS OF EVIL SPEAKING. (*J. Seed, M.A.*) *The love of censuring others* :—"Speak not against one another, brethren." The context shows what kind of adverse speaking is meant. It is not so much abusive or calumnious language that is condemned as the love of finding fault. The censorious temper is utterly unchristian. It means that we have been paying an amount of attention to the conduct of others which would have been better bestowed upon our own. It means also that we have been paying this attention, not in order to help, but in order to criticise, and criticise unfavourably. But over and above all this, censoriousness is an invasion of the Divine prerogatives. "He that speaketh against a brother, or judgeth a brother, speaketh against the law and judgeth the law." St. James is probably not referring to Christ's command in the Sermon on the Mount—"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged" (Matt. vii. 1, 2). It is a law of far wider scope that is in his mind, the same as that of which he has already spoken, "the perfect law, the law of liberty" (chap. i. 25); "the royal law according to the Scriptures, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (chap. ii. 8). No one who knows this law, and has at all grasped its meaning and scope, can suppose that observance of it is compatible with habitual criticism of the conduct of others and frequent utterance of unfavourable judgments respecting them. No man, however willing he may be to have his conduct laid open to criticism, is fond of being constantly subjected to it. Still less can any one be fond of being made the object of slighting and condemnatory remarks. Every man's personal

experience has taught him that; and if he loves his neighbour as himself, he will take care to inflict on him as little pain of this kind as possible. In judging and condemning his brother he is judging and condemning the law; and he who condemns a law assumes that he is in possession of some higher principle by which he tests it and finds it wanting. What is the higher principle by which the censorious person justifies his contempt for the law of love? He has nothing to show us but his own arrogance and self-confidence. This proneness to judge and condemn others is further proof of that want of humility about which so much was said in the previous section. Pride, the most subtle of sins, has very many forms, and one of them is the love of finding fault; that is, the love of assuming an attitude of superiority, not only towards other persons, but towards the law of charity and Him who is the Author of it. Censoriousness brings yet another evil in its train. Indulgence in the habit of prying into the acts and motives of others leaves us little time and less liking for searching carefully into our own acts and motives. The two things act and react upon one another by a natural law. He who constantly expresses his detestation of evil by denouncing the evil doings of his brethren is not the man most likely to express his detestation of it by the holiness of his own life; and the man whose whole life is a protest against sin is not the man most given to protesting against sinners. "One only is Lawgiver and Judge, even He who is able to save and to destroy." There is one, and only one, Source of all law and authority, and that Source is God Himself. And this sole Fount of authority, this one only Lawgiver and Judge, has no need of assessors. While He delegates some portions of His power to human representatives, He requires no man, He allows no man, to share His judgment-seat or to cancel or modify His laws. It is one of those cases in which the possession of power is proof of the possession of right. "He who is *able* to save and to destroy," who has the power to execute sentences respecting the weal and woe of immortal souls, has the right to pronounce such sentences. Man has no right to frame and utter such judgments, because he has no power to put them into execution; and the practice of uttering them is a perpetual usurpation of Divine prerogatives. Is not the sin of a censorious temper in a very real sense diabolical? It is Satan's special delight to be "the accuser of the brethren" (Rev. xii. 10). It is of the essence of censoriousness that its activity is displayed with a sinister motive. "But who art thou, that judgest thy neighbour?" St. James concludes this brief section against the sin of censoriousness by a telling *argumentum ad hominem*. Granted that there are grave evils in some of the brethren among whom and with whom you live, granted that it is quite necessary that these evils should be noticed and condemned, are you precisely the persons that are best qualified to do it? Putting aside the question of authority, what are your personal qualifications for the office of a censor and a judge? Is there that blamelessness of life, that gravity of behaviour, that purity of motive, that severe control of tongue, that freedom from contamination from the world, that overflowing charity which marks the man of pure religion? To such a man finding fault with his brethren is real pain; and therefore to be fond of finding fault is strong evidence that these necessary qualities are not possessed. Least of all is such an one fond of disclosing to others the sins which he has discovered in an erring brother. Indeed, there is scarcely a better way of detecting our own "secret faults than that of noticing what blemishes we are most prone to suspect and denounce in the lives of our neighbours. It is often our own personal acquaintance with iniquity that makes us suppose that others must be like ourselves. (*A. Plummer, D.D.*) *Evil speaking*:—It is not good to speak evil of all whom we know bad; it is worse to judge evil of any who may prove good. To speak ill upon knowledge shows a want of charity; to speak ill upon suspicion shows a want of honesty. I will not speak so bad as I know of many; I will not speak worse than I know of any. To know evil by others, and not speak it, is sometimes discretion; to speak evil by others and not know it, is always dishonesty. He may be evil himself who speaks good of others upon knowledge, but he can never be good himself who speaks evil of others upon suspicion. (*A. Warwick.*) *Uncharitable speech in the light of death*:—One day the conversation at dinner, in a family well known to the writer, turned upon a lady who was so unfortunate as to have incurred the dislike of certain members of the household because of some little peculiarities. After several had expressed their views in no gentle terms, the married sister added, "I can't endure her; and I believe I will not return her call if she comes here again." Her husband, who had hitherto remained silent, replied, "She will not trouble you again, my dear, as she died an hour ago." "You do not mean it?

Surely you are only teasing us for our uncharitableness?" "She is really dead. I learned it on my way home to dinner." Overwhelmed with shame, the little group realised for the first time the solemnity of such sinful conversation. Let us take warning, and speak of those about us as we shall wish we had done when they are taken from us. (*Advocate and Guardian.*) *Habit of censure:*—It is reported of vultures that they will fly over a garden of sweet flowers and not so much as eye them; but they will seize upon a stinking carrion at the first sight. Thus many there are that will take no notice of the commendable parts and good qualities of others; but, if the least imperfection appear, there they will fasten. (*J. Spencer.*) *Look for good in others:*—There is an old legend that our Lord was once walking through a market-place, when He saw a crowd of people gathered together, looking at something on the ground, and He drew near to see what it was. It was a dead dog with a halter round its neck, by which it seemed to have been dragged through the mire, and it certainly was a most disagreeable sight. Everybody around it had something to say against it. "How horrible it looks," said one, "with its ears all draggled and torn!" "How soon will it be taken away out of our sight?" said another. "No doubt it has been hanged for thieving," said a third. And Jesus heard them, and looking down compassionately on the dead creature, He said, "Pearls cannot equal the whiteness of its teeth." Then the people turned towards Him with amazement, and said among themselves, "This must be Jesus of Nazareth, for only He could find something to approve even in a dead dog." This is a beautiful old legend, and the lesson it teaches us is that there is always something good to be found in everybody if only we would take the trouble to look for it. *Evil speaking rebuked:*—"Is she a Christian?" asked a celebrated missionary in the East of one of the converts who was speaking unkindly of a third party. "Yes, I think she is," was the reply. "Well, then, since Jesus loves her in spite of all her faults, why is it that you can't?" **There is one Lawgiver.**—*The Supreme Lawgiver:*—1. Absolute supremacy becometh none but him that hath absolute power. 2. God hath an absolute and supreme power on man, and can dispose of them according to His will and pleasure; and therefore we must—(1) Keep close to His laws with more fear and trembling. There is no escaping this Judge (1 Cor. x. 22). Eternal life and eternal death are in His disposal (Matt. x. 28). (2) Observe them with more encouragement; live according to Christ's laws, and He is able to protect you (Psa. lxviii. 20). He can save His people, and He hath many ways to bring His enemies to ruin. Your Friend is the most dreadful Enemy; He "hath the keys of death and hell" (Rev. i. 18). (3) Be the more humbled in case of breach of His laws. Wool overcometh the strokes of iron by yielding to them. There is no way left but submission and humble addresses. He may be overcome by faith, but not by power (Isa. xxvii. 5). (*T. Manton.*) *The Lawgiver:*—I. His PRE-EMINENCE. 1. His authority is underived. All other legislators act on trust; they are responsible to some one, He to none. 2. His laws are constitutional; they are written in the very nature of the subject. Hence—(1) They are unalterable. (2) They involve their own sanction. (3) They are the ultimate standards of conduct. II. His PREROGATIVE. He is able to save and to destroy. There are three classes of moral beings in the universe. 1. Those that He can destroy, but never will—unfallen angels and sainted men. 2. Those that He could save, but never will—the population of the nether world. 3. Those that He can either save or destroy—men on earth. If a human sovereign possess the prerogative to save a condemned criminal, and he nevertheless perish, it must be for one of three reasons—either that he is indisposed to use it, or that it is not expedient for him to use it, or that the criminal spurns it. Neither of the first two will apply to God. The Bible declares His willingness, and the Atonement makes it expedient. (*D. Thomas.*) *Conscience subject to God alone:*—To offer to domineer over the conscience is to assault the citadel of heaven. (*Emperor Maximilian.*) *Rights of conscience:*—Nobly did Napoleon Bonaparte, in the year 1804, maintain the rights of conscience, in his reply to M. Martin, President of the Consistory of Geneva, in words worthy to be held in everlasting remembrance—"I wish it to be understood that my intention and my firm determination are to maintain liberty of worship. The empire of the law ends where the empire of the conscience begins. Neither the law nor the prince must infringe upon this empire." (*H.C. Fish, D.D.*) **Who art thou that judgest another?**—*Of judging our neighbour:*—I. First, let us inquire WITH WHAT LIMITATIONS WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND THIS PROHIBITION IN MY TEXT, OR WHAT THAT JUDGING IS WHICH IS HERE FORBIDDEN. For it is plain that it cannot be understood in an absolute sense, as if all judging were forbidden; but only in certain cases, and with some restrictions,

As, first, we must not so understand these words as if they interfered with the magistrate's office, or forbade those in authority to judge and punish crimes. This is so far from being forbidden, that it is everywhere allowed, approved, and authorised in Holy Scripture. The judging here forbidden can be only meant of that liberty which private Christians take to judge and censure the conduct of one another. And this appears plain from the verse before my text, where it is joined with the vice of evil-speaking. But still it may be asked, Is all judging or censuring, then, forbidden to Christians? Or how far may we be allowed to judge and speak concerning the faults of other people? To this I answer, briefly, as far as truth and charity will give us leave, and no farther. Where a man's faults, indeed, are public and notorious, there every man may be allowed to pass a judgment on them, nay, and to express his detestation of the thing, if it be really detestable, as long as he bears no malice or hatred to the person. We are not allowed to call evil good, or good evil, but must give everything its proper name; and public infamy or shame is but the just reward of bold and open wickedness. But then it is not every idle rumour, every ignorant or malicious whisper, that will bear a man out in presently censuring and condemning of his neighbour; much less in spreading ill reports concerning him, or saying what may tend to lessen or defame him. A man's general character should always be considered, in the first place, before we lightly entertain an ill opinion of him; and, moreover, the fact well proved, before we take upon us to pronounce, or even to think him guilty. But, where a man's faults are evident to all the world, there every man may be allowed to express his dislike; and happy were it if the public censure might bring him to himself at last, and reclaim him from his evil courses. If this should happen, indeed, and a person who has been openly bad should nevertheless repent sincerely and become a new man, here the law of charity will oblige us to regard him in a different light—to forget his former faults, if possible, or at least never to mention them by way of reproach. But, further yet, I must observe, that the words of the apostle are not to be understood in that strict sense as if they forbad us to speak of the faults of others to themselves, by way of charitable admonition or reproof. For that observation of the wise man will be found, in most cases, to hold good—that better is open rebuke than secret (or silent) love (Prov. xxvii. 5). II. THE JUDGING HERE FORBIDDEN BY THE APOSTLE IS ALL FALSE, AND RASH, AND NEEDLESS, AND UNCHARITABLE, JUDGING OR CENSURING THE CHARACTERS AND CONDUCT OF OTHER PEOPLE. 1. You must beware that your censures be not false or groundless: for whenever this happens, you are guilty of injustice to your neighbour, though you should only harbour such an ill opinion of him in your own thoughts; but much more if you give vent to it, and help to propagate the slander amongst others. 2. But beware of being rash and precipitate in judging: for there are so many things that are apt to deceive and mislead us, that, if we proceed hastily in this matter, it is ten to one but we make a wrong and a mistaken judgment. 3. As you are to avoid all rash judgments, so must you likewise all needless ones—all that censuring and judging our brother which there is no occasion for. 4. You must beware of all uncharitable judgments and censures of others: you must be ready to put the best constructions that you can upon the words and actions of other people—avoiding that too common, but ill-natured practice of turning things to the worst sense, and suspecting ill of everything that has but the least doubtful aspect. There is another thing which men ought carefully to avoid in their judgments and censures of other people, not to intrench upon the prerogative of God by pretending to discern men's hearts, or the secret springs upon which they act, and which can be known only to God and their own consciences, any further than as their words and actions plainly speak them. III. THE REASONS HERE USED BY THE APOSTLE TO DISSUADE US FROM THIS SIN OF RASH JUDGING AND CENSURING. 1. We should be cautious how we judge our brethren, because we must all of us give account of ourselves to God, that great Lawgiver, who is alone able to save and to destroy. The great Judge of heaven and earth, who sees men's actions in their very birth, and is perfectly acquainted with even the smallest circumstance of them, yet does not ordinarily judge men so as to reward or punish them in this life, but has reserved the great decision to the future general judgment; and shall we, then, weak and ignorant and short-sighted creatures, presume to prevent the great and infallible Judge, and hastily to pronounce upon the characters and conduct of men, before the time which God Himself hath fixed to bring these hidden things to light? Again, since we must all of us give account to God, the great Lawgiver and Judge, we should consider that our proper business is to look well into ourselves, and to examine diligently

our own conduct, that so we may be able to stand the trial of that great day. This is our great concern, and, if we do this with diligence and impartiality, we shall neither have the heart nor leisure to inquire much into the bad conduct and failings of other people. I shall observe one thing more, viz.,—That, as the consideration of a future judgment should make us cautious how we judge and censure others, so will it afford just ground of comfort and support to those who labour under the weight of an undeserved reproach. 2. The other argument is this—that we are, for the most part, very unfit and improper judges of the characters and conduct of one another: Who art thou that judgest another? Whereby the apostle would intimate to us, either that we have no authority so to do, or else that we are very unfit and unqualified for the office. And, indeed, it may be justly questioned by what authority we set ourselves up as judges of the conduct of other people. The office of a judge is what no man takes upon himself without a commission from his superiors, or else by a reference from the parties themselves who submit to be judged by him; and, if we do it without one or other of these to warrant us, we intrude into an office to which we have no right. And, if our authority to judge our brother may be justly questioned, it is certain that our ability for it, in many cases, is as justly questionable; and, perhaps, there is scarcely anything wherein we are more liable to error and mistake. If we judge from the reports of others, how often is it that prejudice, malice, or envy, or ill-nature, or sometimes, perhaps, a mere mistake and oversight, has had the greatest share in kindling these reports! And if we judge from these, therefore, we are in great danger of being deceived and misled. If we set aside the reports of others, and trust to our own sagacity in judging; yet here too we shall be liable to great mistakes, unless we proceed with care and circumspection. And that on account of the difficulty that there is to see into the true characters of men and things; and next, with respect to ourselves, and the many prejudices we labour under, which are apt to bias and corrupt our judgment. A friendship for one man shall make us blind to all his faults; and some little difference with another shall give us a disgust, perhaps, even of his virtues. In general, men are more inclined to judge by humour and affection than by any fixed and stated rules. And hence it is that the most trifling things are sometimes apt to possess them with an ill opinion of a person. The very make of a man's face, that has had something in it disagreeable to the humour of another, has oftentimes possessed him with such a prejudice against him, at first sight, as nothing had been able to remove, till a better acquaintance has at length convinced him of his folly, that he was too rash and precipitate in his judgment. And so, likewise, a mere absurdity of behaviour, or some little weakness and indiscretion, shall, by hasty and severe judges, be interpreted as something highly criminal, and oftentimes throw a blot upon a character which it no way deserved. So easy is it for us to be mistaken in our judgment and opinions of other people. But the greatest prejudice of all, and that which will infallibly corrupt men's judgments in this as well as other cases, is that of a depraved and wicked heart. For he that is a slave to any vice himself is a very improper person to judge of the characters and conduct of other men. The reason is this, because he will be apt to judge of others by what he finds and feels within himself. And as his own inclination to his favourite vice is strong, he will suspect the same of all men, and so proceed to censure and condemn without reserve. (*Chas. Peters, M.A.*) *Be merciful in your judgment of others*:—One of the legends of Ballycastle preserves a touching story. It is of a holy nun whose frail sister had repented of her evil ways and sought sanctuary at the convent. It was winter. The shelter she claimed was granted; but the holy sister refused to remain under the same roof with the repentant sinner. She left the threshold, and proceeded to pray in the open air; but, looking towards the convent, she was startled by perceiving a brilliant light proceeding from one of the cells, where she knew that neither taper nor fire could be burning. She went back to her sister's room—for it was there the light was shining—just in time to receive her last sigh of repentance. The light had vanished, but the recluse interpreted it as a sign from heaven that the offender had been pardoned, and learned thenceforward to be more merciful in judging and more Christlike in forgiving.

Vers. 13-17. **To-day or to-morrow we will go.**—*Sinful confidence regarding the future*:—I. THE SPIRIT WHICH IS HERE CONDEMNED. 1. The confident expectation of prolonged existence. Here was a purpose formed in which there was no recognition whatever of the uncertainty of life or of dependence on God, in which the future was calculated on with unhesitating confidence. Thus do multitudes

presume on the permanence of that which the next moment may be gone like the vapour which the morning sun dissipates or the passing breeze sweeps away without leaving a trace of it behind. 2. The confident expectation of worldly success. There is no mention of anything but trade and consequent profit. There is not a word of seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, of working out their own salvation, of laying up treasures in heaven. All is material, secular, temporal. II. THE GROUNDS ON WHICH THIS SPIRIT IS CONDEMNED. 1. The notorious uncertainty of human life. While we can review the past, we cannot foresee the future. By a sudden stroke of fortune the poor man may be raised to affluence, or by one of a contrary kind the rich man may be reduced to beggary. Before we are aware friends may be alienated, plans defeated, prospects blighted. Dangers may gather round us, disgrace may settle down on us, and a bright day of prosperity be turned into a dark, dismal night of adversity. The dearest objects may be snatched away, and we may be left solitary and alone, our former joy gone, and a bitter sorrow come in its place. Especially is this the case with that life on the retaining of which all our earthly possessions and enjoyments depend. 2. The dependence on the Divine will which befits the creature. We are not forbidden to look forward to the future, and provide for our prospective wants, personal and domestic. Within certain limits this is right, necessary. As little are we forbidden to be diligent in business and to expect profit as the result. Why, this matter is of express and urgent requirement. But we are to do all recognising the Divine will, cherishing a sense of dependence on God for life and health, for ability to work and success in working. 3. The sinfulness of all such proud confidence as they had been exhibiting—"But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil." They were jubilant where they had reason to be afraid. By their "boastings" we are to understand the manifold workings of that self-sufficient and vainglorious spirit by which they were animated. They presumptuously calculated on life, health, and prosperity. They entertained high expectations and bright prospects, and by these they were elated. Hence they expressed themselves in language of the kind which James is here condemning. Having thus remonstrated with them regarding the spirit which came out in the language he represents them as using, he concludes with the general inference in ver. 17—"Therefore, to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." The case in hand fell under this principle: it was one of the exemplifications of the maxim. When people are fully aware of their duty, and yet fail to do it, either by positive transgression or by omission or neglect, they are chargeable with sin which, in these circumstances, becomes peculiarly heinous. Ignorance does not excuse disobedience, but knowledge greatly aggravates its guilt. (*John Adam.*) *Godless merchants:*—I. THEY PRACTICALLY MAKE SELF THE END OF THEIR LIFE. It is this, in the resolution of worldly men, that is here condemned. 1. Not their industry. That is right. The rust that settles on inactivity—such, for instance, as the weakness of an unused limb or intellect or affection—is God's brand on indolence. 2. Again, the condemnation here is not upon their working for profit. It is well to accumulate what will be for our own or others' comfort. To amass wealth is a better as well as a wiser thing than to squander and to lose. 3. Nor is working for profit with forethought condemned. It is well to "go into the city," for there the stagnant pulses of our whole life are often quickened. It is well in the city to put forth the earnest industry of persevering men. A Christianised commerce may become one of the truest educators of the individual and efficient harmonisers of the race. But the reproach is when this working for profit with forethought is all for self. When the streets of the city are busily trod and all the details of commerce earnestly carried out merely for gain man wrongs his fellows, degrades himself, and dishonours God. II. THEY PRACTICALLY DISREGARD THE TRANSITORINESS OF THEIR LIFE. The swiftness with which our life passes defies adequate description. It is well when we regard it as Job did. If he looked on the road he trod he recognised as a symbol of his life, not the slow caravan richly laden with merchandise, but the rapid courier, who urged on the swift dromedary as he promptly carried the royal commands, scarcely deigning to look at the traveller he passed, who might sadly muse, "My days are swifter than a post." And as he gazed on the sea "the swift ships"—canoes of reed, and not the ponderously built and heavily freighted merchantmen—reminded him of his life. In the landscape he read types of himself, not in the rock, nor even in the tree, but in the frail grass and the fragile flower; and in the heavens, not in the enduring moon, nor even in the trembling stars, but in the vanishing cloud and the flimsy mist. Seeing the fact just as Job had thus seen it, James asks, "What is

your life? it is even a vapour." A vapour is an exhalation from the earth. We are dust, and at death our bodies only return to what they were. A vapour passeth away utterly. Though we can find the powder of the crushed rock, and even the faded leaf of the dying tree, there is no trace left of the mist that is exhaled by the sun or borne away by the breeze. So the places that now know us shall know us no more for ever. III. THEY PRACTICALLY IGNORE THE GOD OF THEIR LIFE. Not that the men of the world of the first century, any more than the men of the world of the nineteenth, could profess atheism. But whatever may be the language of the creed, the more convincing language of his conduct convicts every worldly man of this heresy. Such heresy ignores the teaching of our text that—1. The God of life has a will. "If the Lord will." The Supreme Being has both desire and determination; and these two constitute will. But beyond this the will of God is distinguished by intelligence, force, benevolence. A God without a will would be a God without a sceptre, without a throne, without any moral attributes. Yet such is the God conceived of by multitudes. 2. God's will relates to individual men. "Ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we," &c. Whenever men conceive their plans and toils and life too insignificant for the control of the Divine will, they limit the Holy One. 3. God's will refers both to the life and activity of every man. He has a will about your life, though the plans of that will are unknowable by you. It can as easily withdraw your life as it can wither the blade of grass or scatter the morning mist. So your life hangs upon that will. And if you live, your activities depend on that will. The path of enterprise may be blocked up by a hundred unforeseen obstacles, or your power to tread it may, through a weakened body or enfeebled mind, be withdrawn. IV. THEY PRACTICALLY PRIDE THEMSELVES ON THE VERY EVILS OF THEIR LIFE. "Now ye rejoice in your boasting; all such rejoicing is evil." We have glanced at the boastful speeches that indicate a boastful spirit. Do you inquire, What boastfulness, what vaingloriousness? The boastfulness of making self the end and aim of all; of disregarding the transitoriness of life; of ignoring the great God. What worse boastfulness could there be? It is glorying in shame. (*U. R. Thomas.*)

Religion and business:—The trade in England is one of the wonders of the time. To others may be left the boast that they are the great military powers of the world. Our distinction is that we stand the first in the ranks of commerce. In whatever way we look at it, the vastness of the trade which England is doing on every sea, with every nation, in almost every department, must impress the mind. There is not an article so minute as to be unworthy of her notice, not a land so inhospitable that it does not furnish some material for her vast transactions, not a sea so distant that it is not visited by her fleet, not a people so barbarous that she is not willing, and for the most part able, to carry on an intercourse with them. Look at it from another side. Visit some of those great hives of industry, where the discoveries of science are made subservient to its purposes. Everywhere there is eagerness, stir, activity. As in the service of idolatry of old, so here in a better work are all ages and classes employed, to an extent sometimes, indeed, that taxes far too heavily the brain of the thinker and the strength of the labourer. What a multitude of anxieties and calculations, hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, centre here! What an amount of interest is awakened, what a power of thought is engaged, what a variety of different forces are employed to the production of the result! It employs all variety of talents, it enlists an infinite number of agencies, it braves all kinds of dangers, it undertakes the most Herculean toils. It plants its settlement at every centre to which people are likely to be attracted; it penetrates forests or pierces mountains which may obstruct its advance; it goes far and wide in order to gather up the peculiar treasures of all countries, and turn them to profitable account. Now, after taking this rapid and cursory review, the first question which should suggest itself to every man who believes in the Divinity of our religion, and the power which it ought to exert as a guide, and a sanctifier of humanity, is, as to the way in which the Church is to regard this work, occupying so much time, employing so much energy, absorbing necessarily so much interest and desire. I. RELIGION IS TO BE A GOVERNING POWER IN BUSINESS LIFE. God is to be owned and obeyed in all its relations, all its feelings, and all its labours. The law of truth and righteousness is to be absolute and unchangeable. It may sometimes impose upon him duties and sacrifices which are felt to be very hard. It may require him to renounce advantages which seem to be within his grasp, and which in truth needs only a little straining of conscience on his part for him to secure. It will lead him to adopt principles of conduct which friends and companions may vote visionary and impracticable. But with him it ought never to be a question whether he will obey or

not. He is under a rule which he has willingly accepted; not because society approves it, or because it may seem on the whole to be most conducive to his personal interests, but because it is the law of Christ. He is not a Christian although a merchant, nor is he a Christian and a merchant, but he is a Christian merchant; that is the law of Christ rules him in his business as much as in his actions in the Church. II. RELIGION IS TO BE A PURIFYING POWER. It would be a simple thing to indulge in declamation against the evils of trade, and the corrupting influence which, even when conducted in the best way, and on the most Christian principles it exerts upon the character. You may be true, righteous, honourable, but the spirit of the world may have such dominion over you that all spiritual desire may be extinguished, and spiritual power and sympathy lost. Under the influence of this passion the purer sentiments of heaven will droop and die, all generous feeling will be resisted until at last it is crushed out altogether, the heart will grow harder and harder, and happy will it be if in some unguarded hour temptation does not betray into grosser evil. But how is even this lowering of tone to be escaped and the soul freed from the dominion of selfishness? It is here, as everywhere else, where the love of the world is, the love of the Father cannot be, and until that heavenly love be shed abroad in the heart, the other cannot be conquered. It is the new and holier affection which must expel the old. III. RELIGION SHOULD BE A CONSECRATING POWER. Our business must be regarded as work done for God, so that God may be glorified in it and served by its fruits, and then will it become itself truly Divine. Uprightness, honour, generosity, and unselfishness will redeem it from the faults which provoke so much censure, and stamp upon it a character which all will soon learn to reverence. (*J. G. Rogers, B.A.*) *Presumptuous language respecting futurity*:—I. THE FORM OF EXPRESSION WHICH THE APOSTLE CONDEMNS. 1. In general, we may observe that this language relates altogether to a worldly project. The principal object is gain, "not the true riches," or "that good part" which shall never be taken from those who choose it; but the gain of this world, the gain which is acquired by buying and selling. 2. The great Lord of all has no part in this scheme. These little arrogant words, "we will," thrust Him out at once and occupy His place. II. THE AMENDMENT SUGGESTED BY THE APOSTLE. 1. It furnishes us with a rule by which all our undertakings ought to be examined. Let us convert the views which we have in any undertaking into the form of a petition, and try whether we can, with decency, offer up such a petition to God. Let us consider whether the means by which we propose to compass these views are of such a nature that we may ask the Divine blessing to accompany them. 2. It teaches us to consider the shortness, and particularly the uncertainty, of life. There is not an element so friendly, nor a circumstance so trifling, that it may not become the minister of death. Ought not this manifest uncertainty of life, then, to cool our pursuit of earthly projects? 3. It teaches us to live in an habitual dependence on God, not only for life, but also for activity and prudence to carry our lawful designs into execution. 4. It teaches us to resign ourselves entirely to the will of God, and to submit all our schemes to Him, to prosper or to disappoint as seemeth good to Him. Lessons: 1. Guard against that extravagance in laying down schemes for the time to come, which, upon cool reflection, appears so unjustifiable in the example before us. 2. Realise this important truth, that our life is but "a vapour, which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Die we must, and we know not how soon. (*R. Walker.*) *The Christian business*:—Business is the process of making what man needs for his physical wants, and also the process of buying and selling what is made or produced. The farmer is engaged in business, and that, too, of a most essential kind. Yet when we speak of business life we generally refer to what can be carried on in cities. By many people it is thought that Christianity has no relation with this manifold work which men carry on. At best business life, they think, must be governed by the common laws of morality, and by nothing more. What is distinctive in Christianity has nothing to do with man's ordinary occupations. But the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, forbids all such views of man's nature and of man's relation to God. In that great act God declared that He for a time would become dependent on outward and material means for the sustentation of His human life. His religion has much to do with material things; for His Son came in the flesh, lived in a material home, inhabited a physical body, worked in a common carpenter's shop, and died a physical death. It is true that some of Christ's disciples were in His time, and are in ours, set apart for purely religious work. But these did not altogether escape secular toil. They had to live. Then, too, there were good men and true whom

Christ left at their secular toil. These were none the less disciples, none the less saintly. There is, therefore, we believe, a Divine call to business. It is not a call to the same work as that undertaken by a minister of the gospel, but it comes from the same lips. What we really need is that all Christian men should feel the designation of God to all honest work. We shall never have a really Christian world and city until this recognition is general. 1. Men are adapted to different and special pursuits. One is evidently cut out to be a lawyer, another to be a doctor, another to be in a bank, another to sell in a shop, another to work in a factory. Who adapted them? We may say that they inherited certain aptitude, or that very much is due to training and early education. All very true. But unless we are going to dismiss God from human life, we must feel that His mind has been at work, and that these varying capacities are proofs of His presiding and providing will. 2. God provides not only the men but the raw material. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." His hand made all things; and when we handle the goods in our commerce, and put our prices on them, we are handling His work. 3. God made spiritual beings like ourselves to do our work through a physical medium. No direct religious work can possibly be done by us except we have been fortified by material means. With angels it may be different; but with us who have bodies it is certain that the souls within cannot act unless we are fed, clothed, nourished, and sheltered, and none of this can happen except through business life. And as God has ordered that we should work and live here through the body, He has ordered the means by which the body of man is to be kept in good working order. He who despises business despises the Lord and His ordinances. If this be so, if God designs that business life shall be the career of most men, then certain consequences follow. (1) We ought to make business life a matter of prayer. There is a plan in the Divine Mind. Do we not wish that plan to be revealed to us? How it calms and cools the fevered brow to pray! How it nerves a man for the battle of life to pray! How it opens the heaven of light in the midst of the world's darkness to ejaculate a prayer to God! (2) Then, too, it is very necessary that business men should be conscious that they are doing the will of God. Men should accustom themselves to feel God with and within them at all times and places. The pious housekeeper of Bengel, the German commentator, used to think that her master spent far too much time over his books and writings; she feared that his soul was in danger. But when one day she went to call him to dinner she saw him fall back in his chair and say, "Lord Jesus, accept my work to-day," and she felt no more fears about his spiritual life. The Christian business is the one that is carried on for the glory of God; it is the work in which Christ is always honoured and obeyed. In order to see the Christianity of business we must inquire a little as to what it is we mean by the glory of God. 1. Justice is the glory of God. It is impossible to read the nature of God without seeing that justice is at the very foundation, and that all other prerogatives would be rendered nugatory if this were absent. The man, then, who would show loyalty to Christ must pay great heed to this principle of justice. It is a harder one to apply in all its details than is love. It is a more uncommon quality in men than generosity and good-naturedness. Business life has been purposely arranged to be a training-school for this virtue. We are brought by business life into contact with unchanging laws. Punctuality is simply a means of paying a debt to our fellows, and it is obedience to the irrevocable law of time. In dealing with raw material it is the same. There is a just and honest way of working at it, and of making it of use in society. The paint washes off, the veneer falls away; the poverty of the material is revealed. There is no glory either of man or God then, but only shame. It was a shame that the workman scamped his work, that the purchaser paid so low a price as to tempt him, that society loved shams and delusions, rather than "things honest in the sight of all men." 2. Brotherhood is a part of the glory of God. For as He is our Common Father He certainly desires to see us act toward one another as brothers. A man may strive, but he must strive lawfully. He may do his best, but he must not seek to inflict wrong and loss on another. He may seek his own gain, but he must not seek the damage of his neighbour. These are the principles of the gospel. They are like all lofty principles, difficult of application and hard to carry into practice, but it is a part of the discipline of business life that we should learn this difficult art, and thus seek in all we do the glory of God. 3. We seek the glory of God when we remember that the material in our life exists only for the sake of the spiritual. Every Christian man must have a soul above his business. He must make the Cross of Christ central. A responsible being, he must seek strength from God to

discharge his duties to those who come under his influence. A consecrated being, he must find in the fellowship of fellow-Christians that which will fill his heart with joy because it fills his hands with usefulness. (*S. Pearson, M.A.*) *The absorbing interest of worldly business to be guarded against:*—Here James does three things. 1. He seems to guard against the absorbing influence of worldly business—against thorough devotedness to the work of "buying, and selling, and getting gain." And well he might, on the ground of the very truths which he here propounds. Besides that "the love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Tim. vi. 10). Accumulated wealth—what a poor and passing portion! 2. The apostle issues a solemn caution against confidence in the future. If, indeed, a man is to be active, energetic, and successful, in any part of his appointed work, he must calculate on future time. But to depend implicitly, whether on the prolongation of life, or on the attainment of wealth, is utterly unreasonable, as being what truth, and the actual condition of things, forbid—and eminently dangerous, as setting aside a powerful moral motive, fitted to be useful both to saints and sinners. 3. He prescribes a wiser way—inculcating a habitual sense of dependence on Divine Providence, and a devout recognition and acknowledgment of that Providence, with respect both to the events, and to the termination, of life. (*A. S. Patterson, D.D.*) *The Jews and trade:*—Trading and chaffering has been peculiar to the Jews before and after the birth of Christ, especially to those who have lived out of Canaan, their country. For because they had no landed property among foreign nations, they were compelled to make their living by trade, which is the case now, if only it were done as it ought to be done. (*Starke.*) *A Jewish story:*—Our rabbis tell us a story, which happened in the days of Rabbi Simeon, the son of Chelpatha. He was present at the circumcision of a child, and stayed with his father to the entertainment. The father brought out wine for his guests, that was seven years old, saying, "With this wine will I continue for a long time to celebrate the birth of my new-born son." They continued supper till midnight. At that time Rabbi Simeon arose and went out, that he might return to the city in which he dwelt. On the way he saw the Angel of Death walking up and down. He said to him, "Who art thou?" He answered, "I am the messenger of God." The rabbi said, "Why wanderest thou about thus?" He answered, "I slay those persons who say, 'We will do this or that,' and think not how soon death may overpower them; that man with whom thou hast supped, and who said to his guests, 'With this wine will I continue for a long time to celebrate the birth of my new-born son,' behold the end of his days is at hand, for he shall die within thirty days." (*Debarim Rabba.*) **Ye know not what shall be on the morrow.**—*Ignorance of the future:*—There has ever been amongst mankind a propensity to trust to futurity. So inveterate has the propensity been, that universal experience from the beginning of time has not yet wrought its correction. It operates like a bewitching spell. The Author of our nature has endowed us with memory but not with prescience. We remember the past; but we know nothing of the future—nothing beyond what He has been pleased to tell us. The remark is trite, but true, that it is better for us that we do not know the secrets of the future. The remark, however, is one which is usually heard in seasons of calamity and distress. But while we might, in such circumstances, have no wish for the anticipation of certain evil, there could, we may think, be no such objection to the foresight of good. By such foresight, it may seem, we should have a threefold enjoyment of it—in expectation, in possession, and in recollection. But here too—the man of spiritual mind at least will admit—"ignorance is bliss." If adversity is distressing, prosperity is fascinating and tempting. And if it exerts such an influence over our hearts when possessed, inducing forgetfulness of God and disregard of our higher interests, what an addition would be made to its seductive power were a man foreseeing a long and uninterrupted course of it! In all respects, therefore, it is better that futurity is hidden from our view. And this bounding of our vision should be a teacher of humility. It should make us feel the infinite distance there is between the creature and the Creator—between ourselves, with our short-sighted vision, and the omniscient God. In the passage there are two states of mind and heart brought into contrast: the one described as that which men are naturally prone to indulge, the other that which God enjoins, and which really becomes them. 1. The former is confident in prospect, and boastful in success. The man is secure of life, of health, of a sound mind, of a ready market, of a sure profit; and of all for a whole year. He is certain of prospering. All in fancy stands already accomplished before him. He calculates neither on death, nor on sickness, nor on any hindrance to his schemes. The stream flows on without a ripple. No rock

interposes to chafe or to divide its waters. His sky is all sunshine: no cloud comes over its brightness. The other character we have in the words of the fifteenth verse—"For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that." The man who says this is supposed to feel it. He humbly recollects that "his times" are in other hands than his own, and uncertain "what even a day," far more what a year, "may bring forth," to that God he commits everything he purposes for the future. 2. Then again, the former character is boastful in success. This is equally implied in his language. The man who trusts in himself for success will only follow out the same temper of mind by taking the credit and the glory to himself in success. The other, in the same spirit in which on entering on his course he had "committed his way unto the Lord," ascribes to Him, with a heart overflowing with lowly and lively gratitude, all the praise of his prosperity. 3. And we may add, as still another feature of the contrast, that the one is fretful in disappointment; the other humbly and cheerfully submissive. To every judgment and every conscience, without the fear of a dissentient voice, may I put the question—Which of these states of mind is the more becoming? and which, too, is the more truly happy? There can be but one reply. Let us, then, cultivate the one, and repress the other. What is there respecting which we can say we know what shall be on the morrow? But, while the apostle does not exclude from the uncertainty the various engagements of business which the boastfully confident character he here introduces anticipates, he evidently has special reference to life itself—on the continuance of which all else depends. This is the point to which he specially alludes: "Ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." The similitude is striking. Such is human life—so fleeting, so transitory, so incapable of being, even for one moment, arrested and held. But not less true is it of property and business than of life. To-day an extensive tenement stands secure, yielding a rental that affords the means of sustenance and comfort to a contented and happy family: to-morrow it is a smoking ruin. To-day a man invests all he is worth in a promising speculation, and is in full and buoyant hope of an abundant return: to-morrow an event, such as no one could have anticipated, occurs, which sinks the markets, blasts his prospects, and leaves him to sigh over irretrievable ruin. (*R. Wardlaw, D.D.*) *The future*:—There are some of us who, with vain hopes and faithless terrors, peer into the future, as well as some who, with unavailing regret, brood upon the past. What are the evils that we are to do most to avoid as respects our future? I think they are three-fold; they may be roughly defined as shadowy hopes, needless anticipations, and procrastinated repentance. 1. Shadowy hopes! When the poet says "Man never is, but always to be, blest," while he thus describes our imagined bliss as a floating upon the future, as a fragment of a rainbow that always flies as we advance. How many of you, if you will confess the truth, are looking for happiness, not from anything which is in your lives, but for something which you hope will be before you die. Well, if we are doing so, we are not wise: there is a three-fold error and folly in wasting and making miserable our present life by these shadowy hopes. It is foolish, first, because the day which we are thus looking to, and hoping for, may, and very likely will, never come at all. We cannot thus rely upon to-morrow, and we know not what a day may bring forth, and what is our life? Death does not care for men's disappointments, he does not take into account men's plans. Death! It is a folly to postpone your happiness to a time which you may never see, and it is consequently a folly thus to live only in the future, because most probably even when your end is attained, even if you get the thing you are now wishing for, these hopes, being earthly hopes, and therefore in their very nature illusory, may bring you just no happiness at all. You may be happier, in the present, if you only knew it, than in the future, even if you get what you hope for. A man gains rest only to find that rest is weariness, and rank only to find that he has touched a bubble, riches only to find that the path of the rich man is strewn with thorns. And the third, and perhaps the most important reason why a life wasted in shadowy hopes is a folly, is, that thereby we lose what we might perhaps have had of present happiness. When St. Bernard was travelling, he was so absorbed in his own thoughts, that after riding all day along the shores of the lake of Geneva, he asked in the evening where the lake was. Even so we, by looking forward to some time that may never come, lose many a bright scene, many a golden moment, many a sweet wayside flower. Our only real chance of happiness is to get such happiness out of the present, as the present, almost always in some sense or other, has to give to the humble and the good, and if it has none to give,

then at least we feel that life has other things besides happiness, and that it is no great matter. 2. And then there is a worse form of this folly of living in the future, perhaps equally common, although exactly opposite in character; it is to destroy all chances of present happiness, not by those vain shadowy hopes, but by equally shadowy fears. Rich men have been known to starve themselves, and even to have committed suicide in the mere dread of future poverty. The worst of evils, says a French proverb, are those which never happen. At any rate, it is absurd for us in any case to suffer them twice over, and sometimes they are more in anticipation than in reality. I have been speaking, for the most part, with immediate reference to this life, but I will extend it to the world beyond. Whatever may await the sinner in the next life, God clearly did not mean this life to be devastated by anticipated horror. As for heaven, you can go there as often as you will. If you do not do so now, you will never be able to do so hereafter. If the angels never sing songs to you now, how can they do so when you come to die? I said, like Richard Baxter, to go to heaven every day. We enter heaven most when we do our duty best and most simply. 3. I can but touch briefly on the one other error about the future—but that is the deadliest, *i.e.*, procrastinated repentance, reliance on the future to mend the wilful sins of the present. For these other follies of which I have spoken are hurtful, but this is absolutely ruinous. It ruins the present by encouraging continuance in sin, by rendering recovery from sin more and more impossible. It ruins the past whatever it may have been. You will repent in the future. But how if you have no future? I say nothing of the terrible impiety of thus bidding God bide your time before you choose to obey His laws, nothing of the shame of thus turning God's mercies into an engine against your soul—nothing of the insolence of declaring that He has not meant anything by His anger. But this I know, there is no known sin so near the sin that is past praying for, so akin to the sin against the Holy Ghost, as this wilful predetermination to postpone repentance that you may enjoy now the depravity of sin. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *Man's ignorance of the future*:—I. THE FACT. II. THE PROBABLE REASONS. 1. To make us have a deeper conviction of the Divine knowledge. 2. To remind us of our subjection to God. III. THE INFLUENCE which our ignorance of futurity ought to have upon us. 1. To check our presumption. 2. To check our anxiety. (*R. C. Dillon, D.D.*) *Impossible to forecast events*:—The *Times* spoke thus of an honoured and lamented nobleman the day before his death:—"Lord Iddesleigh will go to-morrow to Osborne, will then deliver up his seal of office, and will on Friday return to The Pynes, Exeter." Let us listen, however, to Holy Scripture: "Go to, now," &c. Even journalists might well remember this. **What is your life?**—*What is life?*—I. LIFE IS A TEST. Every new ship must have a trial trip. If you take some one into your employ, and a crisis comes where his behaviour will make or break you, you say, "Now I will test him; now I will see what is in him." And, my friends, our whole life is a test, and we are all on a trial trip. Men, angels, devils the spectators; heaven, earth, and hell watching. Every word spoken and every action having ten thousand echoes. II. IT IS AN APPRENTICESHIP. We study eight or ten years and we get our profession, we work five or six years and we get our trade, and then we go forth to the work of life. But this world is not our workshop. This world is to be destroyed, but do you suppose that because this world is to be destroyed all the affairs of the universe are to stop? How many hands and feet and eyes are necessary for the carrying out of the business of this world, and how many activities will be required for the business enterprises of eternity? III. IT IS A CONFLICT. Have you not found it so? If you have never tried to curb your temper, if you have never tried to subdue your passions, if you have never tried to be better men, better women, then you know not what I mean; but if you have tried to do better, and wanted to be better, and struggled to do better, then you know that Paul was not only graphic but accurate when he described life as war with the world, and war with the flesh, and war with the devil. It may have been a conflict with yourselves, it may have been a conflict with poverty, it may have been a conflict with higher social position, with an unhappy family name, with the persecutions of the world; but I warrant you life has been to most of you a hand-to-hand fight. IV. IT IS A PROPHECY. What you are now you will in all probability be for ever, only on a larger scale. Are all your preferences toward the bad? The probability is that they will be so for ever. Are your preferences toward the good? Do you want to be better? Do you long after God as an eternal portion? I tell you plainly that you are on the way to grandeurs which no summer's night's dream had ever power to depict. V. IT IS A PREPA-

RATION. If we are going a long journey we must get ready; we must have a guide-book; we must have apparel. If we are going among dangers we want to be armed. We have all started on a road which has no terminus, and once started we will never come back. Are we armed? Have we the robe? Are we ready for the future? VI. IT IS A GREAT UNCERTAINTY. Of those people who perished on the Brooklyn Bridge, there was not one who expected to quit life in that way. Some, no doubt, had said, "Well, I shall leave the world under this disease, or under that disease." Another person said, "There are so many perils in that style of business, in that way I shall come to the end of my earthly life." Not one ever expected to go in this way—to perish on the bridge—and to every man the step out of this life is a surprise. I never knew any one to go in the way he expected. You hear of some one who has been an invalid for twenty-five years, and he always departs suddenly. You hear of some friend who, after thirty years of illness, has departed, and you say, "Why, is it possible?" Our life is struck through with uncertainty. Our friends change, our associations change, our circumstances change, our health changes. All change. But, blessed be God, there is a rock on which we can stand, the Rock of Ages. It is no autocrat at the head of the universe. My Father is King. Though the mountains may depart and the hills remove, His kindness and His love and His grace will fail us never, never. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *What is your life?*—1. In the first place I will remark that it is a very mysterious part of God's dealings, this making our life so uncertain. A man has a work to do, a great work, compared with which everything else he does is mere trifling, and yet he does not know whether he shall have twenty years in which to do it, or ten, or a few months or days. Surely if we were not accustomed to the thought this would seem strange to us; it is different from most earthly arrangements; men who give a piece of work to be done assign a time for doing it, they do not say, "I *may* come to-day or to-morrow, or perhaps not for twenty years, but whenever I come I expect the work to be ready." Or, again, to take a slightly different view of the case, it must appear strange that such different periods should be given to different persons to do the same work; one person has only childhood, another gets into youth, another is left to mature old age, and falls asleep rather than dies. Some, too, have long warning of their end; a man falls into a consumption and knows that within a certain time he must die, and so he has time as it were to get himself ready; while another is cut off on a sudden, and apparently in health drops down and expires; one man has frequent warnings by illness, and is in such a state that he knows he is liable to be cut off any day; while another has some sudden accident and is gone. It will throw all the light required on the difficulties of which I have been speaking, if we remember one thing, namely this, that our state here is one of trial; we are not told to do this thing and that so much for their own sake as for the sake of seeing whether we will obey God or no. We speak of the future as if it were something certainly to come; we speak of doing this and that to-morrow as if to-morrow were sure to come; but if God calls us away this night, what future, what to-morrow will there be for us? there will be a to-morrow for some doubtless, but will there be a to-morrow for us? Thus, you see, we may not reckon on to-morrow, we do not know whether there will be such a thing, and so the present becomes our great concern, the present is ours; the past is gone and cannot be recalled, the future may never be, but the present is indeed our own to work in, and the most powerful persuasive that we can have to set to work at once is the uncertainty of our having any other time allowed us. In this way, I think, we see something of the explanation of the mystery of God's dealings in making our lives so uncertain; we see that purposes of trial may be carried out thus better than in any other way; and if any man feel inclined to murmur, we can assure him that if he does not submit himself to God's will as things are, undoubtedly he would be just as stiff-necked, or rather more so, were he assured that he should live a hundred or a thousand years. And so of that other point I mentioned, namely, the difference of time allotted to different persons; this also seems quite consistent with a system such as we know that of God to be. For what is man's trial? simply this, whether in the position in which God has placed him he will strive to live a life pleasing to God. 2. I will next observe that the truth in the text is the best truth to carry about with us in order to enable us to set things at their value. If the uncertainty and shortness of life make those unhappy who are negligent of the will of God, in the same proportion will it give peace and comfort to the minds of those who do set themselves to live according to His holy will: for the troubles of life will appear trifling to him who thinks of himself as a

traveller on his road home; a person on a journey will put up with many inconveniences, because he says they cannot last long, and home will appear even pleasanter after a rough journey. 3. Lastly, I wish to consider the question of St. James, "What is your life?" in a sense rather different from that intended by the apostle, but yet one which will afford us much instruction and comfort. "What is your life?" If any one is troubled by this question, his answer is in the Creed which he repeats, "I believe in Jesus Christ—who was born—who was dead and buried—who rose again the third day—who ascended into heaven." In the life of our Lord, Christian brethren, we are to see the life of man represented as in a picture: what He has done we may do, not in our strength, of course, but here is the very blessing of the Christian Church, that we may rise above our own strength, we may claim union with Him "who was born, dead, and buried, but who rose again." (*Bp. Harvey Goodwin.*) *Life*:—I. WHAT A DESCRIPTION IS HERE GIVEN OF THE LIFE OF THE NATURAL MAN! "A vapour"—a filmy nothing! Yesterday he was not; he seems scarcely to have existence now; to-morrow he is gone—in a moment gone. Such is man's natural life; one cold, one fever, one mistake in medicine, in eternity. Yet men live, neglecting their souls, as if they were to live for ever. But look we at another feature of his life: look we at his moral life, when destitute of the grace of God. It is but a wretched "vapour"—a murky vapour. It is but one step above the beast. Look at the mere man of business. Do not think I speak against business; it is one of the mistakes of mankind to suppose that a man must retire from his vocation to give himself up to God. God requires him to give himself up to Him in his business. But look at him the slave of his business, from Monday morning till Saturday night; occupying himself, indeed—altogether occupying himself—but never occupying himself one moment for God. He has not the least concern in this matter. Rise we higher: look we at the man of intellect, the man of intelligence. He dives into the earth, ascends into the clouds, travels over the sea, goes over the world—thinks himself a man of wisdom. Ask Solomon what he thought—what was the end of the matter with him. To "fear God and keep His commandments." That is what he summed up all his knowledge in; as if there were nothing else worth knowing. We sometimes see beautiful exhibitions of what is termed domestic happiness; but the chief ingredient is wanting, when a man is destitute of the fear of God. Even the benevolence we sometimes see displayed by a worldly man (would that there were more of it exhibited among the saints of God!)—self is at the root of it. And his very religion has all self at the root of it—self-righteousness, self-power, self-wisdom. Shall we descend lower? Shall I ask what there is in profligacy? Is there a profligate here? Is this life? What! is dissipation life? Is excess life? It is not worthy the name of life; it is a mere vaporous nothing, a murky vapour, a stench, as it were, in the nostrils of Jehovah; and it ought to be a stench to thine own soul. II. Consider THE STRONG CONTRAST WHICH THE LIFE OF A CHILD OF GOD PRESENTS TO THAT WHICH I HAVE BEEN PLACING BEFORE YOU. Here is no "vapour"—here is substance, reality, truth. "To be spiritually minded is life and peace." This is life—to be led of the Spirit, to be quickened by the Spirit, to be drawn by the Spirit, to be kept by the Spirit, and to follow His guidance. This is life—this is peace; nothing short of it. "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God with your bodies and your spirits, which are God's." Here is life; no "vapour," a substance, a reality, a something, a real thing. To "glorify God" is the highest element in man's being. Whether a man is in the lowest poverty, or whether he is called to sit upon the most exalted throne, it matters not; if he live under this principle, it is true life. It signifies not what a man's engagements are—it gives a dignity to them, be they what they may. Look at the source of this life: nothing less than the Spirit of God. Yet how small were its beginnings! Oh! the wonders of this spiritual life! Think of its security—"hid with Christ in God"—hid with Christ's life; just as secure as Christ's life is; the perfections of Jehovah encircling it, and that continually. Who can declare the happiness of this life? The happiness of self-denial! And whence is it that this life comes to us? It comes from the life of Christ: His life is our life—it is the support of our life. (*J. H. Evans, M.A.*) *What is your life*:—When a prince dies they toll the great bell of the cathedral that all the city may hear it, and that for miles round the tidings may spread. Swift messengers of the press bear the news through the length and breadth of the land, and all men's ears are made to tingle. "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city," let believers be quick to hear the call to humiliation, to awakening, and to prayer that the visitation may be overruled

for great and lasting good. A sudden death is a specially impressive warning. In a moment our strength is turned to weakness, and our comeliness into corruption. Now, upon this matter we have nothing to say but what is commonplace, for, garnish them as you may, graves are among the commonest of common things. Yet a solemn reflection upon the shortness of life, and the certainty of death, may prove to be important, and even invaluable, if it be allowed to penetrate our hearts, and influence our lives. History tells us of Peter Waldo, of Lyons, who was sitting at a banquet as thoughtless and careless as any of the revellers, when suddenly one at the table bowed his head and died. Waldo was startled into thought, and went home to seek his God; he searched the Scriptures, and, according to some, became a great helper, if not the second founder, of the Waldensian Church, which in the Alpine valleys kept the lamp of the gospel burning when all around was veiled in night. A whole Church of God was thus strengthened and perpetuated by the hallowed influence of death upon a single mind. I suppose it is also true that Luther in his younger days, walking with his friend Alexis, saw him struck to the ground by a flash of lightning, and became thenceforward prepared in heart for that deep work of grace through which he learned the doctrine of justification by faith, and rose to be the liberator of Europe from Papal bondage. How much every way we owe to this weighty subject! May a prince's death awaken many of you to life. He being dead now speaks to you; from yonder sunny shores he reminds you of the valley of death-shade which you must shortly traverse. I. The text begins by reminding us that WE HAVE NO FORESIGHT: "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow." The text divides itself into an emphatic question, "What is your life?" and an instructive answer: "It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." 1. First, I say, we have here an emphatic question: he asks, "What is your life?" For solidity, for stability; what is it? What is there in it? Is it not composed of such stuff as dreams are made of? Your own breath is a fair picture of the flimsy, airy thing which men call life. What is your life? What is it for continuance? Some things last awhile, and run adown the centuries; but what is your life? Even garments bear some little wear and tear; but what is your life? A delicate texture; no cobweb is a tithe as frail. It will fail before a touch, a breath. Justinian, an emperor of Rome, died by going into a room which had been newly painted; Adrian, a pope, was strangled by a fly; a consul struck his foot against his own threshold, and his foot mortified, so that he died thereby. There are a thousand gates to death; and, though some seem to be narrow wickets, many souls have passed through them. Men have been choked by a grape stone, killed by a tile falling from the roof of a house, poisoned by a drop, carried off by a whiff of foul air. I know not what there is that is too little to slay the greatest king. It is a marvel that man lives at all. So unstable is our life that the apostle says, What is it? So frail, so fragile is it, that he does not call it a flower of the field, or the snuff of a candle, but asks, What is our life? It is as if he had said—Is it anything? Is it not a near approach to nothing? St. Augustine used to say he did not know whether to call it a dying life or a living death, and I leave you the choice between these two expressions. This is certainly a dying life; its march is marked by graves. Nothing but a continuous miracle keeps any one of us from the sepulchre. Were Omnipotence to stay its power but for a moment, earth would return to earth, and ashes to ashes. It is a dying life: and equally true is it that it is a living death. We are always dying. Every beating pulse we tell leaves but the number less: the more years we count in our life, the fewer remains in which we shall behold the light of day. From childhood to youth, from youth to manhood, from manhood to grey old age we march onward in serried ranks from which no man can retire. We tarry not even when we sleep: we are continually moving forward like the waters of yonder river, on whose banks we find a habitation. What, then, is our life? That is a question which remains to a large degree unanswered and unanswerable. 2. Yet our text affords us what is in some aspects an instructive answer. It does not so much tell us what life actually is as what it is like. (1) "It is even a vapour." James compares our life, you see, to a very subtle, unsubstantial, flimsy thing—a vapour. If you live upon an eminence, from which you can look down upon a stretch of country, you see in the early morning a mist covering all the valleys. In a little time you look from the same window, and the vapour has all vanished. It was so thin, so fine, so much like gossamer, that a breath of wind has scattered it, or peradventure the sun has drawn it aloft; at any rate, not a trace of that all-encompassing vapour remains. Such is your life.

Or you have marked a cloud in the western sky, illuminated with those marvellous lights which glowed during those extraordinary sunsets, the like of which none of our fathers had seen. You looked at the jewelled mass; it shone in the perfection of beauty, and all the colours of the rainbow were blended in its hues: in another instant, lo, it was not; it was gone past all recall. Such is your life. This morning, as we came hither, we saw our breath: it was before our eye for an instant, and anon it had gone. Such is the picture which James presents to us. "What is your life? It is even a vapour." He proceeds to explain his own symbol in a sentence which is full of meaning. (2) "It is even a vapour, that appeareth." Vapour is so ethereal, phantom-like, and unreal, that it may rather be said to appear than to exist. If you could reach yon fleecy cloud, you would scarcely know that you had entered it, for it would possibly appear to be the thinnest of mist. The vapour which steams from your mouth, how light, how airy, it is next door to nothing; it only "appeareth." And such is this life—a dream, a vain show, an apparition of the night. (3) Further, the apostle says, It "appeareth for a little time." It is only a very little while that a man lives at the longest. Compare a man's life with that of a tree. A hundred years ago that oak seemed every way as venerable as it does to-day, whereas the man was then unthought of by his grandsire. Compare our life with the existence of this world; I mean not the present state of the earth as fitted up for man, but I allude to those unknown ages which intervened between the present arrangement and that beginning wherein God created the heavens and the earth. The long eras of fire and water, the reigns of fishes and reptiles, the periods of tropical heat and polar ice, make one think of man as a thing of yesterday. Then contrast our life with the being of the eternal Lord: and what is man—man when most venerable with years? A Methuselah, what is he? He is but an insect born in the morning's sunbeam, sporting in the noontide ray, and dead when the dews begin to fall. He appeareth for a little while. (4) The parallel is further consummated by the apostle's adding, "And then vanisheth away." The cloud is gone from the mountain. Where is it? It has vanished away. No trace of it is left: neither can you recall it. We too shall soon be gone; gone as a dream when one awaketh. With the most of us our remembrance will be short. The air has felt the passing-bell, and now the stars look down upon a stone writ large with "HERE HE LIES!" Or the dews shall wet a grass-grown mound, girt about with brambles, on which a few wild flowers have sprung up spontaneously to show how life shall yet triumph over death. Children may bear our name, and yet a fourth generation shall quite forget that we ever sojourned in this region. Such is our life—"a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." II. THE LESSONS WHICH LIE WITHIN THIS TRUTH. First, If this life be unsubstantial as a vapour—and nobody can deny the fact—let us regard it as such, and let us seek for something substantial elsewhere. It may be well to make the best of both worlds; but of this poor world nothing can be made unless it be viewed in the light of another. This is a poor withering life at the best, for we all do fade as a leaf. Next, Is life most uncertain? We know it is: no one attempts to deny it. It is certain that life will come to an end; but it is most uncertain when it will come to that end. Is it so uncertain? Then let us not delay. Since death is hastening, haste thou thyself until thou has found a refuge in the cleft of the Rock of Ages, and art safe in the arms of Jesus. Since life is so uncertain, oh, haste thee, Christian, to serve thy God while the opportunity is given thee: be diligent to-day to do those works which perfect saints above and holy angels cannot do. Is life so short? Does it only appear for a little time, and then vanish away? Then let us put all we can into it. If life be short, it is wisdom to have no fallows, but to sow every foot of ground while we can. Is life so short? Then do not let us make any very great provision for it. If I were going a day's voyage, I should not wish to take with me enough biscuit and salt beef to last for three years; it would only cumber the boat. One walking-stick is an admirable help, as I often find; but to carry a bundle of them when going on a journey would be a superfluity of absurdity. Alas, how many load themselves as if life's journey would last a thousand years, at the least! Is time so short? Then do not let us fret about its troubles and discomforts. A man is on a journey, and puts up at an inn, and when he is fairly in the hostelry, he perceives that it is a poor place, with scant food, and a hard bed. "Well, well," says he, "I am off the first thing to-morrow morning, and so it does not matter." Must life vanish away? We know it must. What then? That vanishing is the end of one life and the beginning of another. And is death quite sure to come to me? Then, as I cannot avoid it, let

me face it. But death will become another thing to you if you are renewed in heart. To the Christian it is an angel beckoning him onward and upward. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *A true estimate of life*:—I. What is the life of the LOVER OF PLEASURE? 1. It is a wandering life; always in pursuit of pleasure, but never satisfied. 2. It is a hollow life; void of all that is exalting and ennobling, and truly unsubstantial as it regards all that is most worthy of the pursuit of an immortal being. 3. It is an accursed life; under the curse of the broken law. 4. It is a tumultuous life. The lover of pleasure spends his time and wastes the most favourable opportunities in the midst of boisterous pursuits and tumultuous joys. II. What is the life of the WORLDLY-MINDED? 1. It is idolatrous. The world in different senses and under different characters is the idol of the worldly-minded man; and to this idol he offers body and soul, devotes time and talents, and sacrifices earthly ease and heavenly happiness. 2. Such a life is stamped with simplicity and folly—which will appear most obviously if you consider the objects the worldly-man has in view, the means he employs for the attainment of these objects, and the end obtained in the accomplishment of such objects. III. What is the life of the FORMALIST? it is laborious, enchanted, fleshly and empty. 1. It is laborious. The formalist has a standard, and to keep up this standard much carnal and bodily exercise are necessary. 2. The life of the formalist is an enchanted life. 3. It is likewise a fleshly life. It originates in the flesh, centres in the flesh, and ends in the flesh. 4. An empty life. It is a shadow without substance; like a statue, which, though it may be a true and correct likeness of a human being, is void of life and energy, and therefore only the representation of the human being. (*J. F. Whitty.*) *What is life?*—We have a life—what are we going to make of it? Yet, though life is short and uncertain, it is wonderful in power; it can do wonderful things. How it can love and hate! How it can pray and blaspheme! What are we going to do with it? Let us look at a few ways, and make our choice. 1. The money-making way. Will that do? 2. The mechanical way. (Technical knowledge.) Suppose you take all the measurements of a house, but never speak to the occupants! 3. Pleasure. Now all these ways of life have their right side. We cannot live without money. We can get but a little way on in life without knowledge. And every one of us needs pleasure, and ought to have more relaxation than some of us get now. But there are ugly circumstances in life which mar all the success that is possible along that line of movement. We have £50,000 a year, but we cannot add one cubit to our stature, or make one hair white or black. We know every science, yet we cannot tell what will be on the morrow. It is the business of the Christian teacher to keep these facts steadily before the public mind, and to draw the heart away from cisterns that are broken, from charms that are mocking, and to fix it upon things invisible, spiritual, Divine. 1. What we want in life is a supreme purpose worthy of our powers. If our purpose is to be rich, the greatest section of our nature will be simply untouched or perverted. If our purpose is to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God, our whole nature will be moved to its best exertions, and will produce its best effects. 2. We want next a right view of those trials and circumstances over which we have absolutely no control. Ask why you are baffled—why you are not allowed to scale the only wall which separates you from the sunny land where the gardens bask in perpetual summer; and such questionings will lead you back into solemn sanctuaries, and show you that the earth and all its affairs are under the direction and judgment of God. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *What is life?*—I. Life is A SENSE—the soul's career in a body. On this account the body should be taken good care of, wisely inhabited and vigorously controlled (1 Cor. ix. 27). II. Life is AN IMPULSE—ever pushed forward by some dominant motive, as of selfishness, or benevolence, avarice, ambition, pride, vanity, love of pleasure, &c. (2 Cor. v. 14; Gal. ii. 20). III. Life is A PURSUIT, ever reaching out after or pursuing something in general that pleases us (Psa. iv. 6). IV. Life is AN ACT, *i.e.*, characterised by things done; either what ought to be done, or what ought not to be done. And this is one of the main pivots of our accountability (2 Cor. v. 10). V. Life is A POWER, ever sending out influence, as a magnet sends out attraction, or the sun its light and heat. VI. Life is A TEAR—a scene of varied and multiplied trials. "Born to trouble" is the world's cradle inscription. Witness Paul's catalogue (2 Cor. vi. 4, 5; xi. 23–27). But what an admirable offset (2 Cor. i. 5). And the same resource is free and open to every child of God. VII. Life is A PERIOD—*i.e.*, with a definite length, it has also an end. For this some adequate preparation should be made. VIII. Life is A PROSPECT; looking

beyond the bounds of time over into the bosom of eternity, and forward to the bar of God (2 Cor. v. 1–9; 2 Tim. iv. 8). IX. Life is A WANT: alike in its beginning, continuance, and end. It is ever needy, as an infant for its mother's arms; or as a vine, stretching forth its tendrils for something by which to climb, or upon which to lean. And how all-happy is that soul that finds the true source of strength, and passes through all the wilderness of this world, and comes up out of it at last "leaning upon her beloved." (*J. G. Hall, D.D.*) *What is your life:*—I. WHAT IS THE INTENTION OF "LIFE"? No man of any consideration can look on "this life" for a moment without connecting it with "the life that is to come." It is evident that the first great intention of this "life" is education—so that as in a man's "life," there is a portion upon this earth allotted to what is strictly preparatory to the rest—so is the whole immortal existence of a man arranged, that there should be a period of instruction and cultivation, to be the education-time for his eternity. God deals with us here as a father deals with the children he is training: nothing is final; but everything has a direct influence upon something else that is to be final. And if it be so, can you wonder that there is so much that is mysterious to our present view? Can a child, while he is a child, understand his own discipline? Allowing, then, that this "life" is education, education is made up of two parts—probation and cultivation. And when I say probation, I mean by that word, that a man is to know himself, and to show to other men what he really is. The circumstances in which he is put are exactly those the best to unfold his real character. He is treated as a perfectly free agent. He is placed between good and evil. Opposite influences bear upon him. He has such tendencies that, if he follow them, he will be bad and miserable; and he has such convictions and assistances that, if he uses them, he will be good and happy. Every trial—every happiness—every event of life—is to develop character; and, as soon as ever the character is fully developed—be it what it may—then comes death—then comes judgment—which judgment, be it remembered, will not be to decide a man's state—that is decided by his daily actions, *i.e.*, while he lived here; but it will be the public declaration of the decision, made to commend itself to the minds of the whole universe: because, when the decision is made, it will appear to be in strictest conformity with all that every man manifested himself to be while he was down here, in this probationary "life." That is probation. But education is also cultivation. Partly by instilling knowledge, but still more by drawing out powers, and by establishing good habits, and exercising right feelings, a child is educated for his after-life. Just such is all machinery which surrounds us in our present state. Every variety of fortune—every little, minute occurrence of life—the Bible—the Holy Spirit—the very atonement itself—are all calculated to train: they are all means to an end. Now, if this "life" be thus education, let us see two inferences. In the first place, they are quite wrong who think that the "life" and character of a man are to undergo some great change and some remarkable metamorphosis when he dies. And again, is "life" indeed education—education for eternity? then I draw my reasoning back from that higher world—What is the great character of heaven? It sees, it loves, it reflects, God's glory. Do you wish to know, to-night, how your education is getting on? I ask, How far could the past year bear witness to your having lived under the influence of a desire to promote God's glory? II. But now I pass to the second thought which lies coiled up in the great question, "What is life?"—ITS DURATION. Now, we would have you, brethren, in this matter to distinctly understand and remember in your minds that, however uncertain the term of "life" may seem to us, it is most determinately fixed by Almighty God. Perhaps I should not be wrong to go further than this, and to say that probably, at this very instant, that course of events is already in progress, and that disease is already existing in your body, which is to be God's instrument to remove you. It is likely that, for many years, we, most of us, carry about with us the seeds of our own dissolution. And is not it to be believed that that period of death is determined according to the preparedness of the soul? and that as soon as ever a man's spirit has become sufficiently assimilated to its final state—be that state which it may—then the word is spoken—the thread is cut—the ripe saint and the ripe sinner are both cut down! Men talk and men plan for the future, and who that visited our world as a stranger would ever guess, from people's ways and people's words, that there were such a thing amongst us as old age—that there were such a thing amongst us as death? Every one seems to see somebody who is older than himself very well, yet alive; and then he thinks, "Why should not I live as long as that man?" Then, "What is your life?" At the most a span; and that span is

held by a thread. There is no certainty of "to-morrow"; and many years are out of the question! And, with the "angel of death thus in the air, can you sit down at your pleasures, and no "blood" on "the door"? If that "blood" is once there, upon your heart—which is a man's "door"—the "door" of his existence—if "the blood of Christ" has ever been applied—everything is changed: age is happy—death is joy. And yet, "What is your life?" Short in nature; but how much shorter in grace! Who shall fix how near will be the hour when the Spirit, who has been striving so long, shall depart, and with Him all that makes "life" worth living? Oh, brethren! what would this drear "life" be if the Spirit were gone? III. WHAT IS THE REAL NATURE OF "LIFE"? It is a part of God's teaching that "the life" of every creature is "the blood"; and when God said that, He said it in reference to "the blood of sacrifice." There must, therefore, be some antitype to man's "blood" which constitutes "life." And what is that antitype—which I do not say gives "life" to anything, but which is "the life" of everything—what will it be but the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ? I may follow that a little further. As soon as a man is really united to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit actually enters into that man's soul. A new power and principle of "life" is in him: new affections breathe; new energies spring up; and so there comes a certain secret, hidden "life," which consists in communion with God—is fed by hidden manna—exercising itself in hidden thoughts, in hidden places. And that is "life" because all the other "life"—everything that is worthy the name—is only the acting out of that first inner "life." Then, from that "life of God" within—which dates itself from the application of "the blood of Christ"—there comes a noble expanding of the intellect of a man, and the affections of a man, and the whole being of a man, out into the service of God. (*Jas. Vaughan, M.A.*) *Life a Divine gift and discipline*:—I. LIFE IS A DIVINE GIFT. We are so accustomed to look upon life and all that it brings with it as absolutely our own, to be spent in any way we choose, that to grasp the thought of its being a gift for which we are responsible is to experience a radical revolution in our favourite modes of thinking. The false view of life, which is so prevalent, springs from the fact that men are endowed with the power of moulding circumstances to their will, the power of manipulating forces for their own ends, and therefore are prone to make themselves their own centre—"the be-all and the end-all" of the universe. Hence, I think we may say that the difference between the regenerate and the unregenerate lies fundamentally in this, that while the former have become aware of a Divine purpose in history, and a Divine meaning in life, and are endeavouring to carry forward the one and to realise the other, the latter are blind to these things, and are the unwilling, unconscious instruments in God's hand for the achievement of His will. The controversy between the Church and the world is reduced to this issue—whether life shall be interpreted in and for itself, or in and for God. Nothing is more sad, and yet nothing is more characteristic of our own age, than its boastful dependence on self, its claims to summon all things in heaven and earth before its tribunal, and its arrogant assumption of superiority over all the eras of the past. Well for it were it more distrustful of self! The man of business, for instance, whose trade or occupation is flourishing, whose balance at the banker's is mounting up by hundreds or thousands, with whom, in common phrase, the world is going well, is he not prone to nourish a sort of self-satisfaction, a feeling that his success is traceable all along to the shrewd common sense and business capacity which are his? The man whose interests are chiefly intellectual, the politician, the statesman, the author, as he listens to the plaudits of admiring crowds, or reads the warm eulogies of newspapers and reviews, does he not at times congratulate himself upon the skill of brain and strength of will which could raise him so high above the mass of men? Life in these cases is valued indeed for itself, the material comfort it can command, the social influence it can secure. To become independent of God is to become dependent on things that are but hollow mockeries. Now, in order to be rescued from this false independence of God, we must grasp by the spiritual understanding this thought, that life is a Divine gift. God gives it to us freely, without merit or effort on our part. Life, therefore, involves—first, reason, and second, a purpose. 1. As to its reason. Life is rooted in Divine love. If we are not to lose faith in humanity, in progress, and in the future of the world, we must hold fast by God's love as lying at the deepest roots of life, even though many things seem to shake our assurance. God loves us, and hence He gives us life. Love is active, exists, indeed, in virtue of its exercise. It creates worlds, and peoples them with happy spirits. Nay, more, it surrounds these spirits with every influence that can evoke their love and satisfy

their yearnings. There are moments which come to the most of us when we can almost echo the prayer of one who was a great sufferer—"Wherefore, then, hast Thou brought me forth out of the womb? Oh, that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me!" The answer to our heart's pain is to be found here—God gives us life, therefore He loves us. His love is the all-sufficient reply to the pains and losses of life. But, now, look at this thought in another aspect. If life is the evidence of Divine love, then, I take it, there is the closest bond existing between God and man. Some religious teachers speak of the sinner as though he lived in the remotest fringe of God's universe, outside the range of His love, though not of His power. This is to misconceive the true relation. For, indeed, what closer bond or stronger link can unite God and the sinner than eternal love? If this fails, where shall we find a power that shall succeed? If God's love fails to win men from their sins, where shall we discover the force that shall avail? Ah! the hope for humanity lies here. A great German preacher is reported to have said of himself, "I was brought up in a hard school; my father taught me not to cry out even though my head was dashed against a wall. But when I saw my sins, and realised the love of God, I could not refrain from weeping like a child." Pessimism—the belief that life is essentially evil—is in its deepest ground the result of spiritual blindness. And to be blind to the affections of God's heart is the greatest curse that can come to man. 2. As to its purpose. Life is given us to realise the Divine will. This also is a thought which comes to most of us as with the freshness of revelation. The majority of men do not realise that life includes a Divine purpose. They are a sort of moral flotsam and jetsam, at the mercy of every wave or eddy of circumstance, devoid of stability, and, therefore, devoid of all noble effort or attainment. Is not this the secret of the weakness, the irresolution, the incapacity which dogs some men throughout all their life? They have never seen our first principle—that life itself is a gift, the outgoing of God's heart of love, and therefore a something to be used in His service and for His glory. Love seeks a return, lives in hope of such; and God endows us with life, that we may love Him. But our love to Him cannot be created by coercion or stern exaction from without; it must be the free, glad utterance of obedient hearts. The task which our love to God has to face is that of penetrating and subduing every force and faculty of our nature with its own sweet influence, of bringing every thought, in apostolic phrase, "into captivity to the law of Christ." As Mazzini, the Italian patriot once said, "Life is a mission, and duty a supreme law." There is no grander conception of man than that he is God's missionary. We are called to a kingly mission. That is, one essential element of God's ideal of man is that he shall rule himself, that he shall check with firm reign every lawless appetite, that he shall bring all the manifold energies of his being into subjection to a governing central authority. And what He wants He performs if we are but willing. If we receive Him into our hearts, He will engift us with a kingly power by emancipating us from selfish aims, and degrading fears, and petty motives, that make life such a mean and commonplace thing. But Christ calls us to a priestly mission as well. To have a well-disciplined soul is a good thing. To know that all its powers are working harmoniously together under the central sway of the man himself is something worth aiming at. But Christ beckons us to a higher privilege still. The man whose spirit is thus well ordered, whose intellect and affections are balanced by a ready will and a tender conscience, is to consecrate himself and all his powers to God. A self-discipline that never can get beyond itself is at heart utterly selfish. The ages in our own history most fruitful of good, most full of the heroic element, were ages when the consciousness of men was saturated with the thought of God. The Reformation era which could produce a Luther, a Knox, a Zwingle, a Calvin, the Puritan age which could create a Cromwell, a Baxter, a Milton, a Bunyan, were times when the name of God had not become a theological phrase, but vital realities, unseen, but all-powerful, in living relation with the practical interests of man. II. LIFE IS A DIVINE DISCIPLINE. When we are asked to believe in life as an effluence or product of Divine love, we are brought face to face with serious difficulties that seem to bar the way to faith. If God loves me, as you say, and has, therefore, bestowed upon me the gift of life, how is it that He has marred His gift by pain and loss and grief; has turned for me what might have been a blessing into what is little less than a curse? I have read somewhere that Christ's earthly life is far from being an ideal one, because it was essentially sorrowful. But I ask, is not this the secret of its undying charm for men, that it meets them in the greatest crisis of their history, when the brain is stunned with grief, and the heart pierced with

sore trials, and life stands forth, bare and gaunt, as a terrible tragedy? Viewing life, then, as having sorrow for its pervading element, our faith in a God of love can be saved only by extending our vision beyond the boundaries of the present, by seeing that our calling and privileges and opportunities now form a discipline to prepare us for a grander and truer life hereafter. Here, again, it may be seen how a pessimistic way of thinking often takes its rise. To put aside the revelation which Christ makes to us of the future, is to shut men up to despair, unrelieved by a single gleam of light. Admit that revelation, however, and though all difficulties are not thereby removed, yet feeling so many to be mitigated, we can bear the rest until the day of clearer light and fuller knowledge. Now, this mitigation may be seen in two ways. 1. Discipline is a test of character. When God wishes to bring a man to see himself, to disentangle him, as it were, from the disguises which he is prone to wear before his fellow-men, He does it perhaps, by suddenly throwing upon him responsibilities of which he had never dreamt, or, perhaps, by confronting him with an emergency that demands quick resolution and determined effort. It is then that what is most real in the man comes out. The weakness or strength of character is seen in how it meets the Divine test. God has many ways of effecting this self-revelation. Just as a lightning flash at midnight reveals in a moment the wooded height or rocky foreland which the murky darkness had concealed, so do the great crises of life unveil, as with the mystic touch of God, the basis of character, the things that have made it what it is. Is it an accession to sudden fortune? A favourable discipline surely! Yet have we not heard of cases where men, intoxicated by the new power that has come to them, have forgotten the simple virtues of their former state, and have become slaves to pride and selfishness, and a hundred other evils? Is it poverty? Then it may be God's design to test whether the graces and virtues so conspicuous in times of comfort were real or not. In these various ways does God test us. But through them all there is a unity of purpose—the taking of us out of the pretences and make-believes of the world, and the planting of us on the eternal realities of the unseen. 2. Discipline is indispensable to the realisation of the Divine Ideal. We all start in life with grand aims. Our ideals are fair and lovely to look upon. And in the joy which a vision of them creates we think we have but to stretch forth our hands and they are ours. But soon we discover our mistake. Contact with the prosaic realities of the world, or the pressure of unforeseen difficulties and hindrances, soon dashes our enthusiasm with an element of distrust, and the "vision splendid" is in danger of fading into the "light of common day." Not thus, nor so quickly, is our dream to be translated into the region of solid fact. It is only by a baptism of the "spirit of burning" that our highest modes of thought can be cleansed from the self-reference or self-pleasing which is so liable to vitiate them. God's ideal is very different from man's, even at the best. Is not this an important part of our life work?—to see how poor and cramped our noblest spiritual creations are when compared with the archetypal thoughts of God. And this we can never see except through discipline. If to obtain a knowledge of the material world and its laws men will spend days and nights of anxious labour, surely it ought not to be considered strange if the supreme possession of the soul, God Himself, cannot be won without at least some spiritual struggle. It is a familiar fact that things of earthly value which are easily purchased are lightly esteemed. Is it not so in the spiritual region? (*J. A. Anderson.*) *The brevity of life*:—"What is your life?" There is a variety of answers to that question. The afflicted might say, "My life is a wearisome burden; when shall I lay it down in the grave?" The labourer might say, "My life is a dull round of toil; I rise early, and late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness." The prosperous might say, "My life is a continued joy; I cannot exaggerate its felicity; flowers strew my path, and overhead the skies are blue. I have sunshine within and without." But the apostle has his answer to the question; and remember that if it is melancholy, it is of God—it is God's own estimate of human life, "It is even a vapour," &c. This being so, shall we not ask what is the best improvement of this "little time," or, in other words, what is God's design willing it to us? I. IT IS THE SEASON OF REPENTANCE. By nature we are sinful, abhorrent, therefore, to God's infinite purity, and devoid of righteousness. We must be brought to admit our vileness, our obnoxiousness to Divine justice, our dishonouring of God, our deep need of pardon. And life is the season for this repentance. It is protracted by the compassion of God for this very purpose. II. IT IS YOUR SEASON OF GRACE—the period in which you may obtain forgiveness, together with a new heart and a heavenly hope. III. IT IS THE SEASON FOR SELF-CULTURE. Have you no ambition

to grow and mature and excel in piety? Do you not wish to be adorned and beautified, and enriched before you are summoned into the presence of the King of kings? Would you not be arrayed for that call in bridal garments which shall "smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces"? Is it not so that you have a great field within you, which you are to plough, and plant, and cultivate for God, till it shall be ripe unto the harvest? IV. IT IS THE SEASON FOR USEFULNESS. Let us endeavour to throw more energy and enterprise into our Master's service this year. 1. Resolve that a New Year shall be distinguished by new resolutions. Wherever you feel you have been deficient, there hasten to repair the breach; there determine that, God assisting you, you will do better for the future. 2. Be a practical Christian this New Year. "Be zealous," not so much of good intentions and of good frames, as of "good works." 3. Be a cheerful Christian throughout this New Year. The renewed man has sources of joy which external circumstances cannot cloud or quench. 4. Be ready for your removal hence. There can be no solid serenity until we have looked death in the face, and overcome it by faith. (*Jas. Bolton, B.A.*) *Human life transitory*:—I. HOW MEN MAKE THE MISTAKE OF REGARDING THEIR LIFE AS SOMETHING SOLID AND STABLE. 1. Men calculate upon the certain continuance of their strength. The young generally seem to look upon diseases and infirmities as separated from them by an impassable gulf. 2. Men calculate upon an indefinite prolonging of life. They make no deliberate, serious calculation upon giving up friends, possessions, comforts, occupations, and pleasures. 3. The next life will much resemble this, according to their ideas. They forget that after death comes the judgment. II. HUMAN LIFE IS A VAPOUR. 1. The uncertainty of life. Nothing is stable on this earth. Our cemeteries vie with our cities. Every day, every hour, every moment, a life is escaping. You may be attired for the gayest scene, awaiting a friend, securely seated at your father's fireside, and in an instant be in the fierce and fiery embrace of death, exchanging your rich garments for a winding-sheet of flame, breathing in an atmosphere of fire; in an instant, unwarned, unattended, unaided—gone! 2. This law is universal. That is, it is not only certain that every human life will cease, but that the time of its cessation is uncertain. There is a place, and a most important place, for medical science; a place for human prudence; but neither skill nor prudence will change the nature of every human life; it will still be "even a vapour." III. HOW SHALL WE RECTIFY THESE ERRORS IN OURSELVES? 1. We should understand the reality of the case. Life with us is but a process of decay. We possess life, but not less certainly are we losing it. 2. We should become entirely reconciled to it. The higher views we take of man, the more satisfied we shall be with this arrangement. 3. Accommodate all your views, feelings, and plans to this state of things. Make nothing that can perish the foundation of your hope. Money, the favour of man, the admiration of man, worldly pleasure, personal accomplishments (other than holiness and sound knowledge) are all vapour. Enjoy them as you do a beautiful sunset. Take them at their real worth; but be fully persuaded that your happiness must come from higher, and holier, and more unfailing sources. Value life for its highest ends. It can be the period of your personal progress in the life of holiness and heaven; the seed-time for an eternal harvest of blessedness. (*E. N. Kirk, D.D.*) "*What is your life?*"—Life comes to us so unconsciously, and lifts and drifts us on so easily, that we yield ourselves to its power without a thought—fools that we are! What is this power to which we surrender so unquestionably? What guarantee have we of its friendliness? What is this stream on which we drift so heedlessly? How do we know over what precipices it may hurl us? What is this life which we accept without scrutiny? Who has certified to its character? How can we tell to what a grand folly we are committing ourselves, or into what maelstrom of difficulty and distress we are permitting ourselves to be drawn? The fact that the great human mass about us moves on with us on the same mysterious tide, does not meet the difficulty, but increases it. Life takes on new magnitudes; but its meaning grows no plainer. The question which goes doubtfully forth from the solitary soul comes thundering back with the voice of the multitude which no man can number: "What is your life?" I. WHAT IS YOUR LIFE AS TO ITS DURATION? How much of this mysterious something, which you call time, is portioned out to you as your part? This is the question of prudence. The first thing that a man asks respecting a possession is: "How much is there of it?" If life were an estate, you would instantly inquire: "What are its boundaries?" If years were sovereigns, you would say, "How many of them may I have?" Life is an estate, but its bounds are invisible. Years are the golden coinage of heaven; and they are

counted out to men. Each man shall have his number, and no more, but what number he cannot tell. The counting is done in another sphere, and no mortal ever overheard it. II. WHAT IS YOUR LIFE AS TO ITS SECURITY? This seems to have been the shape in which the apostle here intended to put it. "For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." The Scriptures have thrown around human life a marvellous imagery to intimate this evanescence. "Behold Thou hast made my days as an handbreadth.' Not even so substantial as a vapour; not even a substance at all; only the shadow of something; and that something, that shadow, passing quickly away. Can anything be more transitory than that? If it comes to that, our question is strangely answered. What is our life as to its security? It is nothing. It has no security, and can have none. III. WHAT IS YOUR LIFE AS TO ITS AIM, ITS PURPOSE, ITS USES? If it be so brief, so much the more reason for improving it while it lasts. If it be so insecure and evanescent, so much the more reason for making the most of it. What do you make of it? What great purpose have you set before yourself, for the accomplishment of which you are laying hold of all life's opportunities, and putting under contribution all of life's forces? A great, wise man, a few years ago, chanced to be present at a winter-evening party where a company of lively young people were enjoying themselves after an innocent fashion. Standing a little apart, he watched, in thoughtful, but not in cynical or unsympathetic mood, the whirl and flutter of sportive life before him. Presently, a young girl, hovering a moment on the outer verge of the gay circle, stopped to exchange salutations with the venerable guest. And the merry creature, radiant with smiles, steeped with the festive spirit of the hour, won from the old man's lips the great thought which he had been revolving: "What are you living for?" The question, friendly in spirit and in tone, came to her in no impertinence, but it sounded through and through her soul. It followed her to her home. It repeated itself to her day and night. It announced to her the great problem of life. She met it honestly. She made room for it in her heart. She sought a fitting answer to it, and not many weeks later she could say, "I am living for Christ and for heaven." What answer does our daily life afford? What do our acts declare that we are living for? I fear that a just analysis of our life would put some of us to the blush. Let me propound a riddle. There is a certain being a day of whose existence may be thus described. He sleeps—rises—eats—does nothing—eats—does nothing—eats—does nothing—sleeps. Is it an oyster or a man? There are those who have higher employments and pleasures, the analysis of whose life would reveal a strange emptiness. They read. What? and with what purpose? and to what profit? They converse. About what? To what end? They enjoy society. On what account? Isn't the record a pretty meagre one, after all, even with some of us who have thought that we were living quite rationally and worthily? IV. WHAT IS YOUR LIFE IN GOD'S CONCEPTION OF IT? Take that question home to your soul, and see what answer is there. Your soul tells you that it was not made to serve the body, or to stoop to any bondage whatever, or to any ignoble purpose. It tells you that it was made to rule, and by its higher nature give the rule to life, and through its higher perceptions to reach God's rule of life. When men meet on the ocean, they ask each other: "Whither bound?" and the man who was bound no whither would be a prodigy of folly. Sailing is a vague purpose without a port in view. But with a heavenward aim and movement, life becomes something angelic. "I've lost a day!" said a great sovereign, of whom a poet has written that he "had been a king without his crown." If it be royal to perceive the worth of time, after it is squandered, how much more to perceive its worth beforehand, and not squander it! If the utterance of such a regret were equal to a coronation, how sadly discrowned and ashamed, on the contrary, shall be he who shall be constrained to lament at last: "I've lost my life!" (*G. Huntington.*) *Estimates of life*:—I. WHAT IS YOUR LIFE IN DURATION? II. WHAT IS YOUR LIFE IN ITS SECURITY? III. WHAT IS YOUR LIFE IN ITS OBJECTS? IV. WHAT IS YOUR LIFE IN ITS INFLUENCE ON YOURSELF? In a higher and far more fearful sense than the ancient artist, every one of us is "painting for eternity"—painting, each his own portrait, stroke by stroke, and line by line. And soon the image shall be finished, and hung up for our own gaze, and for the inspection of the universe—every part of it to grow brighter and brighter, or darker and darker for ever. V. WHAT IS YOUR LIFE IN ITS RESPONSIBILITIES? Every object, every influence of life, implies responsibility. Every moment is inwoven with obligation to God and to your own soul. VI. WHAT WILL YOUR

LIFE BE IN ITS RESULTS? God has left it to your choice whether you will make it the pathway to salvation or perdition. *Earnest living*:—Religion is the art of living well for Christ and like Him. Three things are essential. I. A RIGHT PURPOSE. The highest purpose is to serve God and benefit our fellow-men. II. A RIGHT PRINCIPLE. The only principle that can hold is a conscience illuminated by the Bible and kept strong by inward grace. No one is to be trusted who does not trust God and obey Him. III. A RIGHT PLAN. No life is well planned which despises small things, or neglects every opportunity to strike. One rotten thread spoils a fabric. A life without Christ is a lost life. (*T. L. Cuyler, D.D.*) "*What is your life?*"—The question may be asked in many tones. It may be asked rebukingly, pensively, comfortingly. There is no doubt as to how the question was asked by the apostle. He was taking a rather humbling view of life. He tells the boasting programme-writers that their life "is even a vapour." Thus would James have us religious in everything. He would have no loose talk about to-morrow; in the very midst of our boasting he rebukes us by telling us that we are handling a vapour. That is no doubt the immediate apostolic suggestion. Yet may we not use the words on a larger base, and for another yet not wholly unkindred purpose? May we not read the suggestion in another tone? What is life?—what a mystery, what a tragedy, what a pain, what a feast, what a fast, what a desert, what a paradise; how abject, how august is man! It may not have occurred to some of you, as it has of necessity occurred to those of us who have to address the public, that there is hardly a more appalling and pathetic spectacle than a promiscuous congregation. We do not see life in its individuality, but life in its combinations and inter-relations of most delicate, subtle, suggestive, and potential kind. When we begin to take the congregation man by man, what a sight it is! The old and the very young, the pilgrim going to lay his staff down, tired of the long journey, and the little child sitting on its mother's knee; the rich man whose touch is gold; the poor man whose most strenuous effort is his most stinging disappointment; men who are doomed to poverty! men who never had a holiday; if they were absent a day it was that they might work two days when they went back again; and men who have never been out of the sunshine, before whose sweet homes there slopes a velvet lawn. What is your life? Then, if we go a little further into the matter, the audience becomes still more mysterious and solemn. What broken hearts are in every congregation, what concealed experiences, what smiles of dissimulation! as who should say, We are happy, yes, we are happy, we are happy. The protestation is its own contradiction. There is a protesting too much. If we go a little further into the matter, who can read his congregation through and through? Men are not what they seem. Every man has his own secret; the heart knoweth its own bitterness. Man is a mystery to himself, to others—mostly to himself. The only power that can touch all these is the gospel of Christ. No lecturer upon any limited subject can touch a whole congregation through in all its deepest and most painful and tragic experiences. No lecturer on astronomy can search the heart. Science holds no candle above the chamber of motive, passion, deepest, maddest desire. The gospel of Christ covers the whole area. How does it cover the whole area of human experience? First as a hope. Blessed be God, that is a gospel word. Christianity does not come down to men with judgment and fire and burning; the gospel is not an exhibition of wrath, retaliation, vengeance: the gospel is love, the gospel says to the worst of us, For you there is hope; I know you, I know all the fire that burns in you, all the temptations that assail you, all the difficulties that surround you as with insurmountable granite walls; I know them all, and, poor soul, I have come with good news from God, good news from Calvary; I have come to say, Hope on, for there is a way to reconciliation and pardon and purity and peace. Then the gospel comes covering the whole area not only as a hope but as a co-operation. If we might personify the case, the gospel would thus address man: I have come not only to tell you to hope, but I have come to help you to do so; the work is very hard, and I will do most of it; what you have to show is a willing heart, an earnest disposition, and, come now, together we shall work out this salvation of yours. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you, with you, for you; we are fellow labourers with God. And then there is a third consideration, without which the case would be incomplete. Christianity, or the gospel, is not only a hope, or a co-operation, but it is a discipline. You always come upon the strong word in a great appeal. It is not all tears; you come upon the backbone, upon the line of iron, upon the base of

rock. So the gospel comes to us as a discipline and says, Having, then, dearly beloved, these promises, let us purify ourselves, even as God and Christ are pure; now for work, self-criticism, self-restraint, self-control, now for patient endeavour. Cheer thee! It is a gospel word. Gospel calls mean gospel helps. Who knows what life is? It is the secret of God. Up and down the mountains and valleys of the soul there are countless millions of germs waiting for the sunshine, and the dew, and all the chemistry of the spiritual universe, and out of these germs will come invention, discoveries, new policies, novel and grand suggestions, heroisms undreamt-of, evangelisations, and civilisations that shall eclipse the proudest record of time. Every evil thought you have kills one of these germs. What is life? A mystery, seed-house, a sensitive treasure. What is life? It is the beginning of immortality. The dawn is the day—the child is the man. It is high time to awake out of sleep and to realise the tragedy, the grandeur, and the responsibility of life. He who loses time loses eternity. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Shortness of life*:—A little girl was asked why she was working so very hard. She replied, "My candle is almost burned out, and I have not got another." Life is as a candle burning out. Sometimes there is a thief in it, a disease consuming it more quickly; or it may be blown out, suddenly extinguished; and we have not got another. (*Dr. Wise.*) *Changes in life*:—So have I seen a rose newly springing from the clefts of its hood, and at first it was fair as the morning and full with the dew of heaven, as a lamb's fleece; but when a rude blast had forced open its virgin modesty and dismantled its too youthful and unripe retirements, it began to put on darkness, and to decline to softness and the symptoms of a sickly age; it bowed the head and broke its stalk; and at night, having lost some of its leaves and all its beauty, it fell into the portion of weeds and worn-out faces. The same is the portion of every man and every woman. (*Bp. Jeremy Taylor.*) *The possibilities of life*:—It was no part of the apostle's intention to teach that life is necessarily vain and perishing; he suggests that life is what we make it, accordingly as we live to the "outer man" which "perisheth," or to "the inward man" which "is renewed day by day." I. "A vapour"—YET A VAPOUR MAY BE A THING OF GLORY OR GLOOM. A vapour is often an object of glory, of richest glory. The firmament is the Royal Academy of God, glorified with countless masterpieces of form and colour. The transfiguring touch of the Divine hand changes the pliant vapour into rich sculptures, superb architecture and pictures of matchless grace or grandeur. The "vapour that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away," is a fountain of perennial delight to poet and painter: it calls up our thought to the glory of heaven, to the glory of God. A vapour may also be a cloud—dense, dark, and forbidding. It may obscure the light, discolour the sky, mar the summer. Thus with human life—it also may be a thing of glory or gloom. Some lives are as the cloud which lies on the sky, an inky blot; whilst other lives in their brightness and beauty remind us of those rainbow tints which are very jewels on heaven's bosom. What makes the difference in the vapour? The sun. The orb of day dyes the vapours with colour, warms them with fire, illuminates them with brightness, and fills the depths with shifting scenes of splendour. What the sun is to the vapour, God is to our life; and life shines or saddens according to its relation to Him. "The Lord God is a sun"; and our lives shine—everything in us and about us shines—just as we keep in the stream of His brightness. Acquaintance with God gives life its purity. The vapour apart from the sun is foul and dark; but as the light pierces it, it becomes "white as white wool," "white as snow." As we set the Lord God before us and live in fellowship with Him the baser elements of life are purged, and we attain that purity of heart which is the condition of all joy and glory. In the identification of ourselves with God life acquires sublimity. And through the knowledge and service of God life attains fruition in full felicity. The sunless vapour is that murky weeping cloud which is the chosen image of misery, whilst the sun-smitten vapour spreads a smile on the face of day. Life so strangely sad in itself kindles into rapture as it drinks the light of the Throne. II. "A vapour"—AND YET A VAPOUR MAY BE THE SOURCE OF BARRENNESS OR BLESSING. Indeed a vapour may be one of three things. It may be the source of blasting, as the sulphurous vapour of the thunder-cloud. This is true of some lives; they are only pernicious and destructive. Or the vapour may be a merely barren thing. Not working any particular and obvious mischief, only drifting before the wind in barren magnificence. Thus is it with many lives. Men live for garish pride, or rosy pleasure, or golden gain, or crimson greatness; the earth is

no better for their presence, they work no private or public service. Or the vapour may be a source of rich and lasting blessing; the messenger of God, scattering showers of blessing. Thus devoted souls pass through society rich in precious and holy influence; they drop as the rain and distil as the dew, and when they have passed out of sight you trace their passage by the rising flowers. If life is to be noble and blessed it must not be hurtful, not neutral, but beneficent. Many of those passages which so pathetically express the transientness of life, and which we quote with extreme mournfulness, have quite another side to them, and it is well to turn them round and refresh ourselves with their sunnier significance. Job has many of these metaphors. "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle" (vii. 6). Hours, days, weeks, months, years pass with confusing rapidity; and we are apt to infer that little can be done or attempted with such conditions. Are we not mistaken here? Swift is the action of the weaver's shuttle, yet each rapid movement may fix a thread of silk or gold which shall keep its beauty for ages in royal robe or tapestry. Thus each fleeting moment may see some shining thread shot into the world's raiment or ours, if we are only wise workers in the loom of life. "O remember that my life is wind" (Job vii. 7). A breath, a passing breeze! And yet the vanishing breath may utter great thoughts and kind words to the joy and purifying of multitudes. The passing breeze will freshen the stagnant flood, lift the unhealthy fog, awaken music in the stirred branches, and fill the whole landscape with animation and freshness; thus a human life may pass as the wind, leaving the whole face of the community refreshed and vitalised. Our life may be wind, yet may it be one with that mighty rushing wind which came down at Pentecost, sweetening the world. "My days . . . are passed away as the swift ships" (Job ix. 26). Yes, but what treasures the swift ships bring; what treasures the swift ships take! So is it with the "ships of reed"—these frail, swift human lives of ours. What treasures these swift ships bring! They come from God freighted with riches of intellect, feeling, utterance, to enrich and rejoice the world. What treasures these swift ships take! Rich results of sanctified sorrow, of spiritual industry, of high duty bravely done, of years of consecrated toil and thought, of pain and blessing, of faith and love and prayer. We grieve to see the white sails vanishing like white wings into the infinite blue; but we must not forget that these weather-stained argosies—built in the noon and rigged with blessings bright—have steered straight into port with mystic treasures which "wax not old," "eternal in the heavens." Finally, take the figure in our text: "A vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Life escapes us like melting mist, and we see it vanish with amazement and distress. Still the vanishing vapour leaves beautiful and lasting effects. Whence the green pasture, the leaf-robed forestry, the rich vineyard, the bowing wealth of corn, the orchards full of ripeness? Are they not all the offspring of vapours that appear "for a little time, and then vanish away"? So the world of noble things and institutions about us—the wilderness blossoming as the rose—is the result of short lives inspired by holy feeling, devoted to high ends. III. "A vapour"—YET A VAPOUR MAY END IN A DRAIN OR A RAINBOW. So widely contrasted is the destiny of that self-determining vapour—human life. In the text we see men living without any recognition of the relation of this life to immortality. Giving themselves to life on its physical and human side, they lose all clearness and brightness of soul, the stream ever becoming more turbid as it flows (Luke xii. 16–21). This man's life ran in the gutter, and ended in the sewer. It is whilst we regard these fleeting days in their relation to the will of God that we penetrate their grandeur and become conscious of exaltation (Deut. xxx. 20; 1 John ii. 16, 17). It is whilst we regard the eternal meaning of life that all the discipline of this world develops greatness and purity of spirit (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18). The legend of the American Indians declares that as the flowers fade in forest and prairie their lost beauty is gathered into the rainbow, and thus they glow again in richer colour than before. It is, however, no legend which teaches the perpetuity of moral excellence. The earth is always being made the poorer by the departure of those whom we so sincerely admired or passionately loved—those who were ornaments of society, the pride of the Church, the light of our home. But these are neither lost nor injured. We look up to see them shine forth again in added grace and glory in the rainbow round about the Throne. Let us live in constant acknowledgment of God; let us, so far from accommodating ourselves to the fashion of a world which passeth away, identify ourselves with the will of God; let us thoroughly realise our sonship with God, our heirship of heaven; so shall we feel that we are being purified from

every grossness, that we are being caught up to meet the Lord in the air, that we are becoming transfigured members in that ring of glory of which the Lord God and the Lamb are the eternal centre. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *Life precious because brief*:—The brevity of life enhances its preciousness. A prudent man, who has only a few shillings to spend, will be careful to lay out not only every shilling, but every fraction of a shilling, to the best advantage. And these few days that God gives us are too valuable to be trifled away. More precious than rubies, they ought to be turned to the very best account. **If the Lord will, we shall live.** —*Man's life and God's providence*:—I. HUMAN LIFE. 1. The period of its duration. It is a little time, but it bears a never-ending relationship to eternity. Let us, therefore, improve the precious gift; it will soon be gone, and will never return. Let us look upon our days as so many valuable gifts which God puts into our hands, which we must part with, and which we may exchange, one after the other, so long as they last, for something which shall enrich us for ever. 2. The incidents of which man's life is composed. We "go into such a city, continue there a year, and buy and sell and get gain." Alas! this completely describes the lives of multitudes among us; their journeyings, sojournings, tradings, and gains—and that is all! Some of us do not even come up to that. I mean those who spend their lives in killing time without work. But life is made up of much more than these. What have we received? "Goodness and mercy have followed us," &c. What return have we made for so much mercy? Alas! much of forgetfulness, indolence, murmuring, unbelief, and rebellion. "We are unprofitable servants." What do we now possess? We have not been buying and selling, or losing, or getting gain only. "With all our getting" have we "got understanding"? Have we a more thorough, abiding conviction of the evil of sin? Have we felt a more searching, heart-aching repentance for it—a repentance which leads to the entire forsaking of it? II. DIVINE PROVIDENCE IN RELATION TO HUMAN LIFE. 1. Our dependence upon it. Whether we know and feel it, or otherwise, we are dependent upon God. Sometimes He makes us know it. Our path is "hedged up," our best, wisest schemes fail, and we are suffered to want. And what a mercy that ultimately we are dependent not on bad men, or even good ones, but upon God! Let us look beyond second causes to the providence of God in the changes which are passing in the Church of God, and its associations. 2. Our ignorance of what the Divine providence will accomplish. "Ye know not what shall be on the morrow." (*T. E. Thoresby.*) *The duty of reference to the Divine will*:—I. MANKIND NATURALLY DO NOT FEEL AND ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR DEPENDENCE UPON THEIR MAKER. How few possess the spirit of the patriarchs, who were bold as lions provided that God led the way, but timid as lambs when they could not see His footsteps. Many men rely upon second causes, and never fall back upon the great First Cause. They calculate upon a long life, because they inherit a good constitution; they expect a successful issue of their plans, because they are regarded by others as shrewd and far-reaching men. In each of these instances the dependence is placed upon something this side of God. II. THE IGNORANCE AND FRAILTY OF MAN IS A STRONG REASON WHY HE SHOULD FEEL HIS DEPENDENCE UPON HIS MAKER. 1. Respect to all beings and things alike, be they finite or be they infinite, men must say, "We see through a glass darkly, and we know in part." 2. Again, man's knowledge is limited by time, as well as by the nature of objects. His knowledge of the present is imperfect, and he has no knowledge at all of the future. Is not this ignorance of ours a strong reason why we should rely upon the all-knowing God? Though we know nothing in an exhaustive and perfect manner, yet we are not shut up to the unhappiness that would result from such a sense of ignorance if unrelieved by other considerations. If man would consciously live, move, and have his being in God, he would be filled with a cheerful sense of security, firmness, and power, amidst the violent and rapid changes incident to this life, and the dark mystery that overhangs it. "He that trusteth in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, that cannot be moved." 3. Again, the brevity and uncertainty of human life is another strong reason why man should feel his dependence upon God. III. THE PROPER WAY FOR MEN TO ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR DEPENDENCE UPON GOD IS TO REFER TO HIS WILL, IN ALL THEIR PLANS AND UNDERTAKINGS. Most of our misery, nay, all of it, arises from our asserting our own wills. The instant we yield the point, and submit to our Maker, we are at rest. And this is proof that we are free, for wherever there is any compulsion, there is dissatisfaction and restlessness. (*G. T. Shedd, D.D.*) *God's will about the future*:—The text applies with very peculiar force

when our friends and fellow-workers are passing away from us. Perhaps we have been reckoning what this brother would do this week, and that sister next week, and so on. They have appeared amongst us in such buoyant health that we have scarcely thought it possible that they would be struck down all in a moment. Yet so it has often been. The uncertainty of life comes home to us when such things occur, and we begin to wonder that we have reckoned anything at all safe, or even probable, in such a shifting, changing world as this. I. COUNTING ON THE FUTURE IS FOLLY. The fact of frail, feeble man so proudly ordering his own life and forgetting God seems to the Apostle James so preposterous that he scarcely deems it worth while to argue the point; he only says, "Go to now!" Let us first look at the form of this folly, and notice what it was that these people said when they were counting on the future. They evidently thought everything was at their own disposal. They said, "We will go, we will continue, we will buy, we will sell, we will get gain." But is it not foolish for a man to feel that he can do as he likes, and that everything will fall out as he desires; that he can both propose and dispose, and has not to ask God's consent at all? Is it so, O man, that thy life is self-governed? Is there not, after all, One greater than thyself? Notice that these people, while they thought everything was at their disposal, used everything for worldly objects. They said, "We will buy; then we will carry our goods to another market at a little distance; we will sell at a profit; and so we will get gain." Their first and their last thoughts were of the earth earthy, and their one idea seemed to be that they might get sufficient to make them feel that they were rich and increased in goods. That was the highest ambition upon their minds. Are there not many who are living just in that way now? All that these men of old spoke of doing was to be done entirely in their own strength. They said, "We will, we will." They had no thought of asking the Divine blessing, nor of entreating the help of the Most High. Alas, that men should do even so to-day, that, without seeking counsel of God, they should go forward in proud disdain, or in complete forgetfulness of "the arrow that flieth by day," and "the pestilence that walketh in the darkness," until they are suddenly overwhelmed in eternal ruin! It is evident that to these men everything seemed certain. "We will go into such a city." How did they know they would ever get there? "We will buy and sell, and get gain." Did they regulate the markets? Might there be no fall in prices? Oh, no! they looked upon the future as a dead certainty, and upon themselves as people who were sure to win, whatever might become of others. They had also the foolish idea that they were immortal. "All men count all men mortal but themselves." Without any saving clause, they said, "We will continue there a year." Having looked at the form of this folly of counting on the future, let us speak a little on the folly itself. It is a great folly to build hopes on that which may never come. It is unwise to count your chickens before they are hatched; it is madness to risk everything on the unsubstantial future. How do we know what will be on the morrow? How can we reckon upon anything in a world like this, where nothing is certain but uncertainty? Besides, the folly is seen in the frailty of our lives, and the brevity of them. Life is even as a vapour. Sometimes those vapours, especially at the time of sunset, are exceedingly brilliant. They seem to be magnificence itself when the sun paints them with heavenly colours; but in a little while they are all gone, and the whole panorama of the sunset has disappeared. Such is our life. It may sometimes be very bright and glorious; but still it is only like a painted cloud, and very soon the cloud and the colour on it are alike gone. II. IGNORANCE OF THE FUTURE IS A MATTER OF FACT. "Ye know not what shall be on the morrow." Whether it will come to us laden with sickness or health, prosperity or adversity, we cannot tell. To-morrow may mark the end of our life; possibly even the end of the age. How frail is our hold on this world! In a moment we are gone—gone like the moth; you put your finger upon it, and it is crushed. Man is not great; man is less than little. He is as nothing; he is but a dream. Ere he can scarcely say that he is here, we are compelled to say that he is gone. III. RECOGNITION OF GOD WITH REGARD TO THE FUTURE IS TRUE WISDOM. I do not think that we need always, in every letter and in every handbill, put "If the Lord will"; yet I wish that we oftener used those very words. I rather like what Fuller says when he describes himself as writing in his letter such passages as "God willing," or "God lending me life." He says, "I observe, Lord, that I can scarcely hold my hand from encircling these words in a parenthesis, as if they were not essential to the sentence, but may as well be left out as put in. Whereas, indeed, they are not only of the commission at large, but so of the quorum, that without them all the

rest is nothing; wherefore, hereafter, I will write these words freely and fairly, without any enclosure about them. Let critics censure it for bad grammar, I am sure it is good divinity." 1. We should recognise God in the affairs of the future, because, first, there is a Divine will which governs all things. 2. But while many of God's purposes are hidden from us, there is a revealed will which we must not violate. I say now, "I will do this or that," but certain other things may occur which will render it improper for me to do so. 3. In addition to this, there is a providential will of God which we should always consult. When you come where two roads meet, in your perplexity pull up, kneel down, and lift your hearts to heaven, asking your Father the way. And whenever we are purposing what we should do—and we ought to make some purposes, for God's people are not to be without forethought or prudence—we should always say, or mean without saying, "All my plans must wait till the Lord sets before me an open door. If God permit, I will do this; but if the Lord will, I will stop, and do nothing. My strength shall be to sit still, unless the Master wishes me to go forward." 4. There is yet another sense I would give to this expression: there is a royal will which we would seek to fulfil. That will is that the Lord's people should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. So, as the servants of the Most High, we go forth to do this or that, "if the Lord will"—that is to say, if by so doing we can fulfil the great will of God in the salvation of men. IV. BOASTINGS ABOUT THE FUTURE ARE EVIL. One man says about a certain matter, "I will do it, I have made up my mind," and he thinks, "You cannot turn me; I am a man who, when he has once put his foot down, is not to be shifted from his place." Then he laughs, and prides himself upon the strength of his will; but his boasting is sheer arrogance. Yet he rejoices in it; and the Word of God is true of such a one: "All such rejoicing is evil." Another man says, "I shall do it, the thing is certain"; and when a difficulty is suggested, he answers, "Tut, do not tell me about my proposing and God's disposing; I will propose, and I will also dispose; I do not see any difficulty. I shall carry it out, I tell you. I shall succeed." Then he laughs in his foolish pride, and rejoices in his proud folly. All such rejoicings are evil. I hear a third man say, "I can do it; I feel quite competent." To him the message is the same —his boasting is evil. Though he thinks to himself, "Whatever comes in my way, I am always ready for it," he is greatly mistaken, and errs grievously. But that young man yonder talks in a different tone. He has been planning what he will do when he succeeds; for, of course, he is going to succeed. Well, I hope that he may. He is going to buy, and sell, and get gain; and he says, "I will do so-and-so when I am rich." He intends then to have his fling, and to enjoy himself; he laughs as he thinks what he will do when his toilsome beginnings are over, and he can have his own way. I would ask him to pause and consider his life in a more serious vein: "All such rejoicing is evil." V. THE USING OF THE PRESENT IS OUR DUTY. "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." 1. In the first place, it is sinful to defer obedience to the gospel. All the commands of God to the characters to whom they are given come as a present demand. Obey them now. 2. In the next place, it is sinful to neglect the common duties of life, under the idea that we shall do something more by and by. If we could all be quiet enough to hear that clock tick, we should hear it say "Now! now! now! now!" The clock therein resembles the call of God in the daily duties of the hour. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin," even though he may dream of how he will, in years to come, make up for his present neglect. 3. Then it is sinful to postpone purposes of service. Mr. Whitefield said that he would not go to bed unless he had put even his gloves in their right place. If he should die in the night, he would not like to have anybody asking, "Where did he leave his gloves?" That is the way for a Christian man always to live—have everything in order, even to a pair of gloves. Finish up your work every night; nay, finish up every minute. I have this last word: "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin"—that is, it is sinful in proportion to our knowledge. If there is any brother here into whose mind God has put something fresh, something good, I pray him to translate it into action at once. "Oh, but nobody has done it before!" Somebody must be first, and why should not you be first if you are sure that it is a good thing, and has come into your heart through God the Holy Ghost? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) "*If*":—"Much virtue in 'if'" is the word of Touchstone in Shakespeare's charming comedy "As You Like It." Several times in Bible story the word comes out conspicuously. The Hebrew leader Joshua, going forth to fight the enemies of Israel, confesses his dependence,

able to win no success except the Lord be with him. "If so be the Lord be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out." In the hospitable home in Bethany the beloved brother Lazarus grew sick unto death. "If only Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." In numberless forms of lamentation, regret, trust, or hope, we encounter in the affairs of life an element of uncertainty expressed in the word "if"—a little word, yet covering momentous issues and contingencies. Consider, then, the value of "if" as a demand for heroism and for trust. First, note some illustrations of its reality. Near Lake Chautauqua, on the watershed dividing the northerly and southerly flowing waters, one may easily find a hill-top, or perhaps the roof-tree of some home, where the falling rains by a slight breath of air are swayed northward to the fountains and rills that flow into Lake Erie, and thence by the rivers Niagara and St. Lawrence to the everlasting ice of the North Pole, or southward into the Alleghany, Ohio, and Mississippi, to the tropics of eternal summer. So history flows in mighty currents whose beginnings seem slight enough to have been swayed by a breath of air. Imagination reconstructs the destinies of mankind by the change of an "if" at critical junctures. In every one of the sixteen decisive battles of the world, as narrated by the English historian Creasy, from Marathon and Cannæ to Waterloo and Gettysburg, between the tremendous array of opposing hosts, victory hung trembling in the balance, and finally turned upon some contingency that changes the face of the world. In the early days of June, 1815, just preceding Waterloo, had Napoleon's Marshal Grouchy gone north instead of east, thus preventing Blucher's corps of Prussians from joining the British army, Napoleon might have annihilated Wellington, and the destinies of Europe been reversed for a century or for ever. In personal experience we also see the reality of the "if." By a lightning flash that kills a loved companion at his side, Martin Luther is sent to the monastery and ministry, and becomes the heroic leader of Protestantism. Some chance exposure brings illness and death to parent, child, or dear friend, whose loss can never be replaced, and life is nevermore the same. Trivial circumstances, ordered by no special foresight, prove crises upon which our earthly fate seems utterly to depend. From personal experience and home histories we can all cull such incidents. How largely has the domestic happiness or infelicity of our whole home history depended upon the chance acquaintance of our youth! That we are here to-day in health and peace depends upon some one of a thousand contingencies, whose change might have reversed our destiny. Bitterly we mourn the untoward happenings. Fancy easily paints brighter pictures in our experience that might have come by some more favourable turn of our kaleidoscope. If only our childhood had been more favoured, and Heaven been in some way more indulgent, we imagine ourselves to-day nobler heroes and lovelier saints. Such, then, being the fact, what shall we say about it? 1. The pulpit boldly calls a halt on this strain of lamentation. The force of these minor contingencies is immensely exaggerated. The destinies of nations and men really depend upon deeper springs and broader streams of spirit and principle. Small events are only bubbles on the surface that show which way the stream flows. Some rocky headland at Lake Pepin may seem to direct the course of the mighty Mississippi, and so fix the map of North America. Do not mistakenly imagine that the rock creates the river. Rains, having fallen, are bound to find their way to the sea; and, whether on this side of the rock or the other, all the same they create the great Father of Waters. No *if* within the range of fate, but *personality*, rather, is the prime factor and supreme arbiter of destiny. Martin Luther had it in his soul to serve God and truth, or no companion's death could have made him a religious leader. Many another had equal advantage. Not the lightning-bolt, but the forces of his manhood, achieved the conquest for liberty. Do not, then, exaggerate the petty contingencies. Some special exposure brings fatal illness to a loved child or friend. Look deeper, and see that the same exposure that others braved with impunity only revealed latent disease, and suddenly brought a crisis that was sure speedily to come. We deplore the overpowering temptation that blotted some fair name. Look deeper, and see that the temptation only exposed existing moral weakness. Oftentimes character creates the contingency. So many turns of an electric cylinder, and the accumulating force, no longer to be pent up, flashes forth in an electric spark. There is no accident about that: it was sure to come. So much reckless violation of physical law, and the man breaks down. It is no arbitrary visitation or sudden accident. Years of offence are summed up and suddenly brought to judgment. But when at last iniquity launches its thunderbolt, do not call it accident or excuse it with an "if." Know that it is simply the inevitable retribution, for a

while postponed, but suddenly consummated—sins, long neglected, at last finding you out and summoning you to judgment. 2. While we would not exaggerate the "if," whatever reality is in it offers a realm for fidelity and courage. The controlling "if" I would put far back and deep down below and beyond the superficial "ifs" that delude us. Go back to the realm of character. In the mainsprings of destiny make pure and full the fountain-head, and all the contingencies that can possibly come will but open channels through which the pure waters of life may divinely flow. Foster the homes, schools, libraries, churches, and charities, build up true religion in the land, and no "if" that winds or fire or flood can bring can imperil our best prosperity. So likewise in personal life. Do not with vain lamentation exaggerate the small "ifs" of private experience. You cannot say whether the morrow shall be fair or foul, or bring good or ill fortune. But one can say, God helping me, I will divinely rule my spirit, the real key of destiny; and, come sunshine or storm, come fortune or failure, my temper shall be sweet, my integrity unsullied, my heart pure, my hands clean, and my manhood or womanhood supreme. Here is the sublime superiority of the human soul. Popular thought too strongly exaggerates the outward circumstance of environment, till unwittingly sin is excused and virtue paralysed, and man deemed a helpless bubble on the stream of fate. (*R. R. Shippen.*) *The providence of God and the providence of man*:—I. THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD. 1. The rule of it. His will—the origin and law of the universe. There is nothing higher than this; it is the force of all forces. 2. The sphere of it. It extends over all things—is co-extensive with the creation. II. THE PROVIDENCE OF MAN. 1. That of the practical atheist. (1) Purely selfish. "Buy and sell," &c. No thought of God. (2) Unreasonably presumptive. Because of the uncertainty and fleetness of life. 2. That of the practical theist. God is the central thought of all his providence. (*Homilist.*) *God's will about the future*:—How do we know what will be on the morrow? It has grown into a proverb that we ought to expect the unexpected; for often the very thing happens which we thought would not happen. How can we reckon upon anything in a world like this, where nothing is certain but uncertainty? Besides, the folly is seen in the fact of the frailty of our lives, and the brevity of them. Why, then, is it that we are always counting upon what we are going to do? Why do we choose to build upon clouds, and pile our palaces on vapour, to see them melt away, as aforetime they have often melted, instead of by faith getting where there is no failure, where God is all in all, and His sure promises make the foundations of eternal mansions? 1. Only God knows the future. All things are present to Him; there is no past and no future to His all-seeing eyes. There are two great certainties about things that shall come to pass—one is that God knows, and the other is that we do not know. 2. As the knowledge of the future is hidden from us, we ought not to pry into it. Let the doom of King Saul on Mount Gilboa warn you against such a terrible course. 3. Further, we are benefited by our ignorance of the future. It is hidden from us for our good. Suppose a certain man is to be very happy by and by. If he knows it he will be discontented till the happy hour arrives. Suppose another man is to have a great sorrow very soon. It is well that he does not know it, for now he can enjoy the present good. He is wisest who does not wish to know what God has not revealed. Here, surely, ignorance is bliss: it would be folly to be wise. 4. Because we do not know what is to be on the morrow we should be greatly humbled by our ignorance. We think we are so wise; do we not? And we make a calculation that we are sure is correct! We arrange that this is going to be done, and the other thing; but God puts forth His little finger, and removes some friend, or changes some circumstance, and all our propositions fall to the ground. 5. Seeing that these things are so, we should remember the brevity, the frailty, and the end of life. We cannot be here long. If we live to the extreme age of men, how short our time is! We are glad that we do not know when our friends are to die; and we feel thankful that we cannot foretell when we shall depart out of this life. What good would it do us? Since He is with us, we are content to leave the ordering of our lives to His unerring wisdom. We ought, for every reason, to be thankful that we do not know the future; but, at any rate, we can clearly see that to count on it is folly, and that ignorance of it is a matter of fact. Recognition of God with regard to the future is true wisdom. What says our text? "For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that." No harm can come to you if you bow to God's sovereign sway. Do you put yourselves entirely at God's disposal? Are you really His, or have you kept back a bit of yourself from the surrender? You say, "We are not our own; we are

bought with a price." But do you really mean it? I am afraid that there is a kind of mortgage on some Christians. They have some part they must give, as they fancy, to their own aggrandisement. They are not all for Christ. "We will not buy, and we will not sell, unless we can glorify God by buying and selling; and we will not wish even for the honest gain that comes of trading unless we can be promoting the will of God by getting it. Our best profit will consist in doing God's will." May this be your resolve, then. Let this clause, "If the Lord will," be written across your life, and let us all set ourselves to the recognition of God in the future. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *"If the Lord will":*—I. Here is DISSUASION FROM PRESUMPTION—from thoughtless, reckless confidence in the immediate future, in the year that is thought about, and in the self that is to make it so and so. When we look at the scheme of life they draw out, it is all planned and purposed as if they had absolute control over events, over other men, over themselves, almost over God. He is not needed. He is not to be consulted. "To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city." But are you sure you will reach it? What if the carriage in which you travel meets with some dreadful disaster? What if the vessel in which you sail should be suddenly wrapped in flames? II. Let us look now at THE POSITIVE SIDE, although this has been of necessity involved in what we have said of the negative. 1. First comes a distinct realisation and acknowledgment of God. He who would spend a good year must begin it and go through it seeing God. "If the Lord will," we ought to say—then of course there is a Lord God to will, and work, direct, watch, and keep. 2. Again, this passage teaches us that the Lord has a will in everything that enters into a man's life. "If the Lord will." That is what we are to say at all times, but with emphasis at the beginning of a year. 3. One thing more we notice as in some sort belonging to this passage—this, namely, that life can be great and good, and according to the will of God, not only, yet best, by things done, by a series of activities. "If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that." I would not here set forth doing, in the narrow mechanical sense, as opposed to speaking, or thinking, or feeling. Some words are acts, some thoughts, some feelings are also acts. All real thought and feeling is action to God. But undoubtedly the reference is chiefly here to outward action—to what is visible and tangible—thoughts embodied, feelings put into words, words put into action; everything made compact, consistent, harmonious. (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*) *Holy forms of speech:*—1. It is good to accustom the tongue to holy forms of speech; it is a great help; the heart is best where there are such explicit and express exceptions of Providence—"If the Lord please," "If the Lord will," "If it please the Lord that I live." A pure lip becometh a Christian. Besides, it is useful to stir up reverence in ourselves, and for others' instruction. Such forms are confessions of Divine providence and the uncertainty of human life. 2. The children of God use them frequently (1 Cor. iv. 19, xvi. 7; Rom. i. 10; Phil. ii. 19). The children of God know that all their goings are ordered by the Lord; therefore they often use these reservations of His will and power (Gen. xxviii. 20; Heb. vi. 3). 3. The very heathens, by the light of nature, were wont to use these forms with some religion, and would seldom speak of any purpose of theirs without this holy parenthesis. Plato bringeth in Alcibiades asking Socrates how he should speak; he answereth, "Before every work thou must say, 'If God will.'" 4. When we use these forms, the heart must go along with the tongue; common speeches, wherein God's name is used, if the heart be not reverent, are but profanations. 5. It is not always necessary to express these forms; though there must be always either implicitly or expressly a submission to the will of God, yet we cannot make it a sin to omit such phrases. The holy men of God have often purposed things to come, and yet not formally expressed such conditions. (*T. Manton.*) *A holy frame of mind:*—I. THE REASONS FOR THIS FRAME OF MIND. 1. Death or want of ability often prevents the execution of our best plans. 2. The plans of others often conflict with ours, or ours with theirs, and so neutralise one another. 3. We are often deprived of the opportunity or the desire to carry out our plans, but all under the guidance of God. II. ITS FRUITS. It will make us—1. Careful in laying; 2. Thankful for the success of; 3. Submissive to and satisfied with the frustration of, our most cherished plans and desires. (*J. J. Van Oosterzee.*) *Recognition of God's will:*—It is a special point of godliness in all things that are to be done, first, to make honourable mention of the Lord's will and pleasure, and evermore to recount and record our own frailness, and in all things to say, if the Lord will, and if we live, we will do this or that. Our whole life relieth upon Him, our whole state standeth upon His only pleasure, all our condition is only in His hands, without

His leave we can do nothing; let us therefore refer all things to His will. And this is not only true in walking after the law of God, and directing our lives according to His will, which without His special grace cannot be, but of the whole course of our life, which is altogether directed by His providence, wherefore in all things men ought to prefer the will of God. To which purpose our Saviour Christ putteth the petition, concerning the will of God, before the things appertaining unto this life. This even reason itself, besides the Word of God, teacheth us; for is it not reason that we should say, by His leave we will do this or that, from whom we have our life, our moving, and being? And this we have from God. Is it not reason, then, that we should yield ourselves under His will? (*R. Turnbull.*) *The wisdom of the Divine will:*—Bishop Vincent, who was General Grant's pastor at Galena, Illinois, has been telling a fine story of the General:—They were walking together one moonlight night in Washington, shortly after the war, but before Grant became President, when the Bishop remarked on the peculiarity of the despatches which the General had sent from the field. "It has been noticed," he said, "that you never speak of God or invoke the Divine aid, and uncharitable critics have commented unfavourably on the fact." That is true, replied Grant, in his quiet way. "The other side were always calling on God, but I thought it better to trust more and say less. At the same time, I always had the most implicit faith in a superior wisdom, and none of my plans ever miscarried without a better result than if they had been fulfilled." *A principle, not a rule:*—Rules are given that they may be observed literally. Principles are given that they may be applied intelligently and observed according to their spirit. We do not obey Christ when we allow the thief who has taken our upper garment to have our under one also; nor do we obey St. James when we say, "If the Lord will," or "Please God," of every future event, and make a plentiful use of "D.V." in all our correspondence. St. James means that we should habitually feel that moment by moment we are absolutely dependent upon God, not only for the way in which our lives are henceforth spent, but for their being prolonged at all. (*A. Plummer, D.D.*) **Ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.**—*Boasting:*—It will be profitable for us to consider carefully, and to examine ourselves after reviewing them, some of the principal grounds of boasting prevalent amongst us, the vanity of which God has exposed in His Word and in the daily experience of mankind. I. The most prominent and universal of these is the Pharisee's boast, "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are"; the boast of self-righteousness or the refuge of fear, the vaunt of self-complacency or the consolation of a conscience not at ease, the hollow comfort of souls that have heard of a wrath to come, but have not learnt the way to flee from it. The mother does not look upon her fairest children with more pride than the heart of man is prone to feel in looking at the works of its own service and contemplating the fruits of its own goodness. Every act of charity, every deed of grace, every observance of religious duty, the very emotions of religious faith or sentiment, all are turned into food for pride and the strength of a security most insecure. II. "The wicked boasteth of his heart's desire." The heart is proud of its idols and is content to worship them; the happy mother boasts of her children and rejoices without trembling over the frailest gift of God; the fond wife clings to her husband and in the strength of her proud reverence and love rests the confidence of her soul if trouble comes to try it. And man makes his boast in the grateful love that surrounds him; he is proud of the hearts that draw their happiness and hopes from him; he gathers the tender ones about him and says with quiet satisfaction, "Behold, I and the children whom God hath given me"; and so our dearest affections become snares of pride, evil rejoicings, to lull the heart in a false security, to fill it with a peace which is no peace, to strengthen it with motives which are not of Heaven, to wrap it in a short-lived satisfaction, a glorying which is not in the Lord, the light of such happiness as a moment may turn to the darkness of the deepest midnight. From this vain boasting of the heart spring the deepest anguish and sorest trials of our lives. III. "They that trust in their wealth and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches," whose "inward thought is that their houses shall endure for ever and their dwelling-places to all generations"; the purse-proud or the rank-proud, who "hath said in his heart I shall not be moved for I shall never be in adversity," who is not "in trouble as other men, neither is he plagued like other men," to whom one day telleth another the same unvarying tale of his prosperity, to whom the world bows down as it bows to every image of the world-god, Mammon, these are types of a false security, such as their lowest worshippers know how to estimate: envy itself, as it looks askance upon them,

remembers the rich man in the parable and half-renounces its greediness; and all but the poor deluded boasters themselves remember him who had got together the fruits of an abundant harvest and bade his soul take her ease, eat, drink and be merry, till he was arrested by the terrible voice of God declaring to him, "Thou fool! this night shall thy soul be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" IV. The boast of youth is strength, the energy of health unbroken by long sickness, the vigour of the hope undaunted by disappointment, the bloom of an unwrinkled cheek, the joy of an untried spirit, the activity of fresh affections and the glowing power to love, the confidence of its simple trust, the earnestness of its crude opinions, the warmth of its zeal, the fire of its devotion; in these youth makes its boast and only finds that its rejoicings are evil when the flower of its strength and beauty has faded, when its hopes have proved to be dreams, when its zeal has reaped the rewards of folly, when experience has made void its unripe judgment, when selfishness has swallowed up or ingratitude has ill requited the warmth of its early regards. And then comes the dreary season when if grace does not take possession of the soul vexation and sorrow are born, uneasiness begins to disturb the heart's unspiritual peace, the weary life-struggle commences, the struggle for progress without hope, for work without strength, for comfort without faith, for the refreshment of love without the power to give it, for the rewards of the world when the soul has acknowledged its vanity and respect for the world has departed. V. "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." This vain confidence in Time, this vague expectation of what shall be, sometimes takes treacherously the aspect of a holier trust and a more faithful boasting in the goodness and providence of God. Be wise and distinguish between the faith that waits patiently for the Lord, which looks to the morrow to confirm the blessings of to-day, and yet knows that the grace not secured to-day may not be vouchsafed to morrow, which has no fear of its days being cut short and its season of repentance brought to an untimely end, and yet would not postpone its repentance for an hour, knowing that "now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation"; whose hopes and plans are in the future, but it says, "If the Lord will we shall live to do this or that";—distinguish this faith from the blind confidence which puts off the sad work of repentance to "a more convenient season," which, while the Spirit is crying "To-day if ye will hear His voice," answers inwardly, "Nay, but it shall be to-morrow," and so keeps the great work of life ever one day in advance, till postponement breeds indifference, impunity begets boldness, out of boldness comes defiance, procrastination sears the conscience, and so the last hour of all, to which folly has resolved to delay its acceptance of Christ's Atonement, is as full of security as if another morrow were still to come instead of the everlasting To-day of godless confusion, of impenitent remorse, of undying death; an Eternity without a future, but full of the vain boastings and evil rejoicings and shocking delusions of the past; haunted by the echoes of that fatal word which was once the soul's boast and stay, and still wailing in hopeless impotence the old dreary strain, "To-morrow." (*A. J. Macleane, M.A.*) *Boastful glorying*:—A man who stood high in the city observed, with great satisfaction, that he had in a single morning cleared £30,000 by a speculation. A brother merchant remarked that he ought to be very grateful to Providence for such good fortune; whereupon the successful merchant snapped his fingers, and said, "Providence! pooh! that for Providence! I can do a deal better for myself than Providence can ever do for me." He who heard the observation walked away, and resolved never to deal with such a man again except upon cash principles, for he felt sure that a crash would come sooner or later. Great was the indignation of the man who stood high in the city when he was told, "If you and I are to have dealings it must be on strictly ready-money terms." He was insulted; he would not endure it; he would go to another house. That other house welcomed his custom, and in due time it was repaid by losing many thousands. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Evil boasting*:—Some of those who despise religion say: "Thank God we are not of this holy number." They who thank God for their unholiness had best go ring the bells for joy that they shall never see God. (*Old English Author.*) *Boastings*:—The noun is defined by Aristotle as the character of the man who lays claim to what will bring him credit when the claim is either altogether false or grossly exaggerated. He contrasts it with the "irony" which deliberately, with good or bad motive, understates its claim. (*Dean Plumptre.*) *The danger of the boaster*:—Two geese, when about to start southwards on their annual autumn migration, were entreated by a frog to take him with them. On the geese expressing their willingness to do so if a means

of conveyance could be devised, the frog produced a stalk of long grass, got the two geese to take it one by each end, while he clung to it by his mouth in the middle. In this manner the three were making their journey successfully when they were noticed from below by some men, who loudly expressed their admiration of the device, and wondered who had been clever enough to discover it. The vainglorious frog, opening his mouth to say "It was me," lost his hold, fell to the earth and was dashed to pieces. (*J. Gilmour, M.A.*) **To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not.**—*Sins of omission*:—It is hard for men under the plain precepts of the gospel not to know how to do good; but who is there that can say he doth all the good he knows? To do good here doth not barely imply something that is lawful, which it is some way in our power to do; but that to which we are under some obligation, so that it becometh our duty to do it. For a sin of omission must suppose an obligation, since every sin must be a transgression of the law. I. THE GOOD WHICH WE ARE OBLIGED TO DO. 1. With respect to God. (1) The duty which we owe to God in our minds; which is, not barely to know Him, but frequently to think of Him as our maker and benefactor. (*a*) To have frequent and serious thoughts of Him, without which it will be impossible to keep our minds in that temper which they ought to be in. For the thoughts of God keep up a vigorous sense of religion, inflame our devotion, calm our passions, and are the most powerful check against the force of temptations. (*b*) We are always bound to have an habitual disposition of mind towards God. This is that which is commonly called the love of God, and is opposed to the love of sin. (2) There are duties of external worship and service owing to God; and how shall we know when the omission of these becomes a sin to us? For these are not always necessary, and sometimes we may be hindered from them. To answer this I lay down these rules: (*a*) A constant or habitual neglect of those duties which God hath appointed for His worship and service cannot be without a sin of omission, because that must arise from an evil temper and disposition of mind. (*b*) Whether the omission of such public duties of Divine worship be a sin or not depends very much on the reason and occasion of it. 2. But besides the duties which we owe to God, there are such which we owe to one another, which cannot be omitted without sin. But there are certain such duties which we owe both to the public and to one another. (1) As to the public, and concerning that we may take notice of two rules: (*a*) Those duties cannot be omitted without sin which cannot be omitted without prejudice to the public good. The main duty of this kind which I shall insist upon is the laying aside all animosities and distinctions of parties, and carrying on that which is the undoubted common interest of us all. (*b*) Men cannot without sin omit the doing those duties which their places do require from them. For those are intended for a public benefit. (2) I now proceed to the good which we are to do with respect to others of the same nature and in a worse condition than ourselves, and therefore need our help and assistance. (*a*) That the measures of duty in this case are very different, according to the different circumstances and conditions of persons. (*b*) There are particular seasons when a greater measure of doing good is required than at others: *i.e.*, when persons suffer for religion and a good conscience; when the necessities of people are more general and pressing; when great objects of charity are certainly known to ourselves and concealed from others, &c. II. THE NATURE OF THE OBLIGATION WE LIE UNDER TO DO THE GOOD WE KNOW. And the reason of considering this is from the comparison of several duties with one another; for we may be bound to several things at the same time, but we cannot perform them together; and the difficulty then is to understand which of these duties we may omit without sin. 1. As to the nature of our duties. For there are several kinds of things that are good, and we are to have a different regard to them (Hosea vi. 6; Matt. ix. 13; xii. 7). When two duties interfere with one another we are bound to prefer the greater and more substantial duty, and then the omission of the lesser is no sin. 2. As to the authority which requires them. There is no question but when the authority of God and man contradict each other, God is to be obeyed rather than man. 3. As to the obligation we are under, and that is threefold. (1) That of nature, which is to act according to reason; and none can question that, but those who question whether there be any such principle as reason in mankind; and whosoever do so have reason to begin at home. (2) Of Christianity, which supposes and enforces that of nature, and superadds many other duties which we are bound to perform as Christians. (3) Of our several relations and particular employments. As to the former, we are under great obligations from God and nature and Christianity to do the duties which belong to us in them. As to the

latter, they commonly require a stricter obligation by oath to do those things which otherwise we are not bound to do. But being entered into it by a voluntary act of our own, we cannot omit such duties without sin but where the circumstances of things do supersede the obligation. (*Bp. Stillingfleet.*) *The responsibility of knowledge* (with John xiii. 17):—Two texts, two sides to one and the same truth, two sides to one coin, back and front. The truth is this—Knowledge without action is simply good for nothing. Act up to what you know, or so much the worse for you. The first text puts it positively, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." The second text puts it negatively, "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin"—the mere neglect of doing right. If a man does not act up to his knowledge of right and good, he has committed positive sin. He not only loses his blessedness, but he—the most pure, moral man—is guilty of positive sin. Mere notional religion never saved a man yet. We have plenty of notional religion; we know what is right, every one of us. We know, I believe, pretty well in this congregation. We know the law of God, we know the gospel of God, we know the way of salvation, we have known it all our lives. These great truths, which are spending thousands of pounds to preach among the heathen; we who live in the full sunshine of that light, do we practise them? If we know these things, Jesus says, blessed are ye if ye do them. But how apt we are to rest satisfied with this miserable notional religion—seeing, believing, attending, listening, hearing, and nothing come of it after all. The Great Searcher of hearts searches right through all sophistry of that kind, and He tells us over and over again in His Word that hearing, knowing, assenting, and believing, simply goes for nothing, unless there is acting right in daily life. How apt we are to begin the New Year by making our plans as though we had a long lease of life before us. We think we shall do most wonderful things. We boast, and we rejoice in our boasting, that we can do this and that and the other thing. Purposes and plans of usefulness for ourselves and for the benefit of others we make most liberally; and how many of them come to anything after all? How apt we are to make the largest promises and yet fail in performing them—"To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin"! Dear friends, have some of us begun the New Year with this feeling, that we really ought this year to be far more diligent in the keeping of our hearts. Perhaps you say: "I acknowledge that my habits of private devotion are becoming careless and hurried and unsatisfactory; I really ought to study my Bible more frequently and systematically; I really ought to give more time to it; I really ought to pray with more feeling—prayer is not merely going through a certain form of words, but is really a coming to close grips with God, and bringing down a blessing from on high by earnest pleading—I really ought to do this; I ought to give more time to it. I confess that my time for devotion has been often sadly scamped and hurried." Devotion cannot be done in a hurry. Hurried devotion spoils all; as I have heard it put, cream does not come upon milk unless it stands. There is often a want in our devotions just owing to the hurried way we pass through them. "I really must be different," you say. "I will be more careful, more systematic in the study of my Bible." It is well to make resolutions of that kind, but remember that the very knowledge that you ought to do this is positive sin if it is neglected. Take another branch of Christian duty. We are very apt to make plans about the beginning of the New Year. Some are ready to say, "I have been leading a very selfish life. God has given me many things to enjoy. He has been giving me time, He has been giving me money, or He has been giving me leisure, and I have just been using these things for my own enjoyment and pleasure and profit, forgetting that I must use them as committed to me as a steward who shall have to give account to God. I must make a better use of my money. I must look clearly, and see how much of my money I am giving to God, and how much I am keeping to myself." Perhaps it is time you have. "I am bound," you say, "to make a better use of my time. I acknowledge I have wasted a great deal of it uselessly and shamefully. I ought really to employ it differently. I ought to visit among the poor, and the sick, and the afflicted; I ought to try and comfort them more than I have been doing. I know I ought to use my opportunities so as to bring, were it only one soul, to the knowledge of the Saviour during the year. I know I ought." You feel you ought; you know you ought. Then you are guilty of deliberate sin if you don't. Judged from the ordinary standpoint, you may be all that is morally beautiful and amiable; but, if you know you ought to lead this useful life, and if you are leading a useless and indulgent life—"To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." (*F. H. Robarts.*) *Sinful neglect of duty*:—I. That men

sin not only when they positively transgress the law of God, BUT ALSO WHEN THEY DO NOT FULFIL THE DUTIES WHICH THE LAW REQUIRES TO THE UTMOST OF THEIR POWER. And — II. That our guilt is more highly aggravated WHEN WE NEGLECT THE DUTIES WHICH ARE KNOWN TO US, or when we decline opportunities of doing good though we know that it is our duty to embrace them. Conclusion: 1. This subject administers a sharp reproof to those who, in any case, attempt to evade their convictions of duty. 2. This subject administers reproof also to the slothful and inactive servant who rests content with low attainments in religion. (*R. Walker.*) *Sin against knowledge* is sin with an accent, wickedness with a witness. (*J. Trapp.*)

CHAPTER V.

VERS. 1-6. **Ye rich men, weep and howl.**—*The miseries coming upon the rich:*— I. THE COMING OF JUDGMENT. "Weep and howl"—weep, and do it in this open, violent manner, with loud, bitter cries of distress—do it wailing, shrieking, howling—as was, and still is, so customary among the Orientals in times of mourning. Lament thus "for," or over, "the miseries that shall come upon you"—more exactly and impressively, "which are coming on," are already even now impending. These miseries were not simply those which in all circumstances the love and abuse of money entail, but specially, and in addition to them, the temporal judgments which were about to visit the guilty parties in this instance. They were to be the peculiar objects of vengeance; their treasures were to be rifled, their possessions wrenched from them, and stripped bare, they were to be subjected to hardships, all the heavier because of the pleasures once enjoyed and the losses thus sustained. II. THE COMMENCEMENT OF JUDGMENT. "Your riches are corrupted"—either their possessions of all kinds, these being afterwards spoken of in detail, or, as distinguished from what follows, those hoarded stores of grain, fruits, and other provisions, in which the wealth of Orientals largely consisted. To the latter the term "corrupted" could most properly be applied. They were rotting, perishing. "Your garments are moth-eaten." In eastern countries one of the most valuable possessions was a stock of costly clothing, a number of dresses, wardrobes filled with a great variety of articles of apparel. They were moth-eaten—a way in which articles of dress, when long kept and little used, are often wasted, destroyed. "Your gold and silver is cankered"—rusted, corroded. The original word implies that it is so not partially, but entirely—as it were through and through its whole substance. This does not take place in regard to silver and gold as it does to iron and steel; but they are spoken of as undergoing the change to which metals generally are subject; and there is that which corresponds to it in their case, for they get discoloured, blackened, tarnished, wasted, corrupted-looking. "And the rust of them shall be a witness against you"—literally, "shall be for a testimony to you"—"and shall eat your flesh as it were fire." In the moth-eaten garments, the cankered silver and gold, their sin no doubt appeared, but appeared in the judgments which had followed it, for in that process of destruction which had commenced there was the avenging hand of God visible. This is the prominent thing—the punishment already begun. The very objects on which they prided themselves, which they made an idol of, were smitten; and in every hole of the cloth, every spot on the money, there was a sign of the consumption that was coming on themselves, of the destruction that was impending over them, the servants of the mammon of unrighteousness. There was a testimony in their wasted, blackened stores—a testimony borne to the worm that dieth not, and the fire that cannot be quenched. "Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days." Treasure has been understood here in the figurative sense of a store of wrath, vengeance to be opened and emptied at the time mentioned. But it is obviously to be taken literally, and as referring to their material riches as detailed in the preceding verses. The "last days" are those introducing and issuing in the season of judgment which was approaching—the last days of the Jewish Church and nation, and, in many cases, of the individual persons themselves; for what multitudes were then to perish by the sword, by famine, by disease, by captivity? They had gathered wealth for a season like this, when they could not enjoy it, could not retain it—

when it was to become the prey of the rapacious invaders, or of the more needy and desperate of their own countrymen. But the literal translation of the original is "in the last days"—they had heaped treasure together, not for, but in the period thus designated. These days were already upon them—the days were begun, and hastening to their terrible close; and it was at a season like that, one fitter far for repentance and reformation, one calling them to break off their sins by righteousness, to prepare for impending judgment by turning to the Lord—one specially imposing on them the obligation to lay up treasure, not on earth but in heaven, where no moth or rust can corrupt, and where no theives can break through and steal—it was then that they devoted their efforts to the gathering of riches, the storing of fruits, garments, and the precious metals. Here was the deepest guilt, here the most reckless, unprincipled infatuation. III. THE CAUSES OF JUDGMENT. 1. Injustice. The wages of the workman should be paid honestly and punctually. To withhold it is a flagrant wrong, and such a wrong was committed by the rich men whose conduct the apostle is here denouncing. They kept it back "by fraud." Aud in various ways may such fraud be perpetrated. The master may not pay at all the stipulated and earned wages. He may receive the service without remunerating the servant. Or he may make unjust deductions from the amount which has been agreed on. He may take advantage of his position and power, and on certain pretexts give less than was bargained for by the other party. And what is still more common, he may beat down the price of labour, and pay for it most inadequately. He may turn to account the competition which prevails and the necessities of the poor, so as to get work done for greatly less than its proper value. This hire, dishonestly retained, is represented by James as crying. Yes, from the coffers where it was treasured up, a loud, piercing call for vengeance rose to high heaven. Often, often, the oppressed are not listened to on earth, however just their claim and urgent their pleading. But they are heard in heaven. Here their cries are said to have "entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." He was able to vindicate the cause of the defrauded reapers who groaned and supplicated. He could call to account, and overwhelm with destruction, those who trampled on their dependents, and set all human law and right at defiance. 2. Luxury. "Ye have lived in pleasure"—that is, in a self-indulgent, sumptuous, effeminate manner. In the qualification, "on the earth," there is an implied contrast with another region, where vengeance was stored up, and their portion was to be one of want and misery. "And been wanton." This word conveys to us the idea of lewdness, lustfulness; but what is intended here is luxuriousness, voluptuousness. It does not necessarily involve indulgence in gross excesses, in coarse and degrading impurities. It intimates that the persons were devoted to earthly enjoyments, and regardless of expense in procuring them, for the term is expressive of extravagance, wastefulness. "Ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter." They have satiated, pampered their hearts, for there were seated the tastes and appetites which they gratified; there the craving for, and the sense of satisfaction, repletion, as they fed and dressed, fattened and adorned their bodies. And they had been doing this "as in," or simply, "in a day of slaughter." They were on the brink of destruction. God was about to draw His glittering sword and smite them in His anger. And yet in these circumstances they disregarded all warnings and signs; they revelled and wantoned as if they were perfectly secure. They were sunk in brutish insensibility. It was thus with the antediluvians: for they did eat and drink, they were married and given in marriage, until the flood came and took them all away. 3. Violence—violence going the length even of blood, of murder. Stephen was the first of a band of early martyrs whom the Jews, in the malignant unbelief, had put to death for their adherence to the gospel. The holiness, the righteousness of these victims of fanatical fury, instead of saving them, had excited the rage and drawn down the vengeance of their adversaries. "And he doth not resist you"—not only or chiefly because of a want of power, but because of the meekness of his character, his patience, endurance, long-suffering. He submits to your murderous violence. He commits his cause to God, and allows you to do your utmost, striving to exhibit the spirit of his crucified Master. And this made their guilt the greater. Their cruelty was the less excusable. It had no provocation. (*John Adam.*) *Avaricious rich men*:—It is not to "rich men," simply as such, that James addresses himself. There was no sin in being rich. It is to the description of rich men whose characters he proceeds to portray, that he speaks—unprincipled, selfish, ungodly, wicked rich men. "Weep and howl." Tears are the natural indication of grief: "howling," or loud lamentation, of overwhelming

distress. They had reason for both in "the miseries that were coming upon them." They would be the chief objects of the plundering rapacity of the besieging foe; and, while the sword would be upon them for their riches' sake—even to those of them who fell not a prey themselves, the very loss of all their accumulated stores, gathered with so much pains and care, would itself be one of their miseries from which the poorer would be exempt. True it is, however, with regard to all "rich men" of the same character, that "miseries are coming upon them." What, then, is the character? Vers. 2, 3. The word "riches" need not be confined to the precious metals alone: the "silver and the gold" are separately mentioned. Eastern riches consisted frequently, not in these alone, but also in stores of corn, and wine, and oil; and here, as in other places, "garments"—wardrobes of various descriptions of clothing, are mentioned, as forming part of such wealth. "Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten," is a part of the charge brought against them: the charge of avaricious selfishness—that, instead of giving away, they kept all to themselves; allowing what might have been distributed for the benefit of others, rather than part with it, to go to waste in their own stores; and allowing the moths to consume what might have clothed and comforted the naked. Had they given away as they ought to have done, their riches would not have been "corrupted." That their "riches were corrupted and their garments moth-eaten" was thus their crime rather than their punishment—though as a part of their punishment—the effects of their selfish hoarding—it might also be regarded. The "last days" are susceptible of two interpretations: of the time of Jerusalem's destruction and the final overthrow of the Jewish economy; or of the end of the world. I do not think it at all unlikely that the apostle had both in his eye; on the same principle on which our Lord Himself appears to pass from the former to the latter—from the nearer to the more distant—in His remarkable address to His disciples in the twenty-fourth chapter of the Gospel by Matthew. In the sack and pillage of Jerusalem, how vain would all the pains appear which they had bestowed on the "heaping together of their treasures." And in the great day of final reckoning they should find that, in having amassed for self, instead of having distributed for God and for fellow-men, they had only been "heaping up" evidence for their own crimination at the bar of Divine judgment. How different the case with those who, in the early days of the Christian Church, used their wealth as the inspired history describes: when they "sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, as every man had need; and distribution was made to all as need required." They had acted in conformity with the Lord's own directions (Matt. vi. 20; Luke xii. 33). Of that treasure there would "in the last days" be no loss, nor any bitter lamentation over it. No enemy could touch it. And in "the day of the Lord"—the day of final account—it would tell in their favour as the evidence of the genuineness of their faith and love. The wealth of those addressed by James was not only selfishly hoarded, it was obtained by criminal oppression and cruelty (ver. 4). This "keeping back by fraud"—under false and unworthy pretexts—of the reapers' wages, to which they were rightfully entitled, was a fearful violation to explicit Divine precepts (see Lev. xix. 13; Deut. xxiv. 14, 15). And it "cried"—cried against the unrighteous oppressor; cried to God; cried for just retribution; cried—in the same sense in which God said to Cain—"The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto Me from the ground." And, as God heard the voice of the blood of a murdered brother, so did He hear that of the "hire" of the defrauded labourers. Let Christians avoid even the remotest approach to such oppression. They ought to be examples of righteousness and love as the children of a just and merciful God. We have next, the manner in which they laid out their riches. We have seen how they were made: we learn now how they were used (ver. 5). The verse expresses the extreme of self-indulgence; the gratification of every sensual desire. Like the infatuated king of Israel, "in the days of his vanity," "whatsoever their eyes desired they withheld not from them; they restrained not their hearts from any joy." The clause—"ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter," is by many understood to mean their pampering themselves as in a day of killing for social festivity. But the meaning seems rather to be that they were pampering themselves as beasts were fed and fattened for a day of slaughter. They were preparing themselves for the knife. While thus "feeding themselves without fear," they were "only fitting themselves for final destruction." Their "joy would be turned to sorrow; their mirth to heaviness." And, in addition to all this, while at the same time in full consistency with it, they were persecutors. "Ye have condemned and killed the just" (ver. 6). This by some interpreted as having reference to Christ

Himself: "the just" being in the singular number—"the just" or "the just one." And without doubt this is one of His distinguishing designations. But, on the other hand, "He doth not resist you" is in the present time; and agrees better, consequently, with a charge of present persecution unto death, than with one relating to a deed so long past. This, therefore, favours the interpretation which makes it refer to the persecution of Christ's followers, who resembled Him in character; of which we have so beautiful an exemplification in the case of the first martyr, Stephen. That there were persecutors still troubling the Church is evident from the admonitions to patience under such troubles, which immediately follow (vers. 7, 8). Let us conclude with one or two reflections. 1. Surely the poorest Christian has no reason to envy the wealthy but wicked man of the world; no, even though he were to suffer, and suffer unto death, at his hands. The poorest Christian is "rich in faith, and an heir of the kingdom which God hath provided for them that love Him." He has God Himself for his portion—a portion infinite in preciousness and fulness of blessing, and unfailing and everlasting in duration. Let him cherish "godliness with contentment," and he is a happy man—happy in enjoyment, and happier in hope. 2. There may be rich men whose wealth has been acquired by honest means—who have been chargeable with no extortion; and who, in the use of their wealth, have not at all rioted in sensuality and libertinism, or abused the superiority which it imparted in evil-entreating and persecuting the godly. Let not such, on this account, sit at ease and flatter themselves with safety. Your riches may be a snare to you, notwithstanding. You may trust in your wealth. It may take away your heart. 3. Let Christians, whom Providence, in whatever measure, has favoured with this world's wealth, remember the true use of riches. Bear in mind that in bestowing wealth upon you the universal Proprietor alienates nothing from Himself. Of the gold and the silver which He puts into your coffers He continues to say, just as He does of all yet in the bowels of the earth—"The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine." And His command is, "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and"—not with the paltry remnants after all thine own selfish cravings have been fully satiated, but—"with the first-fruits of all thine increase." (*R. Wardlaw, D.D.*) *The curse of wealth*:—A full purse, with a lean soul, is a great curse. (*Bunyan.*) *The gold poison*:—Gold is the worst poison to men's souls. (*Shakespeare.*) *God help the rich*:—God help the rich, the poor can help themselves. *Gold bought too dearly*:—Men may buy gold too dear. *Wealth disappointing*:—Very few men acquire wealth in such a manner as to receive pleasure from it. Just as long as there is the enthusiasm of the chase they enjoy it; but when they begin to look around, and think of settling down, they find that that part by which joy enters is dead in them. They have spent their lives in heaping up colossal piles of treasure, which stand at the end like the pyramids in the desert sands holding only the dust of kings. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Too much and too little*:—He that hath too little wants feathers to fly withal; he that hath too much is cumbered with too large a tail. (*Owen Feltham.*) *The wounds of evil wealth*:—It were no bad comparison to liken mere rich men to camels and mules; for they often pursue their devious way over hills and mountains, laden with India purple, with gems, aromas, and generous wines upon their backs, attended, too, by a long line of servants as a safeguard on their way. Soon, however, they come to their evening halting-place, and forthwith their precious burdens are taken from their backs; and they, now wearied and stripped of their lading and their retinue of slaves, show nothing but livid marks of stripes. So, also, those who glitter in gold and purple raiment, when the evening of life comes rushing on them, have nought to show but marks and wounds of sin impressed upon them by the evil use of riches. (*St. Augustine.*) *Excessive wealth ruinous*:—Gotthold saw a bee flutter for a while around a pot of honey, and at last light upon it, intending to feast to its heart's content. It, however, fell in, and, being besmeared in every limb, miserably perished. On this he mused, and said, "It is the same with temporal prosperity, and that abundance of wealth, honour, and pleasure, which are sought for by the world as greedily as honey is by the bee. A bee is a happy creature so long as it is assiduously occupied in gathering honey from the flowers, and by slow degrees accumulating a store of it. When, however, it meets with a hoard like this, it knows not what to do, and is betrayed into ruin." (*New Cyclo. of Illustrations.*) *Unsatisfactory riches*:—Worldly riches are like nuts: many clothes are torn in getting them, many a tooth broke in cracking them; but never a belly filled with eating them. (*J. Venning.*) *Wealth too dearly bought*:—A ship bearing a hundred emigrants has been driven from her course, and wrecked on

a desert island far from the tracks of man. There is no way of escape; but there are means of subsistence. An ocean, unvisited by ordinary voyagers, circles round their prison; but they have seed, with a rich soil to receive, and a genial climate to ripen it. Ere any plan has been laid, or any operations begun, an exploring-party returns to headquarters, reporting the discovery of a gold mine. Thither instantly the whole party resort to dig. They labour successfully day by day and month after month. They acquire and accumulate large heaps of gold. But spring is past, and not a field has been cleared, nor a grain of seed committed to the ground. The summer comes, and their wealth increases; but the store of food is small. In harvest they begin to discover that their heaps of gold are worthless. When famine stares them in the face a suspicion shoots across their fainting hearts that the gold has cheated them. They rush to the woods, fell the trees, dig the roots, till the ground, sow the seed. It is too late! Winter has come; and their seed rots in the ground. They die of want in the midst of their treasures. This earth is the little isle, eternity the ocean round it; on this shore we have been cast. There is a living seed, but gold mines attract us. We spend spring and summer there; winter overtakes us toiling there, destitute of the bread of life, forgetting that we ought to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto us." (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *Wealth seasoned by alms*:—The pious Jews believed that as salt seasoned food so did alms riches, and that he who did not give alms of what he had his riches should be dispersed. The moth would corrupt the bags, and the canker corrode the money, unless the mass was sanctified by giving a part to the poor. *Ruined by riches*:—Do not be over-anxious about riches. Get as much of true wisdom and goodness as you can; but be satisfied with a moderate portion of this world's good. Riches may prove a curse as well as a blessing. I was walking through an orchard, looking about me, when I saw a low tree laden more heavily with fruit than the rest. On a nearer examination it appeared that the tree had been dragged to the very earth and broken by the weight of its treasures. "Oh!" said I, gazing on the tree, "here lies one who has been ruined by his riches." In another part of my walk I came up with a shepherd, who was lamenting the loss of a sheep that lay mangled and dead at his feet. On inquiry about the matter he told me that a strange dog had attacked the flock, that the rest of the sheep had got away through a hole in the hedge, but that the ram now dead had more wool on his back than the rest, and the thorns of the hedge held him fast till the dog had worried him. "Here is another," said I, "ruined by his riches." At the close of my ramble I met a man hobbling along on two wooden legs, leaning on two sticks. "Tell me," said I, "my poor fellow, how you came to lose your legs?" "Why, sir," said he, "in my younger days I was a soldier. With a few comrades I attacked a party of the enemy and overcame them, and we began to load ourselves with spoil. My comrades were satisfied with little, but I burdened myself with as much as I could carry. We were pursued; my companions escaped, but I was overtaken and so cruelly wounded that I only saved my life afterwards by losing my legs. It was a bad affair, sir; but it is too late to repent of it now." "Ah, friend," thought I, "like the fruit tree, and the mangled sheep, you may date your downfall to your possessions. It was your riches that ruined you." When I see so many rich people as I do, caring so much for their bodies and so little for their souls, I pity them from the bottom of my heart, and sometimes think there are as many ruined by riches as by poverty. (*Old Humphrey.*) *Riches eating the flesh*:—Some strong poison is made of the rust of metals; none worse than that of money. (*J. Trapp.*) *Money an opportunity*:—Money, both inherited and accumulated, is a great talent or opportunity. Nothing astonishes me more than the fact that so many rich men utterly fail to realise what an opportunity wealth gives them. They go on heaping up useless wealth with which to curse their children. As though the mere accumulation of money was, in itself, a great gain! As though heaps of gold could protect them against all the ills to which flesh is heir! I am very glad that one millionaire—Mr. Carnegie, of Pennsylvania—realises that the best thing he can do with his money is to get rid of it, and that the worst thing possible would be to pile it upon the hapless head of his children. There seems to be, in some respects, even less public spirit among the wealthy men of our own time than distinguished the heathen patricians of old Rome. They delighted to spend their wealth in dignifying and adorning their great city. It is exceedingly strange to me that the immensely wealthy citizens of London do not use their millions to purify and to beautify this great capital. It is even more astonishing that those who profess and call themselves Christians, toil on and slave on, adding money-bag to money-bag,

instead of using this mighty instrument to facilitate and encourage the evangelisation of mankind. Nearly every Christian and humanitarian organisation is crippled for want of more adequate resources. One of the greatest evils of the time is the miserliness of the wealthy. They are preparing for their children an awful retribution. The bitter and almost implacable hatred of the wealthy, which is the most dangerous social symptom of modern Europe, is the direct result of the awful way in which the wealthy have neglected to use their wealth for the public good. They are busily heaping up wealth, but they are also heaping up wrath against the day of wrath. They seem to have forgotten that wealth is a talent, an opportunity, a glorious opportunity, of serving God by serving men. *The troubles of the rich*:—Mr. Jay Gould, the American millionaire, thus confided his woes to a reporter: "I am kept on the drive now from early in the morning till late at night, without any let up, day in and day out. The money I've made has enslaved me. With financial success, cares, and responsibilities, and trials outnumbered go close together; and there is no escaping the embarrassments and troubles. A rich man ought to be judged pretty generously. He has a good deal more to contend with than people who are not rich generally suppose. Food and clothes and a place to sleep, that's all a man gets in this world, and I don't care how rich he is. The boy on the farm, the man who isn't driven to death to look after property that is in his name, they are the happiest—or ought to be." **Your riches are corrupted.**—*Sordid sparing*:—1. Sordid sparing is a sure sign of a worldly heart. God gave us wealth, not that we should be hoarders, but dispensers. Seneca calleth covetous men chests. We think them men, and they are but coffers; who would envy a trunk well stored? Well, then, beware of "withholding more than is meet" (Prov. xi. 24), of a delight in hoarding; it is a sure note that the world has too much of your heart. 2. Keeping things from public use till they be corrupted or spoiled is sordid sparing. When you lay them not out upon God, or others, or yourself, you are justly culpable. The inhabitants of Constantinople would afford no money to the Emperor Constantinus Palæologus when he begged from door to door for a supply for the soldiers; but what was the issue? the barbarous enemy won the city and got all. The like story there is of Musteatzem, the covetous caliph of Babylon, who was such an idolater of his wealth and treasures that he would not dispend anything for the necessary defence of his city, whereupon it was taken, and the caliph famished to death, and his mouth, by Haalon, the Tartarian conqueror, filled with melted gold. 3. Covetousness bringeth God's curse upon our estates. He sendeth corruption, and the rust, and the moth. There is nothing gotten by tenacity, by greedy getting, or close withholding. Not by greedy getting; when men will snatch an estate out of the hands of Providence, no wonder if God snatch it away again; ill gains are equivalent to losses (Micah vi. 10). Not by undue withholding; it draweth man's curse and God's too upon us (see Prov. xi. 26). God can easily corrupt that which we will not bestow, and cause a worm to breed in manna. Certainly there is a "withholding that tendeth to poverty" (Prov. xi. 24). 4. There is corruption and decay upon the face of all created glory. Riches corrupted, garments moth-eaten, gold and silver cankered. It is madness to set up our rest in perishing things, "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not" (Prov. xxxiii. 5)? It is not only against grace, but reason; confidence should have a sure and stable ground. Well, then, take Christ's advice (Matt. vi. 19, 20). 5. From the diversity of the terms—moth, corruption, canker, note that God hath several ways wherewith to blast our carnal comforts. Sometimes by the moth, sometimes by the thief, by rust or robbery; they may either rot, or be taken from us. Well, then, let the greater awe be impressed upon your thoughts. (*T. Manton.*) *The folly of avarice*:—We have here three kinds of possessions indicated. First, stores of various kinds of goods. These are "corrupted," they have become rotten and worthless. Secondly, rich garments, which in the East are often a very considerable portion of a wealthy man's possessions. They have been stored up so jealously and selfishly that insects have preyed upon them and ruined them. And thirdly, precious metals. These have become tarnished and rusted, through not having been put to any rational use. Everywhere their avarice has been not only sin, but folly. It has failed of its sinful object. The unrighteous hoarding has tended not to wealth, but to ruin. And thus the rust of their treasures becomes "a testimony against them." In the ruin of their property their own ruin is portrayed; and just as corruption, and the moths, and the rust consume their goods, so shall the fire of God's judgment consume the owners and abusers of them. They have reserved all this store for their selfish enjoyment, but God has reserved

them for His righteous anger. (*A. Plummer, D.D.*) *Wealth exposed to danger:*—Strolling along the banks of a pond, Gotthold observed a pike basking in the sun, and so pleased with the sweet soothing rays as to forget itself and the danger to which it was exposed. Thereupon a boy approached, and with a snare formed of a horsehair, and fastened to the end of a rod, which he skilfully cast over his head, pulled it in an instant out of the water. "Ah me!" said Gotthold with a deep sigh, "how evidently do I here behold shadowed forth the danger of my poor soul! When the beams of temporal prosperity play upon us to our heart's content, so grateful are they to corrupt flesh and blood, that, immersed in sordid pleasure, luxury, and security, we lose all sense of spiritual danger, and all thought of eternity. In this state, many are, in fact, suddenly snatched away to the eternal ruin of their souls." *Wealth destructive:*—When Crates threw his gold into the sea, he cried out, *Ego perdam te, ne tu perdas me.* That is, "I will destroy you, lest you should destroy me." Thus, if the world be not put to death here, it will put us to death hereafter. (*T. Secker.*) **Your garments are motheaten.**—*Moth-eaten garments:*—In early days, besides silver and gold, which always and everywhere have been considered wealth, garments were stored up, and were regarded as an evidence of riches. Against these things time has a grudge. They wear out if you use them, and waste more if you do not. If you store them away, mildew and damp searches for them to rot them. If you too incautiously expose them to the cleansing air, you give knowledge of your treasure, excite cupidity, and draw the thief to your dwelling. And while men covet, and the elements enviously consume your garments and your fabrics, there are insects created, it would seem, expressly to feed upon them. First is the moth miller. It is most fair, silent, harmless. And yet every housewife springs after it with electric haste. It is a dreaded pest—not for what it is, but for what it becomes. It is the mother of moths. And there are ten thousand moral moths just like them—soft, satiny, silent, harmless in themselves; but they lay eggs, and the eggs are not as harmless as the insects. There are sins that have teeth, and there are sins that have children with teeth. Could there, then, have been selected a figure more striking in its analogies than this? Could anything more clearly show to us the power of the sins of neglect? of the sins of indolence and of carelessness? of sins of a soft and gentle presence, that in themselves are not very harmful, but that are the breeders of others that are? of the silent mischiefs of the unused faculties or rooms of the soul, that are not ventilated, nor searched with the broom and the brush? men do well to watch and fight against obvious and sounding sins. They are numerous. They are armed and are desperate. They swarm the ways of life. Not one vice, not one temptation of which the Word of God warns us, is to be lightly esteemed. But these are not our only dangers. Tens of thousands of men perish, not by the lion-like stroke of temptation, but by the insidious bite of the hidden serpent; not with roar and strength, but with subtle poison. More men are moth-eaten than lion-eaten in this life; and it behoves us in time to give heed to these dangers of invisible and insidious little enemies. The real strength of man is in his character. Now character is not a massive unit; it is a fabric, rather. It is an artificial whole made up by the interply of ten thousand threads. Every faculty is a spinner, spinning every day its threads, and almost every day threads of a different colour. Myriads and myriads of webbed products proceed from the many active faculties of the human soul, and character is made up by the weaving together of all these innumerable threads of daily life. Its strength is not merely in the strength of some simple unit, but in the strength of numerous elements. There are crimes that, like frost on flowers, in one single night accomplish their work of destruction. There are vices that, like freshets, sweep everything before them. Men may be destroyed in character and reputation, utterly and sudden. But there are other instruments of destruction besides these. We do well to mark them, and to watch against them; but we also do well to remember that a man may be preserved from crimes and from great vices, and yet have his character moth-eaten. Watch against little sins and little faults. First, aside from great vices and crimes, there are the moths of indolence. Indolence may be supposed to be morally wrong; but it is thought to be wrong rather in a negative way than otherwise. No, no! The mischief of water is not that it does not run, but that, not running, it corrupts, and corrupting breeds poisonous miasma, so that they who live in the neighbourhood inhale disease at every breath. The mischief of indolence is, not that it neglects the use of powers and the improvement of the opportunities of life, but that it breeds morbid conditions in every part of the soul. There is health in activity, but

there is disease in indolence. There are moths also in things unsuspected. All men agree that a glutton and a drunkard are opprobrious and ignominous. But there are excesses from over-eating on this side of gluttony, and excesses from over-drinking this side of drunkenness. There are moths of appetite. There are many men who eat beyond the necessities of nature. They obscure their minds. There are many who, by taking too much food, twice or thrice a day repeated, keep all their feelings upon an edge, so that they are quick and irritable, or stupid and slow. There are many who, by mere over-eating, take from sleep its refreshment, and from their waking hours their peace, by the gnawing of the worm of appetite. This is a little thing. Your physician does not say much about it. Your parents hardly ever speak of it. It is a thing for every man to consider for himself. But it is a serious fact that two-thirds of the men who live a sedentary life impair their strength by the simple act of injudicious feeding—over-eating. And that which is true of food is still more true of stimuli: not alone of spirituous liquors, with regard to which you are warned abundantly, but also of domestic stimuli. I do not mean to be understood as saying that every man who employs tobacco is moth-eaten; that every man who indulges himself moderately in the use of tea and coffee is injured thereby. I do not mean to go so far as to say that every man who uses unfrequently and in small quantities, wines and liquors, is himself physically injured by them. But I do mean to say, comprehensively—and you know it is true—that in this sphere lie a multitude of mischiefs and of temptations, each of which is minute, but the sum of which is exceedingly dangerous. The carriage of our affections also develops a class of tendencies which are fitly included in this subject. There are many men who never give way to wrath on a great and sounding scale. It is wholesome to be mad thoroughly. It does a man good to subsoil him by stirring him up down to the bottom. I would that men were fretful less and angry more. For it is these little petty moths of perpetual fretfulness, moroseness, sourness; these little fribbles of temper that cut the thread of life—it is these that destroy men, inside and out. We read about some of the passions of which we see traces, but of the nature, and progress, and power of which we scarcely ever form an adequate conviction, either in others or in ourselves. Some of them are such as these: greediness, envy, jealousy. Youth is seldom afflicted with them. They are latent. They lie concealed. There is a sphere in men's lives into which they are accustomed to sweep a whole multitude of petty faults without judging them, without condemning them, and without attempting to correct them. There is a realm of moral moths for almost all of us. We all hold ourselves accountable for major morals, but there is a realm of minor morals where we scarcely suppose ethics to enter. There are thousands and thousands of little untruths, that hum and buzz and sting in society, which are too small to be brushed or driven away. They are in the looks; they are in the inflections and tones of the voice; they are in the actions; they are in reflections rather than in direct images that are presented. They are methods of producing impressions that are false, though every means by which they are produced is strictly true. There are little unfairnesses between man and man, and companion and companion, that are said to be minor matters, and that are small things; there are little unjust judgments and detractions; there are slight indulgences of the appetites; there are petty violations of conscience; there are ten thousand of these plays of the passions in men, which are called foibles or weaknesses, but which eat like moths. They take away the temper, they take away magnanimity and generosity, they take from the soul its enamel and its polish. Men palliate and excuse them, but that has nothing to do with their natural effect upon us. They waste and destroy us, and that, too, in the soul's silent and hidden parts. (*H. W. Beecher.*) **The hire of the labourers.**—*Various ways of oppressing the poor:*—1. When through greatness you challenge their labours without reward, as the gentry use the peasants of many countries, "Woe be to him that useth his neighbour without wages" (Jer. xxii. 13), meaning Jehoiakim, who, in his pompous buildings used his subjects' labour without hire. 2. When you give them not a proportionate hire, working upon their necessities, for then a great part of their labour is without reward; and it is flat covetousness to "exact all your labours" (Isa. lviii. 3), when your reward is scanty and short. 3. When by cunning ye defraud them of their reward, either through bad payment or crafty cavils. The Lord saith, "I will be a swift witness against those that oppress the hireling in his wages" (Mal. iii. 5). So it is in the text, "by fraud kept back." God knoweth what is oppression, though veiled under crafty pretences. 4. When you diminish or change their wages, as it is said of Laban that he changed Jacob's wages ten

times (Gen. xxxi. 41). 5. When you delay payment. God commanded the Jews to do it before sunset (see Deut. xxiv. 14, 15; Lev. xix. 30). It is a maxim of the law that not to pay it at the time is to pay the less, because of the advantage of improvement; and in the text it is said, "kept back by fraud," though not wholly taken away, yet "kept back" entitled them to sin. The Lord, you know, rewardeth His servants ere they have done their work; we have much of our wages aforehand, &c. (*T. Manton.*) *Profane rich men*:—What shall we say then? Is it not lawful at all to resist injuries, but shall we suffer ourselves to be spoiled, robbed, injured, smitten, and murdered without resisting? by not withstanding them shall we animate them, encourage them to further mischief? Hereunto I answer, though it be commanded us that we shall not resist, and commended in the righteous men that they did not resist their oppressions, yet it followeth not that the righteous may not at all resist. For, touching the commandment of Christ and His apostle, it is apparent that they spake of impatient resisting, and of such resisting as was joined with greedy desire of private revenge, in which manner the saints of God are everywhere forbidden to resist. In other respects it is not unlawful to resist, but either by avoiding their oppressions; either by telling the wicked of their injuries or, finally, by repelling force by force; when we cannot have the lawful aid of magistrates it is lawful to resist the wicked when they oppress us, which doctrine may be warranted out of the infallible word of truth. Our Saviour Christ commanded His disciples to fly from city to city when they were persecuted, and so by avoiding injuries to make resistance, as it were, to their persecutors. And when Himself was in danger of stoning He conveyed Himself from them, and did not suffer the Jews to wreak their wrath upon Him. Neither by avoiding and shunning their injuries is it lawful only to resist the wicked, but also by telling them of the wicked oppressions and extreme cruelty which they show towards their brethren, though in the meantime our bodies be subject to their tyrannous outrage and fury (John xviii. 22, 23). The first sin and evil condemned in these wicked rich men against whom St. James dealeth is their fraudulent detaining of their hirelings' wages, whereof he giveth special example in their harvest labourers. Yet for so needful, so painful and profitable a work they were unrewarded and their wages detained by fraud from them, no doubt an extreme point of evil dealing. The greatness of their sin the apostle amplifieth in most effectual manner, "Behold," saith he, "the hire of the labourers which have reaped your fields, which is by you kept back by fraud crieth, and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of hosts." First, saith he, "Behold" of which speech there are divers uses. Sometimes it is used for a greater evidence and certainty of a thing. St. Jude, citing the words of Enoch for a great evidence of the Lord's coming to judge the world, useth this phrase of speech: "Behold the Lord cometh with thousands of His saints, to give judgment against all men," &c. In like manner, in this place, to assure them that their wickedness was certainly gone up into the cares of the Lord the apostle breaketh out in this manner: "Behold the hire of the labourers," &c. Sometimes it is used in strange and wonderful things, which rarely are heard or seen, as Isaiah entreating of the extraordinary, rare, and wonderful manner of Christ's conception, in this wise expresseth it: "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel." Our apostle, either to assure them of their punishment, or as wondering at the hard dealing of the wicked, may not amiss in this sense be thought to use it: "Behold the hire of your labourers," &c., as a thing to be wondered at, that you would be so hard hearted as to defraud their labourers of their hire, the apostle breaketh out and saith, "Behold the hire of your labourers," &c. 2. The hire of those labourers which reaped their fields was detained. This amplifieth their wickedness. To detain the wages of any labourer who by the toil and moil of his body, and in the sweat of his face, eateth his bread cannot be but a great sin; but to deny them their wages, by whom our fields are reaped, our corn and grain gathered into our garners, is no doubt a grievous sin before God. 3. The wages of their hired servants was by fraud kept back. To detain the wages of the hireling and servant, which for his living worketh with men, is an evil and sin by the law and Word of God forbidden (Levit. xix. 13). To withhold the daily relief of a man from him, what is it, but as much as lieth in us, to take his life from him; for we keep back the thing whereby he liveth, and this is murder before the Lord. And this sin of fraudulent detaining the wages of the hired servants is divers ways committed. 1. When the hireling's wages are stopped altogether under some colourable pretence and intended matter, not right, not true, not just, but deceitful. 2. Moreover, this

cruelty is done, and sin committed, when the wages are deceitfully deferred longer than the poor can well spare it. 3. Men become guilty hereof also when, through fraud, they misreckon the poor hireling being simple, or any ways diminish of the wages of the labourer. 4. Finally, by changing the wages of the servant and workman to their hurt and damage. 5. To conclude, this sin is mightily amplified in that the cry thereof is said to ascend and come to the ears of the Lord of hosts. Here God is called the Lord of hosts, which attribute is oftentimes given unto Him because He hath all His creatures always ready as an innumerable and infinite host to fight at His pleasure against the wicked for the maintenance of His glory and defence of His servants. They shall be glad to do His commandment, and when need is they shall be ready upon earth, and when their hour is come they shall not overpass the commandment. St. James, therefore, partly for the terror of the wicked, who in due time shall feel the weight of His revenging hand, and partly for the comfort of His afflicted servants whose wages wicked men hold back by fraud, calleth Almighty God the Lord of hosts, as having a power always prepared, and an army evermore in readiness, to fight against His enemies and to defend His saints. Now, if the cries of their detained wages which work in our bodily and earthly harvest be entered into the ears of the Lord of hosts, how much more fearful judgment shall be pronounced against them—under how wretched condition are they who, by fraud or by force, keep back the wages of them that labour in the heavenly and spiritual harvest of the Lord? who sow the furrows of your hearts with the Divine seed of the Word of truth, and should reap the increase of their labours with great joyfulness. The first evil then in this place condemned is their fraudulent detaining of their labourers' wages, the cry whereof entered into the ears of the Lord of hosts. This second evil and sin for which the apostle threateneth their destruction to the wicked is their sensuality and carnal life, which consisteth briefly in three thing. 1. Pleasure. 2. Wantonness. 3. Riotousness and excessive banqueting. 1. Pleasure here signifieth the deliciousness of men in this life, whereunto they give themselves that they, faring deliciously every day, may spend their time and life in pleasure like Epicures, by the which they are not only condemned as injurious unto others, but also are accused as misspending that which they detain from their workmen upon their own pleasures and delights. 2. Their sensuality also showeth itself in the wantonness of their lives, whereby carnal uncleanness is understood (Rom. xiii. 13). Thereunto also most rich men are given. For riches minister matter of living deliciously; delicious living pricketh forward to fleshliness and bodily uncleanness. St. Cyril saith: "In those which flow in prosperity, honour, and all worldly wealth, there is a sting of desire of deliciousness more vehement, and the mind moved with concupiscence is (as it were) carried away with the whole bridle, none staying it." 3. Of their sensuality the last and third branch is that they nourished their hearts as in the day of slaughter. Whereby their continual study to banquet and make merry is noted that their whole life might be, as it were, a continual day of feasting, by which they grew as fat as pork or brawn for Satan the devil to feed on in the day of judgment. The Hebrews call the days of feasting the days of slaughter, because at great feasts there is great killing, great slaughter. Calves from the stall, sheep from the fold, oxen from the pasture, kids from the goats, lambs from the ewes, deer from the forest, buck from the chase, fish from the sea, fowl from the fen, birds from the air, capons from the coop, pheasant from the wood, partridge from the covey, rabbit from the warren, and infinite the like are then slain to be devoured. The third sin and evil for which these men are subject to this judgment is their cruelty, which in these two things appeareth. 1. That they condemn the righteous men. 2. That they condemn them not only, but slay them when they make no resistance. 1. The wicked men of this world condemn the righteous at their pleasures, they give what sentence they lust against the just and godly men, they judge the innocent at their wills, if in all things they do not please them, which is great cruelty and a thing abominable before God (Prov. xvii. 15). 2. Neither do these only wrongfully judge and condemn the righteous, but also they slay him, and he resisteth them not, this is fierceness and intolerable cruelty. Now, the righteous are slain divers ways. (1) In heart by hatred, "He that hateth his brother in his heart is a murderer," saith St. John. (2) In tongue by slander, therefore Christ containeth it under the nature of murder, making it subject to like judgment. (3) By denying help in their misery wherein we suffer them to perish without succour. (4) When by fraud or force, when by greedy courteousness or cruel extortion, whereby our hands are imbued by the blood of our brethren we take or hold from them, that which is their own;

whereby, as much as in us lieth, we murder them. (5) When, finally, we bereave men of their lives, which all agree with this place of St. James, and are found in the rich wicked men of this world. For—1. They hate the godly poor men in their hearts. 2. They slander them with their tongues. 3. They withdraw their helping hands from them. 4. They detain their right from them. 5. And, to conclude, they cause their lives oftentimes to be taken from them, who, albeit themselves by themselves, do not always these things; yet by their means and power these are done, therefore are they said to do it. Finally, there are times and seasons when by repelling force by force it is lawful to resist. When Christians are so narrowly bestead and so straightly beset with their enemies, as that they cannot have the aid of civil powers and lawful magistrates of the commonwealth, but must either resist by force, or be in danger of the loss of their lives and goods without all recovery or recompense; in such a case to resist I hold it lawful altogether. So that it be done in a moderate defence of ourselves, without private malice or desire of shedding of blood. (*R. Turnbull.*) *Sins of the wealthy* :—The three most important things about a man's wealth are these: How it was obtained; how it was enjoyed; how it is used. Lucre is not filthy itself; but if obtained by unjust means it becomes filthy lucre; or if it be enjoyed selfishly, lavishly, and carnally, it becomes filthy lucre; or if employed to carry out crafty and wicked designs by corrupting men to become instruments for evil in the hands of its owner, it is filthy lucre. It is to men who have so obtained and employed wealth that James calls out in tones of tremendous warning. In the midst of the shouts of their revelry he calls them to weep, in words spoken in tones of the old prophets (see Isa. xiii.). It is a call to arouse them from their self-contentment and self-sufficiency; dispositions frequently caused by great riches. He prophesies that miseries are coming upon them. He seems to hear the footfall of the approaching days of misery—misery that could not be warded off by all the wealth which they had gathered around them. In the picturesque phrases which follow, James alludes to the various kinds of wealth in his day. If a man acquired wealth beyond his own house and garden, what was he to do with it? There were three classes of things in which he ordinarily invested it—grain, clothes, and gold and silver coin. The first might be used in several ways. It might be stored for a rise in breadstuffs, something like our modern "corners in grain"; or it might be transported and sold; or it might be kept stored in vaults for the owner's use if there should come at any time a famine or a war. With such wealth one might say (Luke xii. 19), When the calamities came, the grain, which had been kept up at a high price, thus increasing the suffering of the poor, had become rotten in the bins. Another form of accumulation was in the shape of costly raiment, and even of plainer garments in greater quantities. In our day this kind of accumulation is almost unknown, because the fashions are so constantly varying. Not so then. As the prizes taken in ancient wars, we often hear of fine garments as amongst the treasures. In regard to that species of wealth James said: "Your garments have become moth-eaten"; and so he said of coin: "Your gold and silver are rusted." Long kept out of circulation, and thus increasing the embarrassment of society, they had become spotted in the secret and safe places where they had been concealed. The words of James must have brought back to his readers the exhortation of Christ (Matt. vi. 19, 20). He announced to them that the rust of their money should rise up against them and condemn them, and come down upon them and punish them, that is, should eat into them, with an agony that should be like the burning of one's flesh; for their avarice, which had led them to such great injustice, which had warmed their hearts and burned out their neighbours, should be in them like the flaming fire. Here, again, we have the old prophetic thunder (Psa. xxi. 9; Isa. x. 16; Jer. v. 14; Ezek. xv. 7, xxviii. 18). To the Jews who lived when James wrote, this soon came to be literally true; for their substance and their flesh were destroyed when the city and the temple were burned. Josephus tells us that the flames consumed their dead bodies and their substance and their wardrobes. Whatever was spared from the flames fell into the hands of the Romans; and so it came to pass that the treasures which had been heaped up to produce for them a long season of quiet and comfort were all swept away; for they had planted their seed in a garden that lay over the heart of a volcano which was soon to burst. Their doom was aggravated by the injustice they had used in the accumulation of their hoarded property. They had violated the law of justice and, as well, the law of benevolence, and had broken the precept of Moses (Lev. xix. 13, xxiv. 14, 15). Perhaps there is no portion of the denunciation which could be brought home to the modern Chris-

tian community more decisively than this. The crying sin against the rich in every large city is the sin of keeping back the hire which belongs to the labourers. In addition to covetousness and oppression, James presents to the conscience the sin of voluptuousness. Supposing a certain amount of enjoyment to be possible to any one man in his lifetime, it is plain that the excesses of one day make drafts upon another day; it may be, upon all days. If he have a thousand days to live, and ten thousand dollars be put at his command, it is plain that he will have the purchasing power of ten dollars for every day in his life. But if he spend fifty dollars a day in the first hundred days, it is quite plain that he would have less than six dollars a day during the remaining nine hundred. And if he spend a hundred dollars a day for the first hundred days, the remaining nine hundred would be spent in absolute penury. This is a rigid mathematical calculation, which does not do justice to the case, for life is composed of so many factors, and each man has so many faculties and connections that an impairment of a man is a wider injury than the removal of anything which can be represented by numbers. To these destructive excesses great wealth tempts any man, no matter what may be his moral qualities. The fourth sin with which James charges the rich, the worldly, and the wanton Jews of his day, is the oppression of the righteous, even to the taking of their lives. If the application of the verse be made either to the good in general, or to the Lord Jesus in particular, there is something very striking in the omission of the conjunction, 'Ye have condemned, ye have killed, the Just," expresses the rapidity of the action and result of their maliciousness. They seemed so afraid that after condemning a good man He should escape slaughter, that they hurried up His death, although, as a lamb before the shearers is dumb, He opened not His mouth. (*C. F. Deems, D.D.*) *The moral evils of wealth*:—I am obliged to regard with considerable distrust the influence of wealth upon individuals. I know that it is a mere instrument, which may be converted to good or bad ends. I know that it is often used for good ends; but I more than doubt whether the chances lead that way. Independence and luxury are not likely to be good for any man. Leisure and luxury are almost always bad for every man. I know that there are noble exceptions. But I have seen so much of the evil effect of wealth upon the mind—making it proud, haughty, and impatient; robbing it of its simplicity, modesty, and humility; bereaving it of its large, and gentle, and considerate humanity; and I have heard such astonishing testimonies, to the same effect, from those whose professional business is to settle and adjust the affairs of estates—that I more and more distrust its boasted advantages. I deny the validity of that boast. In truth, I am sick of the world's admiration of wealth. Almost all the noblest things that have been achieved in the world have been achieved by poor men; poor scholars and professional men; poor artisans and artists; poor philosophers, and poets, and men of genius. (*Orville Dewry.*) *Money*:—A philosopher has said, "Though a man without money is poor, a man with nothing but money is still poorer." Worldly gifts cannot bear up the spirits from fainting and sinking when trials and troubles come, no more than headache can be cured by a golden crown, or toothache by a chain of pearls. "Earthly riches are full of poverty." *The ingenuousness of fraud*:—Some frauds succeed from the apparent candour, the open confidence, and the full blaze of ingenuousness that is thrown around them. The slightest mystery would excite suspicion and ruin all. Such stratagems may be compared to the stars: they are discoverable by darkness, and hidden only by light. (*C. Colton.*) *The greedy disposition*:—The king vulture will not permit any other bird to begin its meal until his own hunger is satisfied. The same habit may be seen in many other creatures, including some men, the more powerful lording it over the weaker, and leaving them only the remains of the feast instead of permitting them to partake of it on equal terms. If the king vulture should not happen to be present when the dead animal has reached a state of decomposition, which renders it palatable to vulterine tastes, the subject vultures would pay but little regard to the privileges of their absent monarch, and would leave him but a slight prospect of getting a meal on the remains of the feast. Thus the greedy disposition, whether in the high or low, never concerns itself about the want of others. (*Scientific Illustrations and Symbols.*) *Insatiable greed*:—The father-lasher, or lucky proach, is a big-headed, wide-mouthed, staring-eyed little fish. Every atom of meat that you drop into the water within the range of his vision must be his; you perhaps intended the morsel for the goby or the blenny, but proach sees it, and proach must have it. They, indeed, may sail up towards the speck, but proach dashes up, bristling with indignation at their temerity, and snaps the food from their very noses. Not one of them can get a bit

till proach is satiated, and I have often seen him lie with a morsel projecting from his mouth for some time, absolutely incapable of swallowing more, before he would relinquish the contest. (*P. H. Gosse, in "Good Words."*) *The unscrupulous money-getter:*—The unscrupulous money-getter is not necessarily an able man. On the contrary, he often appears dull and stupid. But he is rapacious, cruel, and cunning, and he owes his success to these qualities. Notwithstanding the applause with which society greets his performances, they have much the same inspiration as those of the glutton. The glutton is thought but a dull animal, but his mode of catching deer shows much the same proportion of intelligence as that which is exhibited by the money-getter, or by the Arctic fox when he arranges cods' heads as baits to catch crows. The glutton climbs into a tree in the neighbourhood of a herd, carrying up with him a quantity of a kind of moss of which the deer are fond, and when he sees any one of the herd approaching, he lets a portion of the moss fall. If the deer stops to eat, the glutton instantly descends on its back, and torments it by tearing out its eyes and other violence to such a degree that, either to get rid of its enemy, or to put an end to its sufferings, it beats its head against the trees till it falls down dead; for when the glutton has once fixed himself by his claws and teeth, it is impossible to dislodge him. After killing the deer he divides the flesh into convenient portions, and conceals them in the earth for future provision. In this he shows himself to be as prudential as the money-getter, who at the end of a nefarious financial success places his profits in various securities, and the balance in his bank for future use. (*Scientific Illustrations and Symbols.*) **Ye have lived in pleasure.**—*Luxury:*—"A day of slaughter!" What "day of slaughter"? Who are slaughtered? The answer is in the context. The poor are slaughtered. The labourers whose hire is kept back by fraud. The luxury of the few is always obtained by the slaughter of the many. The few cannot live delicately on the earth without directly or indirectly keeping back by fraud the hire of the labourer. In a word, we are all so tightly bound together in the bundle of life that extravagant expenditure anywhere always involves starvation somewhere else. Prodigality at one end of the scale must mean pauperism at the other end. What pestiferous delusion is more widely accepted than the notion that the extravagant expenditure of the rich is good for trade? How often have I heard people condemn the Queen of England because she does not spend more time in London holding costly *levées* and drawing-rooms and concerts. Now, there is no doubt that if she wasted her money as most monarchs do, she would bring a great deal of temporal prosperity to some of our West-end tradesmen. But when we think of it, that temporary prosperity of the comparative few would be a great loss to the nation as a whole. Let me take a concrete example of this. The Queen holds a drawing-room. A young lady of high rank and of great wealth is to be "presented." For this purpose she procures a court dress, which, with all its finery and lace and jewellery, is worth, say, £400. That sum of money has been calculated by a great authority to be the equivalent of 50,000 hours of labour—labour of the most tedious kind and fatal to the eyes. What is the advantage of expenditure of that luxurious sort? This poor, vain child wears it once or twice, and then the fruits of all that arduous toil is thrown away. Now, suppose the dressmakers and others had spent those 50,000 hours in making cheap, warm, and beautiful dresses for the half-clad and starving poor. Would they not have added a deal more to the sum of human health and happiness? Let us take another example. Some time ago a friend of mine was in the provinces, and was driving along the road near one of the great provincial palaces which belong to the British nobility. He began to speak of the aristocratic family who owned that estate. "Ah," said the man who was driving him, "we used to have a great deal of aristocratic company coming down here, and much money was spent on dinner-parties and wines. There was plenty of amusement. But now that the property has fallen into the hands of the heir, there is no more of that, and everything is going to the bad." Now, from this man's narrow point of view it appeared a dreadful matter that the old state of things was not continued. But look at the other side of the picture. The owner of that estate had also a very large property, inhabited by the poor, in one of the most miserable parts of London, full of publichouses and hovels where the people were living in abject misery. The estate had been neglected for generations. Now, in the old time, when a handful of the rural tradesman were making money out of the prodigality and extravagance of the owner of the property, this London estate was utterly neglected, and thousands of the poor were suffering untold agonies. But the present owner having a conscience and being a Christian, instead of using the revenue for the purpose of diffusing a little trade among a hand-

ful of people in the country, is living a quiet life in a very simple home, and is using all the resources of her property to blot out the liquor-shops and the houses of infamy, and to build proper dwellings for the poor, where for generations they have been occupying hovels. Although a handful of people in a remote part of the provinces may suffer a certain amount of loss, it is an untold gain to thousands of people and to the human race that the wealth of that great property is no longer wasted in the old way. It is impossible to waste and save at the same time. Luxury and economy are as diametrically opposed as darkness and light. Luxury is any expenditure that is both costly and superfluous. I do not say a word about any little superfluity that does not cost much and which may give as much pleasure as it is worth. But when the superfluity is a very costly one, then it becomes a luxury, and must be denounced by every Christian and by every lover of the human race. It is astonishing what ingenious arguments have been used from time to time in defence of luxury. It has been argued, for example, that luxury is necessary to keep machinery at work. But, as Laveleye says, the object of machinery is to give us more leisure as well as more products. It is quite clear that in the better times which are coming we must not only give fair wages for every piece of work done, but we must also give men leisure to spend with their families, and to cultivate the higher aims of life. But there is another reply to this argument, and it is this. The money which is saved from luxury will give much more employment to machinery in other and healthier directions than it now gives in doubtful ways. It is very important in this particular discussion to remember that money is not hoarded now. If a man happens to have a good deal of money he does not bury it; that money is saved. When economy has saved money it is spent in employing labour. That is always a great gain to the human race. This brings us to the point from which we started, and is a fresh refutation of the delusion that luxury is good for trade. A distinguished French economist tells a good anecdote about himself, and shows how he discovered that prodigality was not an advantage to the human race; that it was an absolute and total delusion; and that the human race has no deadlier enemy than the spendthrift. On one occasion, when M. Say was a young man, he went to dine with his uncle, who produced some exceeding beautiful wineglasses, which he subsequently broke into pieces. He justified this extraordinary conduct by saying that every one must get a living, and he thought that by destroying his wineglasses he was a benefactor of the human race. That is a very simple illustration, but it precisely illustrates a widespread delusion which exists in West London, that waste and extravagance and destruction are beneficial and make trade. It was, of course, a matter of fact that if he broke six wineglasses it was to the benefit of some one in the neighbourhood, for he sent a servant the next day to buy some more. This incident set young Say thinking. "If my uncle is really doing good, he had better proceed to smash all his crockery, and then to smash all his furniture, and then all the glass in the windows of his house; for glaziers, painters, and carpenters would be employed; and from this point of view his destructiveness would be a great benefit." When the argument is worked out, every one sees that there must be some delusion in it. If waste is for the good of trade, those Communists who set fire to many of the finest buildings in Paris were great benefactors. It has employed thousands of masons and painters to replace those buildings. Yes, but when you reflect, the answer is this: If none of this destruction had taken place, the money that has been used by the French Government to restore the public monuments, schools, and museums that were burnt would still be at their disposal, and might have been used to pay for other monuments, schools, railways, and museums. They would have retained their old property and had other property as well. Money is never well spent except, first, when it satisfies real human wants, and secondly, when it makes permanent improvements. (*H. P. Hughes, M.A.*) *Living in pleasure:*—1. A sin very natural to us. There were but two common parents of all mankind—Adam the protoplast, and Noah the restorer, and both miscarried by appetite: the one fell by eating, and the other by drinking. We had need be careful (Luke xxi. 34). 2. The sin is natural to all, but chiefly incident to the rich. There is, I confess, a difference in tempers; wealth maketh some covetous, and others prodigal; but the usual sin in the rich is luxury. Pride, idleness, and fulness of bread were the sins of Sodom, and they are usually found in great men's houses; they should be the more wary. 3. Though delicate living be a sin incident to wealthy men, yet their abundance doth not excuse it. God gave wealth for another purpose than to spend it in pleasures. Intemperance is odious to God, be it in any whatsoever they be. 4. Luxury is living in pleasure. God alloweth us to use

pleasures, but not to live in them; to take delights, but not they should take us; to live always at the full is but a wanton luxury. (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *Aggravations of luxury*:—St. James' words here are of a highly tragical character, and therefore the sentences are brief, abrupt, concise, and broken; the graphic metaphor reminds us of the style of the outpourings of Hosea. The difficulty here, as in other examples of the same kind of composition, is to catch the logical relation of the thoughts expressed, and trace out the consecutiveness of the clauses. He had charged them with laying up riches "in the last days." There his purpose was to point out their folly with reference to the *time* in which they were engaged in their ungodly gain. Now he proceeds to show *where* they were doing this, in the *land*, the land of Israel, which was on the very point of being given over to the avenger. In the former chapter the visiting of the city by the rich for the purposes of gain had been adverted to, now he supposes them upon the spot, and the day of vengeance at hand. Jerusalem was the central spot on which the thunderbolt was about to fall that would paralyse all Israel, Hebrews and Hellenists. As a matter of history it is well known that vast numbers of the Dispersion were involved in the catastrophe of the holy city. This passage, however, though addressed to, and by direct implication comprising the Dispersion, yet evidently conveys a prophetic warning and denunciation against the whole family of Israel, on whom the judgment was about to descend. (*F. T. Bassett, M.A.*) *End of gaiety*:—A Parisian gentleman who had educated his daughter Ninon for the gay world, on his death-bed thus addressed her, "Draw near, Ninon: you see that nothing more remains for me than the sad remembrance of those enjoyments which I am about to quit for ever. But, alas! my regrets are as useless as vain: you, who will survive me, must make the best of your precious time." *Poison in pleasures*:—It is said to have been a plan sometimes practised in the Middle Ages, to send poisoned flowers to princes or great persons, when a plot was laid against their life. Whether the fact be true or not, the moral it may suggest is true. (*New Cyclopædia of Illustration.*) *A warning to the rich*:—A nobleman who lived in the neighbourhood of the Rev. Mr. D——, one day asked him to dine with him. Before dinner they walked into the garden, and after viewing the various productions and rarities with which it abounded, his lordship exclaimed, "Well, Mr. D——, you see I want for nothing; and I have all that my heart can wish for." As Mr. D—— made no reply, but appeared thoughtful, his lordship asked him the reason. "Why, my lord, a man may have all these things, and go to hell after all." The words powerfully struck the nobleman, and through the blessing of God terminated in his conversion. *Take care of pleasure*:—It is said that where the most beautiful cacti grow, there the venomous serpents are to be found at the root of every plant. And it is so with sin. Your fairest pleasures will harbour your grossest sins. Take care, take care, of your pleasures. Cleopatra's asp was introduced in a basket of flowers: so are our sins often brought to us in the flowers of our pleasure. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Sodden with pleasure*:—"A soul sodden with pleasure" is a lost soul. (*J. C. Lees, D.D.*) *Pleasures*:—Think not that a pleasure which God hath threatened, nor that a blessing which God hath cursed. (*Quarles.*) The pleasures of sense will surfeit, and not satisfy; the pleasures of religion will satisfy, but not surfeit. (*Henry.*) *The pleasures of sense and of religion*:—He buys honey too dear who licks it from thorns. Xerxes offered a reward to the man who would invent a new pleasure. *Living in pleasure*:—Ye have lain melting in sensual delights, which have drawn out your spirits and dissolved them. (*J. Trapp.*) **Ye have nourished your hearts.**—*Nourished hearts*:—Pleasures nourish the heart, and fatten it into a senseless stupidity: nothing bringeth a dulness upon it more than they. There is a fish which they call the ass-fish, which hath its heart in its belly; a fit emblem of a sensual epicure. The heart is never more dull and unfit for the severities and masculine heights of religion than when burdened with luxurious excess; therefore Christ useth that expression, "Let not your hearts be overcharged," &c. (Luke xxi. 36). Ah! do but consider how many reasons we have to be wary in our pleasures. Will the inconveniences they bring to your estates move you? "He that loveth corn, and wine, and oil, shall be poor" (Prov. xxiii. 21). How often hath the belly brought the back to rags? Or will the mischiefs they bring upon the body move you? Lust, which is but the last end and consummation of all pleasures, sucketh the bones, and, like a cannibal, eateth your own flesh (Prov. v. 11). Ah! but chiefly think of the inconveniency which your precious souls sustain; your hearts will be nourished and fattened. Pleasure infatuateth the mind, quencheth the radiancy and vigour of the spirit, the generous sprightliness of the

affections. So the apostle speaketh of persons given to pleasures, that they are past feeling (Eph. iv.); they have lost all the smartness and tenderness of their spirits. Oh! that men would regard this, and take heed of nourishing their hearts while they nourish their bodies. You should starve lust when you feed nature; or, as Austin, come to your meat as your medicine, and use these outward refreshments as remedies to cure infirmities, not to cause them; or, as Bernard, refresh the soul when you feed the body, and by Christian meditations on God's bounty, Christ's sweetness, the fatness of God's house, &c., keep the heart from being nourished whenever you repair nature. (*T. Manton.*) *Running to death*:—Alas! the greatest part of this world run to the place of torment, rejoicing, and dancing, eating, drinking, and sleeping. (*S. Rutherford.*) **Ye have condemned and killed the just.**—*The just*:—The true meaning is found, it is believed, in taking "the just" as the representatives of a class, probably of the class of those who, as disciples of Christ, the Just One, were reproducing His pattern of righteousness. Such an one, like his Master, and like Stephen, St. James adds, takes as his law the rule of not resisting. He submits patiently, certain that in the end he will be more than conqueror. It is not without interest to note that the title was afterwards applied to St. James himself. The name Justus (Acts i. 23, xviii. 7; Col. iv. 11) was evidently the Latin equivalent of this epithet, and it probably answered to the *Chasidim* or Assideans of an earlier stage of Jewish religious history. It is as if a follower of George Fox had addressed the judges and clergy of Charles II's. reign, and said to them, "Ye persecuted *the friend*, and he does not resist you." (*Dean Plumptre.*) *Taking advantage of meekness*:—Meekness of spirit commonly draws on injuries and indignities from unreasonable men. A crow will stand on a sheep's back, pulling off the wool from his side; she durst not do so to a wolf or mastiff. (*J. Trapp.*)

Vers. 7, 8. **The husbandman waiteth.**—*Persuasives to patience*:—Here the apostle inculcates—I. A PATIENCE THAT, IN THE CONSCIOUSNESS THAT LIFE RIPENS, WAITS. This is taught in the allusion made to harvest. The husbandman waits. He waits from the season of the autumnal till after the vernal rains. These rains, and all the ripening influences of sun and earth succeed each other in unhastened order. He waits for what is worth the waiting. To him the clusters of the grape, the sheaves of the corn, are "precious fruit." And all the time he waits, he knows that the ripening process is going on. 1. The human race advances to maturity. Notwithstanding the blight of its early spring, and the many perils of all its seasons, the great Restorer points to its harvest when He says, "Then cometh the end." 2. Our individual life is under the same law, the law of growth. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Every life ripens, every life tends to and culminates in a harvest. Towards it in all our seasons we are advancing. To the Christian man the produce, the result of his ever-ripening life, will be in its habits, experiences, and fellowships, a harvest of "precious fruit." Even now he reads pages of his own inner history, which prove that "tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope." II. A PATIENCE THAT, BY THE HOPE THAT CHRIST WILL COME, IS UPHELD. The expression of patience at which we have been looking is that of a somewhat spiritless resignation. Now we are summoned to a fortitude prepared for all that may happen. "Stablish your hearts." The Septuagint uses the word translated "stablish" to describe the upbearing of the hands of Moses by Aaron and Hur on the mountain. Those two men sustained the prophet's arms from hour to hour till the war was over, and the victory won. So there is a hope which our patience, though often like Moses' hands thus heavy, may be upheld. What hope? "That the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." The "coming of the Lord" may mean at least one of the three things: 1. His coming in some special dispensation of Providence. 2. His coming to judge the world. 3. His coming at our death. III. A PATIENCE THAT IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST'S PRESENCE IS UNMURMURING. "The Judge standeth before the door," and though Judge, it is He who was the "Man of sorrows," the "despised and rejected of men." Does not His history, from the stable to the Cross, shame our murmurs? "The Judge standeth before the door," and knows the circumstances and deserts of us all. Before we judge others we need that our eye should, like Christ's, search souls as well as circumstances, and that our hand, like His, should weigh character as well as condition. "The Judge standeth before the door," and will rightly reward our destiny. Dare we anticipate His sentence? Need we? IV. A PATIENCE THAT IN THE SENSE OF ITS FELLOWSHIPS REJOICES. High among the heroes of the good stand the prophets. Having held communion with God, they have turned to

the world of men, and charged with God-given thoughts, have stood and taught in His stead. Thus, theirs has been the dignity not of mere nobility, nor royalty, but of Divinity. Their sufferings have become as famous as their mission—so famous that we are bidden to take them as examples of "suffering affliction." In our sufferings, therefore, we can look round to those that have "spoken in the name of the Lord," and wonderingly ask one and another of them, "Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us?" But as eminent as their sorrows is their endurance. When we think of them we reckon them not as sad, unfortunate, pitiable. Listening to the voice that on the mountain pronounced who among men are "blessed," we know that these prophets are indeed blessed. V. A PATIENCE THAT THROUGH CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S CHARACTER IS ALL-CONQUERING. The expression, "The end of Lord," may mean one of two things, either of which reveals Him as being "very pitiful and of tender mercy." 1. It may mean the termination to which God brings sorrow. For illustration of this, perhaps, Job's name is cited. 2. Or it may mean the object of the Lord in permitting sorrows. Well has it been said that "it is rough work that polishes. Look at the pebbles on the shore! Far inland, where some arm of the sea thrusts itself deep in the bosom of the land and expanding into a salt loch, lies girdled by the mountains, sheltered from the storms that agitate the deep, the pebbles on the beach are rough, not beautiful—angular, not rounded. It is where long white lines of breakers roar, and the rattling shingle is rolled about the strand, that its pebbles are rounded and polished. As in nature, as in the arts, so in the grace: it is rough treatment that gives souls, as well as stones, their lustre. The more the diamond is cut, the brighter it sparkles; and in what seems hard dealing, their God has no end in view but to perfect His people's graces." (*U. R. Thomas.*) *Are missions a failure?*—It is a matter of common remark that Christian missions are often looked upon somewhat coldly even by well-disposed people. The main reason for this coldness is, at least in very many cases, a mistaken estimate of what missions can be reasonably expected to achieve. Now the first point to be observed in this estimate of what missions can be expected to do, is that it is the natural product of one feature of the temper of our day. The human mind is largely influenced by the outward circumstances of the successive forms of civilisation in which it finds itself; and within the last half century railroads and telegraphs have successively altered human habits of thought in more respects than one. We assume that the rate at which we travel and send messages must necessarily have its counterpart in all meritorious forms of human effort; and in this way we accustom ourselves to regard rapidity in producing results as a necessary test of good work—a test failure to satisfy which is not easily, if at all, atoned for by other tokens of excellence. This impatience of delay in production may have its advantages in certain limited districts of activity. But is it not a mistake to assume that all forms of human effort are improved by this acceleration of pace, or, indeed, that they will adapt themselves to it? Take art, and consider the old and true saying, "Time is short and art is long." Do what we will, art cannot be hurried. Even if a painter or a sculptor creates with great rapidity this or that masterpiece, the rapidity is limited to the moment of production; the real preparation which has enabled him to project the idea, and has perfected the methods of expressing it, is the work of a lifetime, and rare, indeed, are the occasions when even a great artist can produce rapidly and to order. Or take literature. As a rule, the composition of a great poem, or history, or treatise, which shall live extends over many years, not because the mechanical labour involved formally in writing out a considerable work requires a great deal of time, but especially because to produce anything that shall have on it the stamp of maturity requires time still more urgently—time for redressing, so far as may be possible, some defects which necessarily attach to the first effort at production, time to reconsider what is ill-judged, to supply what is deficient, to anticipate in some degree the sentence which an impartial posterity would pass upon a composition in its original crudity. Now, to-day, we are remarking how this impatience for immediate results which marks our time extends itself beyond those activities which are mainly or wholly human, and claims to mould and to govern undertakings in which God is the main agent, and man only God's instrument. Only here the impatient demand is apt to meet with a different kind of reception from there. Artists and men of letters adjust their work to the temper of the day, but the Eternal Workman heeds not the varying moods and fashions of the creature whom He has made, and, in spite of the demand for rapid production, is at this hour as slow and as sure in His work as at any past time in history. A mission is essentially a work in which man counts for

little, although his active exertion is imperatively necessary. In a mission, the influences which fertilise human effort, and the date at which this fertilisation shall take place, are alike in the hands of God. When this is felt, it will be felt also that an order, so to describe it, upon a given mission for so many converts, at least, within such and such time, is an indefensible thing. But St. James in the text supplies us with an illustration which may enable us to see this more clearly. What "the coming of the Lord" certainly means in this passage may be open to discussion. Our Lord comes to us in blessings and in judgments, and St. James may be thinking of some political or social event which would put a stop to the oppressions of which his correspondents had complained; or he may be thinking of our Lord's second coming to judgment. But either coming, St. James implies, is in this respect like the natural harvest—that while man's activity leads up to it, it depends on agencies which are beyond man's control. When St. James points to the presence and operation of God in nature, every countryman in Syria would have understood him. The corn was sown in September; in October there came the early rain, which made the seed sprout; the latter rain fell, as a rule, in March or the beginning of April, in time to make the ears swell before they ripened. In a soil of remarkable fertility, but generally of no great depth, spread as it was over the limestone rock, everything depended on the two rainfalls. The husbandman could only prepare the soil and sow the seed: the rest he must leave to God; and St. James dwells on the long patience with which, as a rule, a Syrian peasant waited for the precious fruit of the earth, and for the rainfall which was so necessary to its growth. And his language illustrates an old observation, that, as a rule, people who live in the country are more religious—by which I mean more constantly alive to the presence and the working of Almighty God—than are people who live in towns. The habit of watching God in Nature is of itself a lesson in the school of faith. If anything is clear about God's work in nature, it is that it proceeds gradually, that it cannot be precipitated. This truth finds, perhaps, unintentional expression in the modern word of which we hear so much—evolution. One period in the earth's earliest condition introduces to another; one phase of natural life leads on to the confines of another; this epoch of human history is the parent of much that first emerges to view in that—the truth being that the one presiding and controlling Mind is throughout at work, never ceasing from, never hesitating about His task, and that eternal wisdom which reaches from one end to another mightily and sweetly doth order all things. And in nature, so, as St. James implies, it is in grace. Man does his part; he sows the word of life, he prepares the soil, he plants with St. Paul, he waters with Apollos, but he can do no more, and God, who sends the early and the latter rain, alone gives the increase. So it is in the history of individuals when that great change takes place which is called conversion, whether from error to truth or from ungodliness of life to obedience of Christ. St. Augustine tells us that long before the change which was precipitated by his reading the passage in the Epistle to the Romans he had met with teachers, events, examples which had set him thinking. He put those thoughts aside, but they returned. He again dismissed them; again they came back to him. He was, in truth, ill at ease; his Manichean creed, his dissolute life were the husks on which this prodigal son long fed, but those husks had a work of disenchantment to do, though time was needed in which to do it, and at last this preparatory process was over. The hesitations, the misgivings, the yearnings, the relapses, the near approaches to grace, and the shrinkings back from grace had all come to an end; the fruit had ripened, whereby the Christian Church received the greatest of her teachers since St. Paul. And so, too, in the history of societies. It took three centuries to convert the Roman empire to Christianity, if, indeed, we may rightly so describe the numerical superiority, for it was not much more, on the part of the Christians at the end of the first quarter of the fourth century of our era. And yet even so described what a wonderful work it was! Three centuries before such a result would have seemed impossible to any man of sense and judgment. In view of these natural analogies, and of this history, let us turn once more to the modern demand that so many missionaries shall produce in such and such a time so many converts, and to the impatience, if not the indignation, which is felt or expressed if this expectation is not realised, as though something had taken place which was akin to a commercial fraud. What is this modern way of looking at missions but an endeavour to apply to the kingdom of Divine grace those rules of investment and return which are very properly kept in view in a house of commerce? Do you not see that this demand leaves God, the Great Missionary of all, out of the calculation? God has His own

times for pouring out His Spirit, His own methods of silent preparation, His own measures of speed and of delay, and He does not take missionaries or the promoters of missionary societies into His confidence. He has a larger outlook than they, and more comprehensive plans, and whether He gives or withholds His gifts, of this we may be sure, in view of the truest and broadest interests of His spiritual kingdom: we appeal to His bounty, but we can but do as He bids us, and abide His time. Not that this reverent patience in waiting for God's blessing is any excuse whatever for relaxing the zealous activity with which missionary efforts should be prosecuted by the Church of God. The husbandman does not the less plough the soil or the less sow the seed because he is uncertain whether his labour will be followed by the early and the latter rain. If he does not plough and sow he knows that the rain will be useless at least to him. It is quite possible for a secret indifference to the interests of Christ and His kingdom to veil itself under the garb of reverence, to refuse to help the work of Christian missions because we do not know how far God will promote a particular mission; but that is only one of the many forms of self-deceit which we Christians too often employ in order to evade Christian duties. Duties are for us, the results with God. (*Canon Liddon.*) *Waiting:*— I. BEHOLD THE CONTINUED AND PERSEVERING DILIGENCE WHICH PRECEDED THE EXERCISE OF THE HUSBANDMAN'S PATIENCE. How various and multiplied are his labours: he ploughed, dressed, fallowed, sowed, harrowed, his fields—and for what? —to wait until the softened furrows should allow the tender grain to sprout. Can you behold his preparatory efforts without emotion? Alas! we are verily guilty in this matter. What little diligence have we evinced—how disconnected have our toils been—how unwilling to repeat the effort, which appears precarious! II. MARK THE SUBMISSIVE ACQUIESCENCE WITH WHICH HE EXPECTS THE PROMISED ISSUE OF HIS LABOURS. He, indeed, knows not which field shall best prosper, or whether both shall be alike good; but he quietly, and without distraction, waits the arrival of spring, when the tender herb shall appear. And shall he be wiser in his worldly ways than you, who are the husbandmen of the Most High? In providential concerns you are perplexed, and your fears are many; but why be careful for the morrow? Of what avail is this tumult of mind, this agitation of spirit? Under tedious delays, does this rebellion of heart do other than increase your misery? Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord; observe how the husbandman waits, how deep is the conviction that impatience will never accelerate his harvest. Moreover, in your case, your hopes are delayed by this temper. Suffer not your fears— I had almost, but for pity, said, your follies—to triumph. You are no proper judge of the length of time you have waited: every minute has been to you as an hour, or as a year. You misjudge the motive of his delay; it is, that he may commend your patience, as well as reward your labours. III. OBSERVE THE ANXIETY WITH WHICH THE HUSBANDMAN EXPECTS THE SPRINGING OF THE CORN. Man is prone to extremes; if he may not be impatient, he thinks he must be indifferent; if he is condemned for standing still, he runs like some restive horse which will either not stir, or furiously gallop. But the farmer unites the two; though not impatient, he is far from unconcerned. Do you take an equal interest, as lively a concern, in the field you cultivate for your Great Employer? Go to the husbandman, thou careless and unconcerned parent; consider his anxieties, and be wise: recollect the domestic trust confided to you. IV. But once more, notice the CERTAINTY which characterises the patient expectation of the farmer; he waits till "he receive the early and the latter rain." The expression may be considered as comprehending all the kindly and sweet influences of the heavens, which are necessary for the precious fruits of the earth; and have these ever been withheld? But the profits of our fields are not so certain, by many degrees of probability, as is the reward of grace which is ensured by His promise who cannot lie. 1. Before we conclude, let our attention be directed to One who has towards us exemplified long patience; who has frequently come and sought fruit from us, and found none. You think much of waiting a few months for your crops; or if your desires are delayed for a year or two, prayer and effort are both discontinued. Has He not reason to expect abundant returns from you? What more could He have done for you? 2. Let me point you to those inferior husbandmen who fairly expected to have reaped from you the reward of their labours, and yet have hitherto waited in vain. 3. Should the expectations of the husbandman in reference to any of his fields fail, he will again plough up the land; and, notwithstanding a few sickly plants sprinkled here and there on the surface of the ground, sacrifice all his toils and hopes, and prepare it for another crop. Thus has the Great Husbandman dealt with the nations at

large: their privileges have been taken from them, and given to such as bring forth the fruits thereof: and thus will He act towards individuals who trifle with the means of cultivation they enjoy. (*W. Clayton.*) *A visit to the harvest field:*—The earth that yields seed to the sower and bread to the eater has received its constitution from God; and it is governed through His wise providence by fixed laws that are infinitely reliable: and yet, at the same time, with such diversified conditions and minute peculiarities as may well convince us that the Almighty intended the operations of nature to supply us with spiritual instruction as well as with material good. I. First, then, HOW DOES THE HUSBANDMAN WAIT? He waits with a reasonable hope for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it until he receive the early and the latter rain. He expects the harvest because he has ploughed the fields and sown the grain. Out on the folly of those who flatter their souls with a prospect of good things in time to come while they neglect the opportunity of sowing good things in the time present. They say they hope it will be well with them at the end; but, since it is not well with them now, why should they expect any change—much less a change contrary to the entire order of Providence? The husbandman waits with a reasonable hope; he does not look for grain where he has cast in garlic. Save then that thou art a fool, thou wilt like him count only on the fruit of thine own sowing. While he waits with a patient hope, he is no doubt all the more patient of the issue, because his hope is so reasonable. And not only does he wait with patience, but some stress is put upon the length of it; "and hath long patience for the precious fruit of the earth." Now, our waiting, if it be the work of the Holy Spirit, must have this long patience in it. Are you a sufferer? There are sweet fruits to come from suffering! Have long patience for those peaceable fruits. You shall be brought out of your trouble when the discipline for which you were brought into it has been fulfilled. Have long patience, however, for not the first month does the husbandman find a harvest. If he has sown in the winter, he does not expect he will reap in the early spring: he does not go forth with his sickle in the month of May and expect to find golden sheaves. He waits. The moons wax and wane; suns rise and set; but the husbandman waits till the appointed time is come. Wait thou, O sufferer, till the night be over. Tarry thou a little longer, for if the vision tarry it shall come. Are you a worker? Then you need as much patience in working as you do in suffering. We must not expect to see immediate results in all cases from the preaching of the gospel, from the teaching of Scripture in our classes, from distributing religious literature, or from any other kind of effort. Be patient, O worker, for impatience sours the temper, chills the blood, sickens the heart, prostrates the vigour of one's spirit, and spoils the enterprise of life before it is ripe for history. Wait thou, clothed with patience, like a champion clad in steel. Wait with a sweet grace, as one who guards the faith and sets an example of humility. Wait in a right spirit, anxious, prayerful, earnest submissive to the ways of God, not doubtful of His will. Disciple of Jesus, "learn to labour and to wait." With regard to the result of Christian obedience, the lesson is no less striking. The first thing that a farmer does by way of seeking gain on his farm is to make a sacrifice which could seem immediately to entail on him a loss. He has some good wheat in the granary, and he takes out sacks full of it and buries it. You must not expect as soon as you become a Christian, that you shall obtain all the gains of your religion, perhaps you may lose all that you have for Christ's sake. And, while the husbandman waits, you observe in the text he waits with his eye upward, he waits until God shall send him the early and the latter rain. None but the eternal Father can send the Holy Spirit like showers on the Church. He can send the Comforter, and my labour will prosper; it will not be in vain in the Lord; but if He deny, if He withhold this covenant blessing, ah me! work is useless, patience is worthless, and all the cost is bootless: it is in vain. Note, however, that while the husbandman waits with his eye upward, he waits with his hands at work, engaged in restless toil. He cannot push on the months; he cannot hasten the time of the harvest-home; but he does not wait in silence, in sluggishness and negligence; he keeps to his work and waits too. So do you, O Christian men! wait for the coming of your Lord, but let it be with your lamps trimmed and your lights burning, as good servants. The husbandman waits under changeful circumstances, and various contingencies. Only a farmer knows how his hopes and fears alternate and fluctuate from time to time. Yet he waits, he waits with patience. Ah, when we work for God, how often will this happen! There are always changes in the field of Christian labour. At one time we see many conversions, and we bless God that there are so many seals to our testimony,

But some of the converts after a while disappoint us. There was the blossom, but it produced no fruit. Then there will come a season when many appear to backslide. Some deadly heresy creeps in, and the anxious husbandman fears there will be no harvest after all. Oh, patience sir, patience. When God shall give you a rich return for all you have done for Him, you will blush to think you ever doubted; you will be ashamed to think you ever grew weary in His service. II. WHAT DOES THE HUSBANDMAN WAIT FOR? He waits for results, for real results; right results; he hopes also rich results. And this is just what we are waiting for—waiting as sufferers for the results of sanctified affliction. Oh that we might have every virtue strengthened, every grace refined, by passing through the furnace. And you are, also, like the husbandman, waiting for a reward. All the while till the harvest comes, he has nothing but outlay. From the moment he sows, it is all outgoing until he sells his crops, and then, recovering at once the principal and the interest, he gets his reward. In this world look not for a recompense. You may have a grateful acknowledgment in the peace, and quiet, and contentment of your own spirit, but do not expect even that from your fellow-men. Wait till the week is over, and then shall come the wage. Wait until the sun is gone down, and then there will be the penny for every labourer in the vineyard. Not yet, not yet, not yet. The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth. This is what we wait for. III. WHAT IS THE HUSBANDMAN'S ENCOURAGEMENT IN WAITING? The first is, that the fruit he waits for is precious. Who that walks through a cornfield where the crops are plentiful, but will say, "Well, this was, after all, worth all the trouble and all the expense, and all the long patience of that winter which is over and gone?" If the Lord should draw you near unto Himself by your affliction, if He should make His image in you more clear, it will be worth waiting for. And if, after your labours, He should give you some soul for your reward, oh, will it not repay you? We may wait, therefore, with patience, because the reward of our labour will be precious. Above all, the reward of hearing the Master say, "Well done, good and faithful servant," is worth waiting for! Even now to get a word from Him is quite enough to cheer us on, though it be a soft, still voice that speaks it, but oh, the joy of that loud voice "Well done." A godly husbandman waits with patience, again, because he knows God's covenant. God has said "seed time and harvest, summer and winter, shall not cease," and the Christian farmer knowing this is confident. But oh, what strong confidences have we who have looked to Christ, and who are resting on the faithful word of a covenant God. He cannot fail us. It is not possible that He should suffer our faith to be confounded. The covenant stands good, the harvest must come as surely as the seed time has come. Moreover, every husbandman is encouraged by the fact that he has seen other harvests. And, O brethren, have not we multitudes of instances to confirm our confidence? Let us cheerfully resign ourselves to the Lord's will in suffering, for as others of His saints who went before us have reaped the blessing, so shall we. IV. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF PATIENCE? To patiently wait God's appointed time is our business. Suppose a man should be impatient under suffering. Will it diminish his suffering? We all know that the irritability of temper which is caused by impatience is one of the difficulties which the physician has to battle with. When the patient is calm there is a better chance of his recovery. O that ye would endeavour to conquer impatience. It cast Satan out of heaven, when he was impatient at the honour and dignity of the Son of God. But the benefits of patience are too many for me to hope to enumerate them. Suffice it to say, patience saves a man from great discouragement. Expect to wait for glory; expect to wait for the reward which God hath promised; and while you are waiting on the Lord your bread shall be certain, and your water shall be sure: you shall often eat meat, thank God, and take courage. The short days and long nights shall not be all charged with gloom, but full often they shall be tempered with good cheer. When we have patience it keeps us in good heart for service. Great haste makes little speed. He that believeth shall not make haste; and as the promise runs, he shall never be confounded. Above all, patience is to be commended to you because it glorifies God. The man that can wait, and wait calmly, astonishes the worldling, for the worlding wants it now. You remember John Bunyan's pretty parable of Passion and Patience. Passion would have all his best things first, and one came in and lavished before him out of a bag all that the child could desire. Patience would have his best things last, and Patience sat and waited, so when Passion had used up all his joy, and all he sought for, Patience came in for his portion, and as John Bunyan very well remarked, there is nothing to come after the last, and so the portion of Patience lasted for ever. Let me have

my best things last, my Lord, and my worst things first. Be they what they may, they shall be over, and then my best things shall last for ever and for ever. There is one other respect in which our case is like that of the husbandman. As the season advances, his anxieties are prone to increase rather than to abate. In like manner we have a closing scene in prospect which may, and will in all probability, involve a greater trial of faith, and a sterner call for patience, than any or all of the struggles through which we have already passed. Perhaps I can best describe it to you by quoting two passages of Scripture, one specially addressed to workers, the other more particularly to sufferers. The first of these texts you will find in Heb. x. 35, 36. This is sweet counsel for thee, O pilgrim, to Zion's city bound. When thou wast young and strong, thou didst walk many a weary mile with that staff of promise. It helped thee over the ground. Don't throw it aside as useless, now that thou art old and infirm. Lean upon it. Rest upon that promise, in thy present weakness, which lightened thy labour in the days of thy vigour. "Cast not away your confidence." But there is something more. The apostle says, "Ye have need of patience, after ye have done the will of God." But why, you will say, is patience so indispensable at this juncture of experience? Doubtless you all know that we are never so subject to impatience as when there is nothing we can do. Hence it is that after our fight is fought, after our race is run, after our allotted task is finished, there is so much need of patience, of such patience as waits only on God and watches unto prayer, that we may finish our course with joy and the ministry we have received of the Lord Jesus. And what about the second text? Turn to James i. 4. Seemeth it not as though patience were a virtue *par excellence* which puts the last polish on Christian chastity? We will hie us back to the cornfields again: I am afraid we were forgetting them. But this time we will not talk so much with the farmer as with the crops. Knowest thou, then, what it is that gives that bright yellow tinge of maturity to those blades which erst were green and growing? What, think you, imparts that golden hue to the wheat? All the while the corn was growing, those hollow stems served as ducts that drew up nourishment from the soil. At length the process of vegetation is fulfilled. The fibres of the plant become rigid; they cease their office; down below there has been a failure of the vital power which is the precursor of death. Henceforth the heavenly powers work quick and marvellous changes; the sun paints his superscription on the ears of grain. They have reached the last stage: having fed on the riches of the soil long enough, they are only influenced from above. The time of their removal is at hand, when they shall be cut down, carried away in the team, and housed in the garners. So, too, it is with some of you. "The fall of the year is most thickly strewn with the fall of human life." You have long been succoured with mercies that have come up from mother-earth; you have been exposed to cold dews, chilling frosts, stormy blasts; you have had the trial of the vapoury fog, the icy winter, the fickle spring, and the summer drought; but it is nearly all over now. You are ready to depart. Not yet for a brief space has the reaper come. "Ye have need of patience." Having suffered thus far, your tottering frame has learnt to bend. Patience, man—patience! A mighty transformation is about to be wrought on you in a short space. Wait on the Lord. Holiness shall now be legibly, more legibly than ever, inscribed on your forefront by the clear shining of the Sun of Righteousness. The heavenly Husbandman has you daily, hourly, in His eye, till He shall say to the angel of His presence, "Put in your sickle." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **Be ye also patient.**—*Christian waiting*:—I. SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRISTIAN WAITING. 1. Christian waiting follows conscientious effort. It is not until we have striven to do our duty in Divine strength; it is not until we feel ourselves hemmed in, unable to take another step, that we are to "stand still and see the salvation of God." The apostolic injunction is: "Having done all, to stand." It is not until we have laboured that we are to learn to wait. To act otherwise would be to play the part of a farmer who may be waiting for a harvest before he has sown the seed. 2. Christian waiting is an outcome of faith. Faith in the Divine promises, fidelity, ability, and love. 3. Christian waiting is patient. It is a state in which fluttering and murmuring have no place; it is a state in which there is dignified self-restraint, and sweet acquiescence to that will which is recognised to be infallible, sovereign, and good. 4. Christian waiting is expectant. It is ever on the outlook. An attendant, who was asked to wake a visitor in time to meet an appointment, was lingering hard by for the purpose, when some one exclaimed, "What, sitting here and doing nothing!" "No," was the quick reply, "I am busy waiting." The man who is truly waiting for the "salvation of the

Lord" is "busy waiting"—busy like one waiting for the day-dawn, or like one waiting to take the tide at the flood. 5. Christian waiting is necessary. God does nothing hurriedly. Did the earth, with her hills and vales, lakes, rivers, and seas, dark mines, and gigantic rocks, reach her present state in swift transactions? Did Jesus sweep down from the heavens as the Saviour of man immediately He was promised? Is human life rapid in its physical, mental, and spiritual growth? The development of that which is great cannot be forced. Perfection is not reached in a leap. II. THE ENCOURAGEMENT BY WHICH CHRISTIAN WAITING IS HERE ENFORCED. The farmer is encouraged to wait by the thought that every sunrise prepares for, and accelerates the gleeful reaping time. So the believer is incited to wait for Christ by the assurance that His coming "draweth nigh." 1. His coming in some signal dispensation of Providence may be nigh. If there is no longer a "needs be" for our waiting, we may be sure that He will speedily come to crown our temporal and spiritual efforts with appropriate success; to solve perplexing problems; to deliver from envy, slander, oppression, and to satisfy the desires which He Himself has kindled. 2. His coming at the end of the world may be said to be nigh. "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand." "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly." 3. His coming at our dissolution may be said to be nigh. It cannot be far distant from any one of us; every clock-tick and pulse-beat hastens it. (*E. H. Palmer.*) *Christian persistence:*—When men have entered upon a religious experience, or a religious life, they are warned that there are perils in that life or experience —especially the peril of getting tired of it; of losing interest in it; of having their enthusiasm waste away like a summer's brook, and die like a fugitive cloud. Weariness may take on either of three forms—that of simple fatigue, that of discouragement, or that of disgust. Now, there are no callings in life that are continuous in which we do not experience weariness in the first form—that of fatigue; and rest is the cure for it. We get tired of daily tasks —especially those that consist in bearing heavy burdens and responsibilities; and the night is a blessed relief to those who perform them. But then come the other forms of weariness—namely, discouragement, want of hope, and disgust, an inexplicable state of mind which oftentimes drives a man to the other extreme, so that he loathes things that once were attractive to him, and not only renounces his purposes, but stands in direct antagonism to the very ends that before he sought violently to serve. I shall speak of some of the occasions on which this weariness and this reaction take place, and of some of the causes which produce them. Weariness often takes place in regular and necessary business life—especially where our avocations are not such as minister pleasure. We should seek as far as possible to reduce that which is necessary in our daily calling to a pleasure. Although there are some things that can scarcely be made pleasurable, yet to a far greater extent than men believe it is possible to subdue to liking things that are not naturally likable. There are odours that are intolerable when we regard them with disgust, but that, nevertheless, when we dwell by them day by day, if we have rational minds, we may come to so regard as to overcome our repugnance to them. And if one man can do it, another can. Tasks that are disagreeable should first be essayed. To all those who have a wearisome life; to all those who have mixed responsibilities: to all those who are obliged to have anxiety; to all those who are compelled to bear these things in bodies enfeebled by disease, or in bodies whose nervous organisation has been very much supplanted, there is this exhortation: "Be not weary in well doing. In due season ye shall reap if ye faint not." If by complaint, if by repugnance, if by weariness, you could change your affairs for the better, it would be different; but you make them worse by these things; and discretion, as well as the exhortation of revelation, points out the true way: "Be bold, be patient, be not weary, continue instant in season and out of season." Follow these directions, and in due time ye shall have relief. Then a still more critical weariness comes upon persons who, having set before them a vivid notion of their faults and failings, attempt to shape their whole character to a higher pattern and to live their whole life on a higher plane. There is nothing harder than to rise from any level where we have permitted ourselves to spread out to a higher level. We hug the sphere in which we have invested the most of ourselves; and when we are called to forsake it and to go up to a higher level it is a thing of displacency; and we do it with the utmost fatigue and reluctance. Yet, every man should set his face against the ruling of lower tendencies; and should determine to measure himself by a higher standard; and when a man, carrying out these

purposes in succession, finds himself attacking pride, besieging vanity, doing battle with lusts, and passions, and appetites, he has a campaign on his hands which may very well breed weariness and discouragement, for many and many of the tendencies of our nature are like streams which seem to dry up in summer, but which come booming again in spring when the rains descend upon the mountains; and where we thought we had achieved victories we find ourselves quite overthrown and swept away. In some respects it is true that men are worse when they begin to be better. The conflict with morbid nature with unwholesome nature is disturbing. Therefore men who attempt to carry out the rule of righteousness with temperance often find themselves very tired of sitting and watching at the door of the mouth, and saying, "Let your moderation be known [be made apparent] to all men." They forget, they relax vigilance, they faint; and the inordinate appetite which they have striven against for days and weeks at once overtakes them, and they are swept away; and in looking back, when they examine the tendencies of anger, and irritableness, and envy, and jealousy, and avarice in the actual strifes of life, when they think of their relations to others, and of the relative conditions of others and themselves, and when they, from year to year, mark whether they grow in grace or not, it is not strange that weariness and discouragement come over men. Then there is weariness in our social duties and relationships. In days of sickness, in days of labour, and especially in days of poverty, when one can almost say, "Heart and flesh have failed," is it strange that there is discouragement? And is there no need of the injunction, "Be not weary in well doing"? and of the promise, "In due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not"? When dealing, not within the sacred precincts of the family, but in our relations with those around us —with our neighbours, of every clime, of every disposition, of every kind of education, and of every temperament—an amount of forbearance, of patience, of gentleness, of wisdom, and of goodness is required that cannot be measured in words. And when it becomes necessary to co-operate for the public good, or for the good of special classes or conditions of men, human nature is a thing that torments the patience. It is hard to bear with men, and it is hard to bear with them just in the proportion in which they are strong and multiform in their nature. We are disposed to be weary in doing good to others, so slow is the result of anything we undertake in developing itself, so unfruitful is this result, and so material and uninteresting are people. Is it the work of charity? To do good among those who need you most—the poor and the ignorant—will require all the patience, all the gentleness, all the self-denial that you can command. All men, therefore, who go out into the community as reformers should bear in mind the difficulty of managing human nature, and should remember that reformation is effectual only in proportion as it touches the fundamental wants of men. The temperance reformation is slow, is intermittent, and has its reactionary periods, because it strikes at the very strongest passions and appetites which exist in human life. It is an attempt of goodness to overcome badness. It is a promiscuous campaign carried on by all sorts of men. And the marvel is not that it is so slow, but that it is so fast, and that there is so much in it that is permanent. To the end of life and society, however, the work of temperance will be a thing to be done over and over again; and every generation will have to go through precisely the same process. Yet men must not be discouraged nor faint. Then, other men grow weary on account of injudicious labours, on account of undertaking too much, and on account of constantly attempting to work from wrong standards in themselves. Many a man works from the impulse of praise; and as long as he is praised, not to say flattered, he is encouraged, and works cheerfully; but when the praise ceases he begins to grow weary and discouraged, and it seems to him as though life had lost its savour. Others work from the feeling of pride; and so long as that feeling is gratified, and men look up to them, and show them difference, and submit to their control, they are buoyant, and work willingly; but when the gratification of their pride ceases, and men do not yield to them any longer, and they are obliged to humble themselves before others, they grow weary. The trouble comes from the fact that they are attempting to work from the standpoint of prominence and dominance, and wish to be masters. Other men work because they have a sense of duty, and a sense of duty ought to underlie every action of their life; nevertheless, if there is nothing but a sense of duty, it is a hard master that grudges reward; for the sense of duty increases with the performance of duty. The ideal of what we should be and should do grows with actual attainment, so that a man will live for ever in the seventh chapter of Romans, if his inspiration in life is

for ever an inspiration of conscience or of duty. In view of these considerations, it is not strange that so many are weary in well-doing, and we see how manifestly it is right that we should exhort men, saying, "Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not." Be seed-sowers. Be husbandmen in the harvest-field. Sow and reap day by day. Sow at morning and at evening. Withhold not your hand anywhere. You know not which shall prosper, this or that, or whether both alike shall prosper; and be not weary of the work that you leave behind you; take it up again wherever you go; and in the spirit of the Master, carry blessedness, cheerfulness, hopefulness, happiness in your rounds, whether of rest, of pleasure, or of duty. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The duty of expectation*:—In the order of the phenomena which we call natural, everybody knows that time must be taken into account, and that the impatience of men has no effect whatever upon the regular progress of things. The harvest can be expected only after a regular number of months, and when fruit-trees or plants such as the vine are to be brought to maturity, years of patient waiting are required. It is from the habit of reckoning with nature that the peasant derives his proverbial patience and his unwearied tenacity. The artisan of our cities handles matter at his will, and his task is sooner completed; nevertheless, he also knows that nothing solid or good can be produced at a moment's notice. Thus it is as regards the culture of the intellect; it has its successive stages, which can neither be suppressed nor interverted; the greatest of mathematicians must proceed step by step from the elements of arithmetic to integral calculus. Nothing can be absolutely improvised in this world, and, as the poet said, "Time soon destroys what has been done without its aid." We all accept this law: but when the Divine works are in question, it seems to us to be out of place. On this point our opinion partly rests upon the true idea that God is above time. Now we may draw a false inference from this principle which, however, is both true and necessary: we may imagine that whatever is Divine must needs be instantaneous. It is certain, however, that Jesus Christ never encouraged this tendency; He declared that prodigies in themselves might be an effect of the evil spirit, and it is upon the moral character of His natural or supernatural works that He always insists upon most strongly. Is it not this very prejudice which leads so many fervent souls to acknowledge the action of the Holy Ghost only in those manifestations which are sudden and striking? Two equally fatal consequences follow from this conception: in the first place, disdain for the ordinary means of grace, for the regular ministry, for the institutions of the past, for the measures which assure and prepare the future. God, it is asserted, hath need of none of these. The other consequence is the impatient zeal which would hurry on the progress of souls, which exaggerates the results already obtained, sees conversions in factitious emotions, creates an over excitement which it takes for an evident effusion of the Holy Spirit, and passes the most uncharitable judgments upon those who have kept outside of this sacred contagion. Now the truth is this: It has pleased God, who Himself is above time, to act in time and by means of time. To convince yourselves of this, behold God at work, as revealed to us in Scripture; His actions will enable us to understand His purposes. God creates the world. It seems as though an instantaneous creation should have responded to an almighty will. But the Bible gives us a totally different account of our origin. In it time appears to us as the very condition of the existence of things. Everything is subject to the twofold law of succession and progress. What I say of creation may also be affirmed as regards the work of grace. If I seek the reason of the existence of all things, Scripture replies by this sublime expression: the reign of God. Everything tends towards this end, everything is subservient to it, and the entire universe knows no other. Nevertheless, despite this decisive reason which appears to us so completely self-evident, God's triumph is not immediate; there is a history of the reign of God. A history, that is to say, a beginning, then successive actions which prepare the final consummation; a history, that is to say, the secular, difficult, laborious development of a germ deposited in the depths of humanity. That is the substance of the teaching of Scripture; if you misapprehend it, the Word of God will be for you an eternally sealed book. God takes time into account when the destinies of His kingdom are in question. The history of Christianity is the visible realisation of this Divine plan. We must acknowledge, doubtless, that the sins, the indifference the apathy, the dissensions of Christians have manifestly contributed to this delay; but, even had the influence of these causes been null and void, the conversion of the world had not been the work of a day: the rains of the early and latter seasons

must have fallen ere that magnificent harvest could be gathered in. What we say of the conquest of nations, we must also affirm of the salvation of individual souls. God might subdue them in a day; sudden and often striking conversions occur at all times to remind us of the sovereignty of grace; but these are exceptions, and in these very exceptions, a discerning eye easily detects a hidden and latent preparation. In the parable of the prodigal son, the gospel points to the successive phases of the sinner's estrangement, of the awakening of false independence, of selfishness, pride, rebellion, of the intoxicating delights of passion, of the final shame and degradation, and only in this supreme hour does the distinct remembrance of the Father's house spring up in that broken heart. For the salvation of a soul, as well as for the salvation of the world, we must learn to wait. Oh! I am not ignorant of the surprise, murmurs, and criticisms which these delays of the Divine action rouse in our hearts. Before us continually stands out that unsolvable contradiction between the notion of the Omnipotence of the good Being and the duration of evil which unceasingly braves His justice and goodness. God is patient, He tolerates the follies of human liberty until the day which He has Himself fixed upon. What He does, that must we also do. Ay, more than this; we are compelled to do this by our very position, for what is a Christian but a sinner, whom God bears with, towards whom He acts with an often extraordinary patience? I have reminded you of the duty of expectation. The expectation of faith is not inaction of the soul: it is its very opposite. We must act as though everything depended upon us, we must wait as if everything depended upon God—act, that is, accomplish the Father's will, day by day, faithful to the duty of the present hour, without impatience, without feverish ardour, without personal ambition; wait in the immovable assurance that in all things the final victory shall be on the Lord's side. (*E. Bersier, D.D.*) *Quieting thoughts about life*:—I. THERE IS A PERIOD HASTENING ON THAT WILL TERMINATE FOR EVER THE TRIALS OF THE GOOD. This period is not far off. It really takes place with the individual man at death. It emphatically "draweth nigh," and emphatically may it be said to us all, "The Judge standeth at the door." It is not something that is far off in the distant ages; it is all but transpiring. We shall soon have struck the last blow in life's battle, and won the crown; heaved over the last billows in life's ocean, and reached the desired haven. II. THE TRIALS OF THE GOOD ARE CONGRUOUS WITH THE PRESENT STATE OF OUR HISTORY. It is a fitful spring with us—a moral April: the struggle of sunshine and shower—the genial glow and the nipping frost. It is a season of fluctuation, not settledness: outlay, not income: labour, not wages: seeds, not results. It is the season for burying the grain, not for plucking the golden ear. It is wise and well for the husbandman to labour patiently in the spring, for he has the assurance from testimony and experience that the glorious summer will reward him for his toil. III. A MORAL ENDURANCE OF TRIALS IS ESSENTIAL TO AMIABILITY OF CHARACTER. The man who has not that "patience" which results from a loving confidence in the character and a loving acquiescence in the will of the Supreme Ruler, will feel an annoyance in every trial. He will pass through the trials of life, as we have sometimes seen a little cur passing through a hailstorm, barking at every step. But the man who cultivates this magnanimous quality of soul will be, in trial, like the imperial bird in the storm, when beaten down from its heavenly flight, it still keeps its wings expanded, looks calmly up, and with the first gleams of sunshine soars away into the radiant and the high again. IV. THE GREATEST TRIALS HAVE BEEN ENDURED BY THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS MEN IN HISTORY. "The prophets" were men of genius and of God; great in talent and in virtue, the loyal servants and moral organs of Heaven; the most majestic trees in the forest, the brightest stars in the firmament of their race. Yet they suffered (Matt. xxiii. 37; Acts vii. 32). The morally great have always been sufferers. V. TRIALS HAVE EVER BEEN THE CONDITION OF TRULY HEROIC AND HONOURED LIVES "We count them happy which endure"—not only because affliction tendeth to spiritual good (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18), but because they are enabled by their sufferings, when rightly endured, to display the highest attributes of greatness. In the history of true men, when the sun of prosperity goes down, the brightest orbs of virtue come out to light up the moral firmament of the world. V. ALL TRIALS BEING UNDER THE DIRECTION OF AN EVER-MERCIFUL GOD, WILL, IF RIGHTLY ENDURED, YIELD A GLORIOUS RETURN. (*D. Thomas.*) *Waiting upon God*:—The true Christian idea of waiting upon God patiently implies self-restraint, trust in God, and the exertion of superior elements of manhood. Patient waiting upon God where it exists is not only founded in intelligence, and in that faith which is the handmaid

of intelligence, but it is a state of submission and sweet relinquishment of one's own urgent and importunate feelings. It is the yielding up of everything into the hands of God, with confidence that the Judge of all cannot but do justly, and that in His own time and way He will fulfil the desires of our hearts, if they be right; or, if they be wrong, He will meet our wants with things other than those which we seek. Consider now the text: "Be patient, therefore," &c. Here is the measure of the waiting. It is to continue clean through till the Lord appears; till the enigma is solved; till the mystery is cleared. "Behold the husbandman waiteth," &c. There could be no more admirable analogue than this of husbandry; for there is in it the most obvious union of persistent natural laws with human activity, which bears the same relation to natural laws that the rider does to the horse. It is the horse that performs; it is the rider that steers and guides him. Natural laws, of themselves, are brute forces, wandering wide, and doing little. It is not until great natural laws, if I may say so, are inspired by human volition and human intelligence, that they become productive of good—that they know how to converge and co-operate so as to multiply blessings upon the earth. Without natural laws man is utterly helpless. Without men natural laws are largely useless. Man, knowing how to use those great physical, permanent laws, directs them to certain purposes. This combination it is that makes fruitfulness in our fields. Human strength makes natural laws productive. What are cities but the insignia of thought applied to brute and dead material? What are gardens, vineyards, orchards, grain-fields, railroads, canals, tunnels, bridges, highways, but the union of Divine natural law and human intelligence? Without the one and the other they were impossible. Human society itself is a vast museum and exhibition-hall, as it were, showing what man's nature has been able to do when it has worked upon the Divine law. See what husbandry does every year. We prepare the soil. We do not make it. It is ready at our hand. For generations God's mills have been grinding; the glacier and the rock have come together; the subtle water, made solid by cold, and moving per force, has ground and ground; and behold, the soil that has in it the results of the workings of cycles of centuries. Man finds it ready waiting for him. It is waiting for man as much as man is waiting for it. It is only when by his skill the plough opens the furrow, and he sows intelligently, studying the seasons, the markets, and the pressing necessities of men about him; it is only when, waiting patiently through months if it be fields of grain, or if it be orchards and vineyards through years, that he begins to find remuneration. Farmers wait, and wait patiently, and wait confidently; and their waiting is from no laggard's indolence. It is from a consciousness that they have done that which, co-operating with natural law, will produce the desired results. God's stamp is upon natural law, and it is warranted to cut, and not to fail. The farmer waits in intelligence; the sluggard waits in laziness. The farmer thrives; the sluggard degenerates. The farmer has abundance; the sluggard suffers cold in winter, and want the year round. Men who refuse to do anything in God's vineyard oftentimes pretend to honour God's sovereignty by waiting upon God; but who would think that he was honouring nature's sovereignty by waiting on it thus? There be those who say it is presumptuous for man to put forth his hand and touch God's work. They are afraid of interfering with the sphere of Divine authority and Divine sovereignty. It is their own spiritual indolence that leads them to wait, for no one of them that owns a ship sails that ship as he does his soul. No one of them that has a farm manages that farm in husbandry as he does his soul in spiritual things. He must know how to work who is to know how to wait. He must experience fatigue who is to appreciate the blessing of rest. He must have enterprise who is to understand the great charm of patient waiting upon God. Look, then, at the sphere in which this virtue of waiting is to operate. Bearing in mind the nature of that waiting which brings a blessing, we shall see that there is a sphere for it in our lives fully as great as there was in the lives of those of old, though we are differently placed from what they were. We shall see, also, that one of the most common traits of a true piety is that of patient waiting. As in all the emergencies of secular life we are called to wait patiently, so we are in all the emergencies of religious life. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Christian patience*:—Christian patience supposeth a sense of evil, and then, in the formality of it, it is a submission of the whole soul to the will of God: wherein observe—1. The nature; it is a submission of the whole soul. The judgment subscribeth, "Good is the Word of the Lord," &c. (Isa. xxxix. 9). Though it were to him a terrible word, yet the submission of a sanctified judgment can call it good. Then the will

accepteth, "If they shall accept the punishment" (Lev. xxvi. 41); that is, take it kindly from God that it is no worse. Then the affections are restrained, and anger and sorrow brought under the commands of the word. Then the tongue is bridled, lest discontent splash over: Aaron held his peace (Lev. x. 3). 2. Consider the grounds and proper considerations upon which all this is carried on; usually there is such a progress as this in the spiritual discourse. (1) The soul seeth God in it, "I was dumb and opened not my mouth, because Thou didst it" (Psa. xxxix. 9). (2) It seeth God acting with sovereignty, "None can say unto Him, What dost Thou?" (Job ix. 12). And elsewhere, "He giveth no account of His matters." (3) Lest this should make the heart storm, it seeth sovereignty mitigated in the dispensation of it with several attributes. With justice. With mercy, "Thou hast punished us less than we deserved" (Ezra ix. 13). They were afflicted, they might have been destroyed; they were in Babylon, they might have been in hell. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might keep Thy statutes." God's faithfulness would not suffer them to want such a sweet help. With wisdom, "God is a God of judgment" (Isa. xxx. 18); it is meant in His dispensations. Let God alone; He is too just to do us wrong, and too kind and wise to do us harm. (*T. Manton.*) *Christian patience advocated:*—Julius Pflugius, complaining to the Emperor, by whom he had been employed, of great wrong done him by the Duke of Saxony, received this answer—"Have a little patience; thy cause is my cause." So says God to His abused. (*J. Trapp.*) *Patience a strength:*—It would be far easier, I apprehend, for nine men out of ten to join a storming party than to lie on a rack or to hang on a cross without repining. Yes, patience is a strength; and patience is not merely a strength, it is wisdom in exercising it. We, the creatures of a day, make one of the nearest approaches possible for us to the life of God who, because He lives for ever, can afford to wait. (*Canon Liddon.*) **Stablish your hearts.**—*An established heart:*—1. Our hearts are settled in our afflictions by the sweet promises we have from God of our deliverance. David thereof saith, "Many are the troubles of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth them out of all." In another place to like purpose, "The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord, He shall be their strength in time of trouble." Therefore Almighty God saith to His people, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." 2. As by the promises of our deliverance our hearts are settled through patience in our oppression; so also ought they to be settled in the experience we have of the power of God in the deliverance of the righteous. If we look to others, or ourselves, we shall find experience of this truth. Hath not God delivered Moses and Israel, His people, from the army of Pharaoh? What, did not God deliver David from sundry attempts of Saul? 3. Neither thus only are our hearts settled in our miseries, but also when we cast our eyes upon the crown of glory, which we shall receive, and the glorious hope whereof we shall be partakers, if we endure with patience, we should settle and quiet our minds in our miseries. Thus Paul, exhorting the Romans to settle their hearts, and in their afflictions which by the ensample of Christ they should suffer, comforting them, telleth them that the sufferings of their mortal life were not to be compared to the glory which should be revealed to the sons of God. 4. Our hearts shall the better be settled if we would consider that nothing cometh unto us but by the will of God. 5. Our hearts shall be settled in afflictions if we know the manifold uses and good ends of the afflictions which God sendeth to the saints. 6. Our hearts in affliction shall be settled if we did consider that our time of sufferings is limited, and is but short, but the time of rest, of peace, of joy, eternal. 7. If we consider that the saints in all times have suffered adversity, that Jesus Christ Himself, the Lord of Glory, hath by many tribulations entered into His glory, that we are no otherwise fellow-heirs with Him, but upon this condition that we suffer with Him. 8. Finally, our hearts in affliction are settled when we recount often the fearful judgments of God upon them which have afflicted and cruelly persecuted His Church and saints in all times. (*R. Turnbull.*) **The coming of the Lord draweth nigh.**—*The approaching of Christ in the revolution of time:*—I. EVERY YEAR BRINGS HIM NEARER TO EVERY MAN TO TERMINATE HIS CONNECTION WITH THIS EARTH. 1. What a solemnity does this give to time. 2. What significance to death. II. EVERY YEAR BRINGS HIM NEARER TO ESTABLISH HIS SPIRITUAL EMPIRE IN THE WORLD. Indications of His approach are multiplying and brightening as years come and go. Every true thought, every moral conversion, every true revolution in the minds of individuals and nations, announce the fact that He is coming whose right it is to reign. III. EVERY YEAR BRINGS HIM NEARER TO WIND UP ALL HUMAN AFFAIRS ON THIS EARTH. On this wonderful day He will—1.

Stop the increase of the race. 2. Terminate the infidelities of the race. 3. Open the graves of the race. 4. Settle the destinies of the race. (*D. Thomas.*) *The impending hour:*—The feelings with which we await the coming of any person or thing depend very much upon the nature of the person or thing advancing, or upon the fittedness to meet him or it. It is evening in a very pleasant household. There is a key heard at the front door. The children come down the stairs with a bound, clapping their hands, and shouting, "Father's coming!" But disaster has entered that home. The writs have been issued. The front door bell rings, an official is about to enter, and the whisper all through the rooms of that house is, "The sheriff's coming!" March weather gets through scolding, and one day the windows toward the south are opened, and old age feels the flush of new life in its veins; and invalidism looks up and smiles, and all through the land the word is, "Spring is coming!" December hangs icicles on the eaves of the poor man's house. No wood gathered. No coal. The cracked window-pane invites the sleet to come in. The older sister, with numb fingers, attempts to tie the shoe latchet of the little brother, and stops to blow warmth into her blue hands, and the father shiveringly looks down and says, "Oh, my God, winter is coming!" Well, it is just so in regard to the announcement of my text. To one it sounds like a father's, to another like an executioner's, footstep. To one it is the breath of a June morning; to the other it is the blast of a December hurricane. "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh." I do not see how God can afford to stay away any longer. It seems to me that this world has been mauled of sin about long enough. The Church has made such slow headway against the Paganism, and the Mohammedanism, and the fraud, and the libertinism, and the drunkenness, and the rapine, and the murder of the world, that there are ten thousand hands now stretched up beckoning for God to come, and to come now. I also see a sign of the Divine advance in the opportunity for repentance which is being given to the nations. God, and angels, and men calling. Messages of salvation in the air. Telegraphs flashing the gospel news. Steamships carrying Christian ambassadors to and fro. Yes, we are on the eve of a universal moral earthquake. "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh." But there is a deeper stop in the organ of my text that needs to be pulled out, and that organ stop is the judgment trumpet. My text distinctly points toward that august arrival. Now, there is one secret that God has never told even to an archangel. The time when. It may come this autumn. It may come next spring. It may be farther off. I cannot tell. But the fact that such a day will come cannot be disputed. The Bible intimates, yea, it positively says, that in that last day God will come in by a flash of lightning. When the roll-call of that day is read your name and my name will be read in it, and we will answer, "Here!" These very feet will feel the earth's tremor, these eyes will see the scrolled sky, these hands will be lifted in acclamation or in horror, when the Lord shall be revealed from heaven, with mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance upon those who know not God, and who obey not the gospel of His Son. It will be our trial. It will be our judge. It will be our welcome or it will be our doom. "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh." But my subject takes a closer grapple, and it closes in and closes in until it announces to you and to me that Christ is coming very soon to put an end to our earthly residence. The most skilful theologians may make a mistake of hundreds of years in regard to the chronology of the judgment; but it is impossible for us to make a very wide mistake in regard to the time in which Christ will come to put an end to our earthly existence. Oh, if you knew how near you are to the moment of exit from this world, do you know what you would do? You would drop your head and pray just now. If you knew how certainly the door of God's mercy is gradually shutting against your unpardoned soul, you would cry out, "Stop! till I enter." My subject closes in once more, and closes in until I have to tell you that God, who in the text is represented as "drawing nigh," has actually arrived. No longer "drawing nigh." He is here. Get away from Him, you cannot. Trust in Him, you ought. Be saved by Him, you may. This God who has been arriving, and who is now come; this God who has been "drawing nigh," has come for one thing, and that is to save every one of you. He has come a long pilgrimage, treading over nails, and spikes, and thorns, until the sharp points have struck up through the hollow of the foot to the instep. He has come to carry your burdens, and to slay your sins, and to sympathise with your sorrows. He is here to break up your obduracy, and make you feel the palpitations of His warm, loving heart. Oh, the love of God, the love of God! (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *The great court of appeal:*—There will be a great court of appeal from all man's injustice. (*Dean Plumptre.*)

Importance of the end:—"We were," writes a Christian traveller, "on a little steamer on the Volga. . . . A young Russian officer was on board with his wife. They had plenty of money; they seemed perfectly well; the scenery around was beautiful and the weather was fine; but, for all that, the officer looked sad and was silent. Every day, as we went on and on, he was more and more unhappy, and I soon found out the reason. He was going from home and friends, far off into Siberia. Each mile of progress brought him nearer to the cold, bleak wilderness where he was to spend many long years of banishment." And it is just so in the journey of life. If a man feels that each day he grows older only brings him nearer to a dark, unknown future, his heart cannot be really happy, even if all around seems gay. "A little while afterwards I had to return to Moscow with another Russian officer. We travelled in a miserable plight, hurried over rough roads in a cart with only straw to sit on, and a few apples to eat. The scenery was dull, the weather was bitterly cold, but that officer was exulting in buoyancy and delight. He was hastening to the emperor to bear the news of a great victory, and to be decorated with an honourable reward." Even so, again, it is on life's journey. The man who feels sure he is getting nearer the heavenly King each day he lives, and that he will be welcomed as a "faithful servant" of that Master who has won a victory over the enemies of God and man—this man will be happy in his heart, even in days of trial and toil, 'mid darkness, want, and sorrow. (*Sunday at Home.*)

Ver. 9. **Grudge not one against another.**—*Discontent and envy:*—I. EXPLAIN THE EXHORTATION. 1. The exhortation implies that we are apt to be secretly discontented with our condition and circumstances in the present life; that we are prone to become fretful when things do not correspond with our wishes. 2. It is implied that we are prone to envy, or to look upon the prosperity of others, either real or imaginary, with a spirit of secret discontent. 3. We are in danger of cherishing a spirit of resentment towards those who have injured us, whether intentionally or not, and so of having a "grudge one against another." II. ENFORCE THE EXHORTATION. 1. The disposition here forbidden is intrinsically evil, and is one of the corruptions of the human heart. 2. It is expressly contrary to Divine command, which requires us to esteem others better than ourselves, to rejoice in their prosperity, to participate of their sorrows, and to make their interest our own. 3. An envious and rancorous disposition is marked with folly, as well as stained with guilt. It argues an unacquaintedness with ourselves, who in every condition of life deserve to be in worse circumstances than we are; nor does such a disposition contribute in the least to our comfort and happiness. It cures not the wound, but makes it more painful and dangerous; does not lighten the burden, but renders it still more intolerable. 4. It is both injurious to ourselves and others, as well as sinful and unwise. Envy makes us our own tormentors; it robs us of that peace and satisfaction which we might otherwise enjoy. "Wrath killeth the foolish man, and envy slayeth the silly one." It embitters his enjoyments and gives a keener edge to his afflictions. It is a sin which often leads to cruelty and injustice, and is seldom found to exist alone. 5. It is a sin which, if not repented of, will subject us to final condemnation. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) *Grudging:*—Murmuring is not here generally taken for every grudging, either against God or man, as whereof in other places of Scripture is spoken, but particularly for that murmuring which is against men, therefore saith he, "Grudge not one against another." This grudging and murmuring is either when we grieve that wicked rich men should so highly be exalted, and the poor, yet righteous, should by poverty be pressed down in the world; or else it is that murmuring whereby we take it in evil part that ourselves should be so tossed and turmoiled, and others should be dealt with more gently; thinking that we bear a greater burden and heavier cross from God than we have deserved, and that other men (as yet not touched) have deserved more. Or, finally, it is that grudging which is in our afflictions, whereby we are discontented that we should sigh so long under our afflictions, and the wicked which afflict us should so long escape unpunished, and so in our hearts, through impatience, complain hereof to God. This ought not to be in the saints of God, who ought to be renowned for their unspeakable patience; whose bounden duty it is to pray even for their enemies, to wish well to them which have done them injury, and to commit their cause to Him that judgeth righteously, which is God. And if this moderation and equity of our minds is to be showed towards our enemies, how much less ought we, then, to grudge against another Christian brother? If every one give some offence unto another, shall we complain to God in the bitterness of our hearts, shall we desire

revenge from God against them? and shall we not all then perish? for no man liveth without some offence-giving. This grudging proceedeth from impatience, argueth discontentment of the mind, causeth mutual complaining unto God, and desireth revenge against such as have done us injury; which thing is far from the excellency or dignity of a Christian, whose patience should be such, as where others through impatience accuse one another, either to God or men, yet they should not so much as murmur in their minds, grudge to themselves, fret or grieve in their inward parts, much less complain indeed through discontentment and impatience, howbeit they had sustained injury. Finally, it bringeth condemnation upon us, who have lost patience, according to the denouncing of the Scripture: "Woe be unto them that have lost patience." The reason why we should not murmur one against another is drawn from the presence of the Lord, who is at hand, as a just judge, to avenge us of our enemies, and to crown us for our patience or punish our murmuring. The Lord our God beholdeth our injuries with open eye, and seeth our oppressions by the wicked; He is pressed and at hand to rescue and deliver us, as it shall seem best to His Divine Majesty; He marketh all our behaviour under the cross; let us not, therefore, be impatient, neither murmur, but therein show all Christian moderation as becometh saints. (*R. Turnbull.*) *The sin of grumbling*:—Do Christian people quite sufficiently consider the sin of grumbling, the sin of being discontented with the allotment of Providence, as to the time and place of their birth; as to the family in which they were born; as to their environment, as well as their heredity? What a strange sight a grumbling Christian is! He is a man who believes that God hath forgiven his sins, that Christ hath borne them all away, that his Lord has gone to prepare a place for him, that in a short time he will be where neither pain nor persecution can reach him, where the load of life will be laid down, where the wicked shall cease from troubling, and the weary shall be for ever at rest. And yet he allows small and transient things to keep him awake in the night, to worry him and make him peevish and fretful and cross through the day. He makes his own burdens more distressing by fretting under them, and thus increases the burdens which his friends have to bear. How many Christians fail to put their grumblings into the category of their sins. But James's admonition, that we should not grumble lest we be condemned, ought to arouse us to the duty of being patient, and to the fact that all really true Christian faith increases a man's manliness. (*C. F. Deems, D.D.*) *The carping spirit*:—A carping spirit rarely goes with a working spirit. It is easier to find fault with what some one else does than it is to do something oneself; hence a man who enjoys doing the easier thing is disinclined to do the harder one. As a rule men are divided into two classes, of those who growl and those who work; and each class is alike devoted to its own mission. But, when it comes to the relative worth in the community of the two classes, everybody can see the difference. *Grudge not*:—"Murmur not" (R.V.). The literal meaning of the Greek is "Groan not"; *i.e.* "Grumble not." (*A. Plummer, D.D.*) **The Judge standeth before the door.**—*The Judge before the door*:—This explains why conscience is always gloomy after sin; it is because He who is the eternal righteousness casts His shadow across the threshold of the soul. In some Eastern houses there are no windows, the doorway serving for lighting as well as for passage. A party of us lunching by invitation in a Druze house in the Lebanons had to drive away the curious villagers who looked in at us through the door, the only opening, because they made it so dark that we could not see the food. God fills the whole light-way of the soul when He looks in at us, and unless He shines on us with the light of His countenance, His stern righteousness makes the soul all dark within. (*J. M. Ludlow, D.D.*) *The magistrate present*:—If the magistrate be present we may not offend another to defend ourselves. (*J. Trapp.*)

Ver. 10. **An example of suffering affliction.**—*Good examples*:—Man is so formed by nature that examples, whether good or bad, have a great influence upon him. The bad, indeed, have more power to corrupt than the good to reform the world: nevertheless, upon all who are well disposed, good examples are not without a considerable effect. Good examples in general tend to establish us in the belief of the infinite advantages of true religion, which appears with most convincing evidence when, in the lives and actions of those who profess it, we behold a lovely counterpart of its Divine doctrines and admirable precepts. The cause is known by its effects, the fountain by its streams. Good examples are further advantageous as they are corrective: they strongly operate upon the principles of an ingenuous shame, and therefore contribute to reform the vicious and to improve the virtuous. We

may also observe that such good and amiable models are powerfully attractive. Their lustre is truly bright, their beauty truly alluring: they seize on our esteem, steal our affections, and so insinuate themselves into the soul as by insensible degrees to transform it into their own likeness. When the sincere follower of Christ contemplates the illustrious patterns held up to him in Scripture, he will naturally be led to reflect that he is not single in the difficulties of the human race. Through the Divine blessing and assistance he will determine to tread the same path, and, like them, despise the allurements and terrors of the world. It is highly useful to attend not only to the patterns proposed in Scripture, but also to all those good examples which through any other means fall within the sphere of our knowledge; more particularly of such persons as have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, and have with heroic fortitude borne witness to the truth in the face of sufferings and death. If we have borne any particular relation to persons eminent for piety and virtue, their examples ought to be peculiarly beneficial to us. It may be presumed that, by our greater affection for such endeared friends, we shall be better prepared to receive the influence of their good examples. If we have had the benefit of their instructions and reproofs, of their admonitions, prayers and counsels, we shall be the more inexcusable if we are not disposed to resemble them. Eminent examples of piety and virtue, whether near or more remote, are like lights set up in the world for the direction of mankind in general, and for the comfort of the good: some of these, like the luminaries of heaven, extend their influence to all nations and times. In order to induce us to imitate those excellent examples which are held forth to us in Scripture, or which by any other means come within the circle of our knowledge, let us attend to the following encouraging considerations. 1. We serve the same God and Father. He is as deserving of the zeal and fidelity of His servants now as ever, has the same blessings treasured up in Himself, the same power in heaven, and the same care of His people here on earth. If we cultivate repentance and faith, piety and virtue, we have the same hopes of acquiring His favour, for He is "no respecter of persons." 2. Another encouraging circumstance is that we profess the same doctrine in general even with those who lived before the time of Christ. 3. Again, we are blessed with the same assistance, we are favoured with the same outward means and institutions, we are blessed with the public worship of God, the benefit of prayer, of the preaching His Word, and of the administration of the sacraments; we have moral and religious treatises in abundance, doctrinal, practical and devotional. Nor is there any want of internal assistance and consolation that either our own weakness, the irregularity of our passions, or the temptations with which we are encompassed, may render necessary to encourage us in our Christian course. 4. To conclude all, let it be considered that we have the promise and expectation of the same reward with them. Attentively, therefore, let us eye all the good examples with which we are acquainted that we may catch a portion of that heavenly ardour which animated them. (*B. C. Sowden.*) *What is affliction?*—Affliction is the dark soil in which is deposited the heavenly seed, that germinates, and brings forth fruit to the glory of God. Affliction is a furnace, in whose ardent flame the Refiner of souls is consuming our human imperfections. Affliction is a rod, under whose kindly chastisement the Father of Spirits is educating us for immortality. Affliction is a baptism, from whose cleansing wave the saints of the Most High come forth fit for the marriage-supper of the Lamb. Affliction is a cup, whose bitter draught is administered by the good Physician to purify our spiritual natures. Affliction is a dark cloud, on which the God of covenant has painted the rainbow of hope, and which He has irradiated with the halo of celestial glory. Would you, then, bring forth much fruit? would you be purified of remaining imperfections? would you be trained for immortality? would you be fitted for the marriage-supper? would you be sanctified in your spiritual nature? would you be encircled in the bow of promise or adorned with the halo of glory? You must needs suffer affliction; for "it is through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom." *The uses of affliction:*—1. God visits with sickness to cause careless sinners to bethink themselves concerning their souls' estate, who, perhaps, never had a serious thought about it before. 2. God visits us with sickness in order to instruct and teach us things we know not (Psa. xc. 12). The path of the cross is the path of light. 3. God sends such trials and distresses in order to mortify and kill sin in us. 4. God sends sickness to awaken in us the spirit of prayer and supplication, and make us more earnest and importunate in our addresses to the throne of grace. 5. Another end is to loosen our hearts from the things of the world, and cause us to look and long for heaven. 6. God designs to make the world bitter, and Christ

sweet to us. 7. God visits with sickness and distress in order both to prove and improve His people's graces (Deut. viii. 2; Rev. ii. 10). Grace is hereby both tried and strengthened. 8. God's aim is to awaken us to redeem time, to prepare for flitting, and clear up our evidence for heaven. (*The Study.*) **And of patience.**—*Patience aids every virtue:*—Patience to the soul is as bread to the body, the staff of either the natural or spiritual life; we eat bread with all our meats, both for health and relish; bread with flesh, bread with fish, bread with broths and fruits. Such is patience to every virtue; we must hope with patience, and pray in patience, and love with patience, and whatsoever good thing we do, let it be done in patience. *Patience reduces pain:*—As the lid is made to open and shut, to save the eye; so patience is set to keep the soul, and save the heart whole to cheer the body again. Therefore, if you mark when you can go by an offence and take a little wrong, and suffer trouble quietly, you have a kind of peace and joy in your heart, as if you had gotten a victory; and the more your patience is, still the less your pain is. For as a light burden, borne at the arm's end, weigheth heavier by much than a burden of treble weight if it be borne upon the shoulders, which are made to bear; so if a man set impatience to bear a cross, which is not fit to bear, it will grumble and murmur, and start and shrink, and let the burden fall upon his head; like a broken staff which promiseth to help him over the water, and leaveth him in the ditch. But if you put it to patience, and set her to bear it which is appointed to bear, she is like the hearty spies that came from Canaan, and said, "It is nothing to overcome them"; so patience saith, "It is nothing to bear, it is nothing to fast, it is nothing to watch, it is nothing to labour, it is nothing to be envied, it is nothing to be backbited, it is nothing to be imprisoned; 'In all these things we are more than conquerors." (*Henry Smith.*)

Ver. 11. **We count them happy which endure.**—*Endurance:*—Most natural words for an apostle to use. He lived in the days of persecution. He was the head of that Church in which his namesake James was slain, Peter imprisoned, and Stephen stoned. But when persecution ceases, when times of rest and quiet come, have the words still a meaning to us? Yes; they are as true as ever now. He alone who has endured is truly happy. An easy life brings not out the powers of the soul. It only tries the surface; it does not search what is deeper. This kind of life, doubtless, is good for some. God knows what is best for each. He has given to some few opportunities, slight abilities, regular duties. He has taken the stones of stumbling and the rocks of offence out of their way. Quietly and gently, yet surely, as we hope, do they travel forward to a truer and more perfect rest. This, then, is happiness. And yet not happiness in itself of the highest kind. They that endure are the truly happy. For—1. Consider we are all sinners. Surely we should be thankful for that which makes us know ourselves; which gives us self-knowledge; which forces us to search ourselves, probe our hearts, and test our conduct; which awakes us from sleep; which calls forth dormant powers, and raises us into activity. Trials are as prophets of old; they are clothed in a sad dress, but they warn us. They tell us what is true happiness—not to enjoy, not to be careless, not to laugh; but to work hard, to labour steadily, to endure what has to be endured. 2. This was the life of Christ. Would you prefer to it the life of any prince, noble, prosperous merchant, merry-hearted youth? Doubtless they are happy in their way. But as gold is better than silver, so is the happiness of Christ a far higher happiness than theirs. And why do we count Christ's life blessed? Because He endured. 3. This is that which does most good, and that which does most good is the happiest. He who attacks sin and ignorance, he who seeks out misery to relieve it, does the most direct good. Now, attack evil, ignorance, misery, we cannot, except with a contest. They are deeply seated. Then comes the struggle. With the struggle comes the endurance, the labour, the toil, the disappointment, the renewed struggle, more endurance. 4. Surely the right thing is work now, rest hereafter. Things show best by contrast. 'Tis the shadow that shows us what light is. It is ungenerous to wish to win heaven lightly. Should we expect, or even desire, ever to sail over an unruffled sea? Should the sea be as calm as the harbour? Should we be satisfied with the merits of Christ? Is there not something to be filled up? What is all that that is said about a great struggle, a race, a wrestling, a combat? Do we need no inward strivings, no hidden battle, no earnest prayers, no sorrowing for sin? We count the dead blessed who have endured; not simply as if so much affliction and sorrow and pain were so much expiation and satisfaction; but we

count, as Christians, him happy who has endured after the pattern and model of Christ's endurance. Nothing else can give us confidence or inspire us with a well-grounded hope. He who is dead may have had less or more to endure; still, something, be he who he may, he must have had to endure. This is the question: Has he endured it with a Christian patience? That which we would think of others, let us each think of ourselves. Endurance should form and fashion our character, try our powers, call out our activity, test our disposition, regulate our temper, teach us confidence in God, wean our souls from the world, join us nearer to the Divine life through Christ; at the same time make us more human, enable us to feel for others' trials; on every side should it strengthen and improve us, so that in all sincerity we may bless God our Father, for that He has not left us without trouble, for that He has not sent us pain, for that He has made us to have not an over-easy life. (*Jas. Lonsdale, M.A.*) *Suffering*:—It seems to me a perfectly fair question to ask, Was there ever any fully-developed soul who did not suffer intensely, and in that suffering develop the forces and talents within it, rising almost to the level of genius? Have you never felt in the presence of some mighty spirit, born with unusual powers, capable of accomplishing mighty things, rising in the sublimity of his forces to the transcendent heights of genius, yet never having been burned to the fibres of his soul by the consuming fire of pain and agony—have you not felt in the presence of such a life that, when the supreme moment of Christ-like agony shall have come to him, he will burst the bonds binding him by reason of his limitations, and through the fires of his suffering spring into hitherto unknown powers and capabilities? Shall we dare to say that Lincoln could have been a Lincoln without his sufferings? Dante a Dante without his? Luther, Melancthon, Ridley, Cranmer, St. Augustine? Oh, how the pain of sin entered St. Augustine's soul; how the biting chisel of violated law cut the fair beauty of holiness, engraved his character! and through his confessions we are enabled to see the process through which the angel of his spirit was let out. Dare we say that St. Augustine would have been what he was without all his sufferings? (*S. R. Fuller.*) *The goodly discipline*:—It is the supreme exercise of faith to believe in its goodness; to accept it as a beautiful, a precious, yea, even a blessed part of the heritage of benediction which we enjoy. It is hard to believe in the goodness of toil, and to break forth into praise as the nerves throb, and the flesh quivers under the strain. It is far harder to praise when the fibres of the soul are throbbing with anguish, and the heart reels under a pressure which it can no longer endure. The real question is, What is in the child's heart, not when it is tormented, but when it is in its right mind, and the hidden nature is free to express itself, to make known its secret thought, and to declare its love. If that be right with God, as Job's was, the plaints and moanings enter into a compassionate ear, and are so many pleas, like the infant's cry, for loving glances, tender touches, wooing words, and all the gentle efforts by which the Father strives to draw the moaning child to His bosom, and to hush him to rest in the arms of His love. It is a state of gracious discipline to which we are called in this life; not a home, not a rest, but a school of culture, a wilderness of pilgrimage, in which salvation is not through possession, but through hope. And for this goodly heritage, this scene and school of discipline, I call you this day to praise. For man constituted as he is, or rather as he has made himself by sin, tasks are good, and the sentence of toil is good. It is good to bring him back into that harmony with the Divine law from which he had withdrawn himself; good to remind him that he is living in God's world, and not in his own, and that he must study and obey humbly the laws of its constitution if he would lift his hand, draw his breath, and eat his bread. The lesson was made hard; the work was to deepen into toil that would strain every fibre, and start every pore, that the lesson might be driven home, and that powers might be drawn forth and cultivated which, when the painful process of their first training was over, would be instruments of power and inlets of joy to the being through all the ages of eternity. Discipline takes up and carries on this ministry of the tasks of life. It carries it up into higher regions—the regions of spiritual experience and power. It is a still stronger and sharper reminder to man that he has placed himself in collision with the whole system of things around him, by the transgression of the Divine commandment; and that submission, believing submission, to the will which is above him, is the one secret of peace and blessedness. It would be very terrible for man, the sinner, in the physical world, if he could command successfully the stones to be made bread—that is, if he could make things obey *him* instead of God. It would but make for him a fool's paradise

for a moment, which his own selfish passions would soon convert into a hell. It would be still more terrible, were it possible for man, if he could lie, and cheat, and steal, or be arrogant, self-willed, lustful, tyrannous, or unjust, and live peaceably, free from storm and inward and outward wretchedness. If he could play the tyrant in his home, and find it a house of benediction, or in his state, and find it prosperous and strong; if he could play the hypocrite or the satyr in his own soul, and be honoured and loved of all men, live in peace and die in hope, it would be a training for a miserable and lost eternity. The pain of life throws back man's thought on his sin. He sees, or is meant to see, how his own selfishness, injustice, impurity, are armed with scourges to smite him, and will bury their thongs in his quivering flesh, and stain them with the starting blood, before they leave him to dream, if he can, that the way of the transgressor is peace. But it would be a dark mistake to imagine that the whole meaning of life's discipline has relation to transgression, and that when it has convinced a man of sin, and set right his relations with the laws of the world around him, its work is done. The end of the Lord in much of our affliction is not so much to convert as to elevate, purify, and conform unto Himself. There is a strange absence of bitterness in this form of suffering; the pain may be terribly sharp, while within there is the perfect peaceful consciousness that the chastisement is the most tender and even yearning manifestation of the Divine love. Those deeply experienced in suffering learn lessons of unselfish thought and activity, of devotion to great ends of human good, of comfort, of healing, of teaching, of ministering, which make them the helpers and saviours of society. And what is true of the greatest, is true in minor measure of minor ministries of blessing. It is those who have learnt much in God's high-school of discipline who best understand His mind and methods, and are His servants and ministers for the instruction of the world. It is suffering which unveils to us life's inner mysteries, solves for us its deepest problems, shows us the true treasure-house of the wealth of being, and brings uncertain riches and possessions to their true weight—but a slight one—in the scale of life. The sorrowful find how little gifts and possessions can content them, can lighten their burden or soothe their pangs. They are open to the teaching which bids them "lay up treasures in heaven"; they know that a soul's wealth lies absolutely in fellowship, sympathy, and love, and the fruit of noble, unselfish work. (*J. B. Brown, B.A.*) *Afflictions are blessings in disguise*:—A young man, who had long been confined with a diseased limb, and was near dissolution, said to a friend: "What a precious treasure this affliction has been to me! It saved me from the folly and vanity of youth; it made me cleave to God as my only portion, and to eternal glory as my only hope; and I think it has now brought me very near my Father's house." *Benefit of afflictions*:—A minister was recovering from a dangerous illness, when one of his friends addressed him thus: "Sir, though God seems to be bringing you up from the gates of death, yet it will be a long time before you will sufficiently recover your strength and vigour of mind to preach as usual." The good man answered, "You are mistaken, my friend; for this six weeks' illness has taught me more divinity then all my past studies and all my ten years' ministry put together." *Benefit of adversity*:—We are told of a merchant who lost his all in a storm, and then went to Athens to study philosophy. He soon discovered that it was better to be wise than to be wealthy, and said, "I should have lost all unless I had lost much." *The honour of endurance*:—There lies a ship out in the stream! It is beautiful in all its lines. It has swung out from the pier, and is lying at anchor yonder; and men, as they cross the river on the ferry-boats, stand, and look at it, and admire it; and it deserves admiration. But it has never been out of port: there it stands, green, new, untried; and yet everybody thinks it is beautiful. It is like childhood, which everybody thinks is beautiful, or ought to be. There comes up the bay, and is making towards the navy-yard, another ship. It is an old ship-of-war. It has been in both oceans, and has been round the world many times. It has given and taken thunder-blows under the flag of its country. It is the old *Constitution*, we will suppose. She anchors at the navy-yard. See how men throng the cars, and go to the navy-yard, to get a sight of her! See how the sailors stand upon the deck, and gaze upon her! Some of them, perchance, have been in her; and to them she is thrice handsomer than any new vessel. This old war-beaten ship, that carries the memory of many memorable campaigns, lies there; and they look at its breached bow, its shattered rigging, its coarse and rude lines, its dingy sides, which seemed long since to have parted company with paint; and every one of them feels, if he is a true patriot, "God bless you! old thing; God bless you!" (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Secret of silent endurance*:—There lived in a

village near Burnley a girl who was persecuted in her own home because she was a Christian. She struggled on bravely, seeking strength from God, and rejoicing that she was a partaker of Christ's sufferings. The struggle was too much for her, but He willed it so; and at length her sufferings were ended. When they came to take off the clothes from her poor dead body, they found a piece of paper sewn inside her dress, and on it was written, "He opened not His mouth." (*Baxendale's Anecdotes.*) *Suffering, the common lot*:—The Mexicans to their new-born offspring, "Child, thou art come into the world to suffer. Endure and hold thy peace." (*Longfellow.*) **The patience of Job.**—*The pearl of patience*:—We need to be reminded of what we have heard, for we are far too ready to forget. We are also so slow to meditate upon what we have heard that it is profitable to have our memories refreshed. We have, however, I trust, gone beyond mere hearing, for we have also seen in the story of Job that which it was intended to set vividly before our mind's eye. I count it no small enrichment of our mind to have heard of the patience of Job, it comforts and strengthens us in our endurance; but it is an infinitely better thing to have seen the end of the Lord, and to have seen the undeviating tenderness and pity which are displayed even in His sorest chastisements. This is indeed a choice vein of silver, and he that hath digged in it is far richer than the more superficial person who has only heard of the patience of Job, and so has only gathered surface-truth. "The patience of Job," as we hear of it, is like the shell of some rare nut from the Spice Islands, full of fragrance; but "the end of the Lord," when we come to see it, is as the kernel, which is rich beyond expression with a fulness of aromatic essence. Note well the reason why the text reminds us of what we have heard and seen. When we are called to the exercise of any great virtue, we need to call in all the helps which the Holy Spirit has bestowed upon us. All our wealth of hearing and seeing we shall have need to spend in our heavenly warfare. In the present case the virtue we are called to exercise is that of patience, and therefore to help us to do it we are reminded of the things that we have heard and seen, because it is as difficult as it is necessary, and as hard to come at as it is precious when it is gained. The text is preceded by a triple exhortation to patience. We are most of us deficient in this excellent grace, and because of it we have missed many privileges, and have wasted many opportunities in which we might have honoured God, might have commended religion, and might have been exceedingly profited in our souls. Affliction has been the fire which would have removed our dross, but impatience has robbed the mental metal of the flux of submission which would have secured its proper purification. It is unprofitable, dishonourable, weakening; it has never brought us gain, and never will. I suppose we are three times exhorted to patience because we shall need it much in the future. Between here and heaven we have no guarantee that the road will be easy, or that the sea will be glassy. We have no promise that we shall be kept like flowers in a conservatory from the breath of frost, or that, like fair queens, we shall be veiled from the heat of the sun. I. IT IS NOT AN UNHEARD-OF VIRTUE TO BE PATIENT. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job." 1. Observe well that the patience of Job was the patience of a man like ourselves, imperfect and full of infirmity; for, as one has well remarked, we have heard of the impatience of Job as well as of his patience. The traces of imperfection which we see in Job prove all the more powerfully that grace can make grand examples out of common constitutions, and that keen feelings of indignation under injustice need not prevent a man becoming a model of patience. 2. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job," that is, the patience of a greatly tried man. That is a very trite yet needful remark: Job could not have exhibited patience if he had not endured trial; and he could not have displayed a patience whose fame rings down the ages, till we have heard of it, if he had not known extraordinary affliction. (1) Reflect, then, that it was the patience of a man who was tried in his estate. All his wealth was taken! (2) Job was caused to suffer sharp relative troubles. All his children were snatched away without a warning, dying at a festival, where, without being culpably wrong, men are usually unguarded. He sits among the ashes a childless man. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job." Oh, to have patience under bereavements, patience even when the insatiate archer multiplies his arrows! (3) "Ye have heard of the patience of Job" under personal affliction. It is well said by one who knew mankind cruelly well, that "we bear the afflictions of other people very easily"; but when it touches our bone and our flesh trial assumes an earnest form, and we have need of unusual patience. Such bitter pain Job must have suffered. (4) In addition to all this, Job bore what is perhaps the worst form of trial—namely, mental distress. The conduct of his wife

must have much grieved him when she tempted him to "Curse God, and die." And then those "miserable comforters," how they crowned the edifice of his misery! They rubbed salt into his wounds, they cast dust into his eyes, their tender mercies were cruel, though well-intentioned. Woe to the man who in his midnight hour is hooted at by such owls; yet the hero of patience sinned not: "Ye have heard of the patience of Job." Job's was in all respects a most real trouble, he was no mere dyspeptic, no hysterical inventor of imaginary evil; his were no fancied losses nor minor calamities. 3. The patience of Job was the patience of a man who endured up to the very end. No break-down occurred; at every stage he triumphed, and to the utmost point he was victorious. Traces of weakness are manifest, but they are grandly overlaid by evidences of gracious power. The enemy could not triumph over Job, he threw him on a dunghill, and it became his throne, more glorious than the ivory throne of Solomon. The boils and blains with which the adversary covered the patriarch were more honour to him than a warrior's gilded corslet. Never was the arch-fiend more thoroughly worsted than by the afflicted patriarch, and instead of pitying the sufferer, my pity curdles into contempt for that fallen spirit who must there have gnawed his own heart as he saw himself foiled at all points by one who had been put into his power, and one too of the feeble race of man. 4. We may once more say that the patience of Job is the virtue of one who thereby has become a great power for good. "*Ye* have heard of the patience of Job," yes, and all the ages have heard of the patience of Job, and hell has heard of it too; and not without results in each of the three worlds. Among men the patience of Job is a great moral and spiritual force. If Job was patient under trial and affliction, why should not I be patient too? He was but a man; what was wrought in one man may be done in another. He had God to help him, and so have I; he could fall back upon the living Redeemer, so can I and why should I not? II. IT IS NOT AN UNREASONABLE VIRTUE TO BE PATIENT, for according to our text there is great love and tenderness in it, "Ye have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." 1. We must have seen in Job's story, if we have regarded it aright, that the Lord was in all. God was not away while His servant suffered; in fact, if there was any place where the thoughts of God were centred more than anywhere else in providence at that time, it was where the perfect and upright man was bearing the brunt of the storm. 2. The Lord was ruling too. He was not present as a mere spectator but as still master of the situation, 3. Moreover, the Lord was blessing Job by all his tribulation. Untold blessings were coming to the grand old man while he seemed to be losing all. It was not simply that he obtained a double portion at the end, but all along, every part of the testing process wrought out his highest good. 4. And when we come to look all Job's life through, we see that the Lord in mercy brought him out of it all with unspeakable advantage. He who tested with one hand supported with the other. Such is the case with all afflicted saints. We may well be patient under our trials, for the Lord sends them; He is ruling in all their circumstances, He is blessing us by them, He is waiting to end them, and He is pledged to bring us through. Shall we not gladly submit to the Father of our spirits? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The patience of Job*:—His impatience is not once mentioned against him; but he is crowned and chronicled here for his patience. God passeth by infirmities where the heart is upright. (*J. Trapp.*) *The secret of patience*:—A Christian friend, visiting a good man under great distress and afflicting dispensations, which he bore with such patient and composed resignation as to make his friend wonder and admire it, inquired how he was enabled so to comfort himself. The good man said, "The distress I am under is indeed severe; but I find it lightens the stroke very much to creep near to Him who handles the rod." (*W. Denton.*) *Christian patience*:—As Richard Baxter lay dying, in the midst of exquisite pains which arose from the nature of his disease, he said, "I have a rational patience and a believing patience, though sense would recoil. Lord, *when* Thou wilt, *what* Thou wilt, *how* Thou wilt." *Learning patience*:—There is no such thing as preaching patience into people unless the sermon is so long that they have to practise it while they hear. No man can learn patience except by going out into the hurly-burly world, and taking life just as it blows. Patience is but lying-to and riding out the gale. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Impatience under affliction*:—The truth is, when we are under any affliction, we are generally troubled with a malicious kind of melancholy; we only dwell and pore upon the sad and dark occurrences of Providence; but never take notice of the more benign and bright ones. Our way in this world is like a walk under a row of trees, checkered

with light and shade: and because we cannot all along walk in the sunshine, we therefore perversely fix only upon the darker passages, and so lose all the comfort of our comforts. We are like froward children who, if you take one of their play-things from them, throw away all the rest in spite. (*Bp. Hopkins.*) *Trial beneficent*:—There is a glass containing a liquid. There is a sediment at the bottom of the glass, but it is all perfectly clear above, as clear as the water from the spring. But shake the glass, and the whole liquid becomes muddy. That was there before, but it was not perceived because all was still. Shake it, and it comes up. Do you understand that, Christian? You thought you were all right; you thought you were walking with God, but temptation came and showed you what you were. Job said; "Once have I spoken"—ah! and wrongly—but now, "I will not answer." "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." "Behold, I am vile." Christian! your experience will not have been lost if it has taught you to know yourself. (*S. H. Langston, M.A.*) *Give God time*:—Suppose a man takes a great contract to build some large edifice in three or five years, and you go in three or five months, and criticise his work, and find fault with this and that. Would it not be unjust? Would he not say, "Please to wait until the work is completed before you pass your judgment upon it: then I will hear what you have to say about it." God has a time in which to complete His work; and you are not to judge before the time. "He that believeth shall not make haste." And when you see the end, you will be brought not only to submit to it but to approve it, and to see it is right. (*Ibid.*) *The gladness of the gardener*:—It was said that a garden once became jealous of a park which adjoined it, because of a certain wonderfully beautiful bed of flowers with which the border between them was graced. The garden prayed the husbandman that she might have a bed of flowers too. "Oh, but you cannot water it if you have it. You have no fountain; it would die." But the garden persisted: "Why could I not have a fountain put in?" The request was immediately granted. Axemen came in and hewed down trees; the sward was torn up with terribly large ploughshares; the garden groaned with pain, and hardly held still. Then the subsoil was probed for wandering and perilous roots, and the garden felt as if all its nerves were to quiver with unendurable agony. Then came men with spades, and channels of stone for drainage were laid; and by and by rocks were blasted with an awful roar of thunderbolts; and the garden screamed that it was aching with intolerable torments and lacerations. But nobody listened; there were nights that succeeded, concerning whose dreadful experiences that garden could never be made to speak in the after years. But one morning the surprise came; there was a rush of crystal spray in the air overhead, and the sunshine kindled it into rainbows. There was never a fountain like that fountain in any paradise of a prince. And the cool streams fell like gentle rain down on the bed of tulips and roses, the blossoming branches and the flowering shrubs. There was never a glory of hue and perfume, of nodding plumes and bending coronals, never such a bed of flowers in any parterre of a princess, as that. The garden, in deep quiet had nothing to say; it was very tired. But things would not need to be done over again. You see it requires courage to bear these agonies of tearing; but when the fountain plays, and the plants flourish, and the gardener comes in for a visit, the garden forgets the anguish in the discovery that the gardener is glad—glad for her sake. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Affliction profitable*:—Thomas Fuller wrote in reference to his own sufferings in the Civil War, "I have observed that towns which have been casually burnt, have been built again, more beautifully than before; mud walls afterwards made of stone; and roofs, formerly but thatched, after advanced to be tiled. The apostle tells me that I must not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to happen unto me. May I likewise prove improved by it. Let my renewed soul, which grows out of the ashes of the old man, be a more pious fabric and stronger structure: so shall affliction be my advantage." (*Tinling's Illustrations.*) *The inward glory of affliction*:—The outside of a stained window looks dingy and unsightly, it has no beauty or attraction; and so the coloured windows of pain, sickness, or bereavement may, to the children of this world, appear gloomy and uninviting; but from within what a grand and radiant sight is disclosed!—the common, familiar sights of this world are hidden, but what living light and glory is revealed within. (*H. Macmillan.*) *God's purpose in troubles*:—Troubles are often the tools by which God fashions us for better things. Far up the mountain-side lies a block of granite, and says to itself, "How happy am I in my serenity—above the winds, above the trees, almost above the flight of the birds! Here I rest

age after age, and nothing disturbs me!" Yet what is it? It is only a bare block of granite, jutting out of the cliff, and its happiness is the happiness of death. By and by comes the miner, and with strong and repeated strokes he drills a hole in its top, and the rock says, "What does this mean?" Then the black powder is poured in, and with a blast that makes the mountain echo the block is blown asunder, and goes crashing down into the valley. "Ah!" it exclaims, as it falls, why this rending?" Then some one saws to cut and fashion it; and humbled now, and willing to be nothing, it is borne away from the mountain and conveyed to the city. Now it is chiselled and polished, till, at length, finished in beauty, by block and tackle it is raised with mighty hoistings, high in the air, to be the top-stone on some monument of the country's glory. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Wisdom of trials*:—Unthinking people would like a world where corn should grow spontaneously and plenty ever lie ready to hand. They would have their path beautified by flowers fairer than those of Eden, and refreshed by zephyrs balmier than those of the sunny south. They would banish care, and make work obsolete. How would all this issue? Doubtless in the degeneracy of our race into a crowd of soft and slothful Sybarites. God is too wise for this. He knows comfort to be of far less importance than character, and acts on that knowledge. (*S. Coley.*) **The Lord is very pitiful.**—*The pitifulness of the Lord the comfort of the afflicted*:—We are far too apt to entertain hard thoughts of God. The horrible atheism of our depraved nature continually quarrels with the Most High; and when we are under His afflicting hand, and things go cross to our will, the evil of our nature becomes sadly evident. Let us never forget that our hard speeches and our suspicions of our God have always been libels upon Him. On taking a survey of our whole life, we see that the kindness of God has run all through it like a silver thread. Goodness and mercy have followed us all our days, even pursuing us when we have wickedly fled from them. Even our apparent ills have been real blessings. Let each restored man say, "He healeth all my diseases." Let each tried one now say, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." Let the aged man bring the spoils of his experience and lay them down at the feet of the Lord who hitherto hath helped him. Our desire will be to help one another to avoid future murmurings. I. Notice that when James is exhorting us to full confidence in God in the hour of trial, He gives us AN INSTRUCTIVE INSTANCE. He quotes the story of Job. Observe that when this apostle introduces Job it is with the view of pointing out the tender mercy of God in his case; and he begins by saying, "Behold, we count them happy which endure." 1. The pitifulness and tender mercy of God are to be seen in the happiness of those who are called to suffer. "We count them happy which endure." This arithmetic is only known to faith, and must be learned of the Lord Jesus. "We"—that is, the Church of God—count them happy who are counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake. I may venture to say that the more sensible part of mankind in some measure concur with the people of God in this accounting. We count that man happy who has passed through trial and hardship with a brave endurance. Such life is of an interesting and manly kind; but life without struggle and difficulty is thin and tasteless. How can a noble life be constructed if there be no difficulty to overcome, no suffering to bear? When we see what poor, paltry things those are who are nursed in the lap of luxury, and consequently never come to a real manhood, "we count them happy that endure." This counting is not mere fancy, but it is a correct estimate: there is a happiness in affliction which none will doubt who have tasted it. When we look to the end of affliction, when we see all its comfortable fruit, when we mark what it corrects, and observe what it produces, we judge that it is no mean blessing. Happy is the man who has been enabled to endure; he rises from the deeps of woe like a pearl-finder from the sea, rich beyond comparison. The people of God find themselves more buoyant in the saltest seas of sorrow than in other waters. The Cross does in very deed raise us nearer to Christ when it is fully sanctified. Rare gems glisten in the mines of adversity. We never get so near to the source of all heavenly consolation as when earthly comfort is removed far away. God seemeth never so much a Husband to any as to the widow; and never so much a Father as to the fatherless. Endurance also works in the child of God a close clinging to God, which produces near and dear communion with Him. Sorrows reveal to us the Man of Sorrows. Griefs waft us to the bosom of our God. Beside, the Lord has a choice way of manifesting Himself unto His servants in their times of weakness. He draws the curtain about the bed of His chosen sufferer, and at the same time He withdraws another curtain which aforetime concealed His glory. He

takes away the delights of health and vigour, and then He implants energy of another and a higher order, so that the inner man waxeth mighty while the outer man decayeth. So wondrously doth grace work beyond nature that it transfigures bodily sickness into spiritual health. 2. Now notice here the notability—I had almost said the nobility—of endurance. As one truly says, Job's bones had lain to this day in the common charnel-house of oblivion if it had not been for his sufferings and his patience. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job." But you would never have heard of Job if he had always been prosperous. Even in worldly histories it is by enduring hardness that men build their memorials. Who that has read the classics has not heard of Mutius Scævola? and why? He was a valiant man, but he did not win his name by a common deed in battle. His fights are unrecorded; but you have heard of his laying his right hand upon the burning coals of an altar, to let Porsenna see how a Roman could endure pain without shrinking. When he suffered his right hand to burn he was writing his name in his country's annals. A thousand instances prove that only by endurance can names be graven in the brass of history. To make a man a man, to bring his manhood forward, and to make other men see it, there must be endurance. 3. Once again, in order to see the pitifulness of God in sorrow, we must see the Lord's end in it; for, saith the apostle, "Ye have seen the end of the Lord." God's end in affliction is that which proves that He is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. We see not so much how grace works as what it works. The design of the Lord is more to be noted than the method He pursues. (1) First, remember that the Lord's end in sending affliction to His people is corrective. Sanctified sorrow is a sharp frost which kills the germs of spiritual disease. (2) Moreover, affliction is sent for the display of grace. Our graces lie asleep within us, like slumbering soldiers, until affliction strikes its terrible drum and awakens them. You know not what spirit you are of till you have been under tribulation. You count yourself rich, but in the fire your gold is tested. You reckon that your house is well built, but the flames find out the wood, and hay, and stubble. Self-knowledge is never sure if it come not of tests and temptations. Therefore we count them happy that endure, because they are less likely to be deceived. God is to be praised for the discovery of our graces, for thus affliction becomes a blessing without disguise. (3) Further, our trials are an education for the future. I do not think that Job was fit to have any more substance until his heart had been enlarged by trouble; then he could bear twice as much as before. Prosperity softens and renders us unfit for more of itself; but adversity braces the soul and hardens it to patience. Beloved, I would not have you forget that "the end of the Lord" is always with His tried people to give them greater happiness as the result of it. Mark, in Job xxxi. 40 it is written, "The words of Job are ended," ended amid thistles and cockle; but the end of the Lord was very different, for He loaded His servant with pieces of money and earrings of gold, and blessed his latter end more than his beginning. Thine end, O thou that art tossed with tempest and not comforted, shall come forth from thy God when He shall lay thy stones with fair colours and thy foundations with sapphires. He will restore thy soul even in this life, and give thee joy and rest out of thy sorrow. As for the life to come, how little do we take it into our estimate! It is as the main ocean, and this life is no better than the village brook. The sorrows of time are a mere pin's prick at the most, if we contrast them with the joy eternal. What shall we think of these temporary inconveniences when we reach eternal felicity? II. OUR APOSTLE MAKES A CONSOLING STATEMENT: "The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." 1. Observe that this is the teaching of God's holy Word; and therefore if we have at this moment no evidence of it perceptible to sight or sense, we are bound to believe it all the same. Do not be persuaded by man or devil to think ill of thy God. He has a father's heart even when He makes thee feel the strokes of His hand. Thy God cannot be unkind to thee. He cannot forsake thee. 2. But further, the text tells us that this truth may be seen; and while it is a matter of faith, yet it may be also a matter of sight. Beloved, it is true the Lord has burdened thee; is it not also true that He has sustained thee? Above is the billow, but "underneath are the everlasting arms." See the pitifulness of God in this! How often the mercy of God is seen in sickness and suffering by His mitigating the pain and loss! Those who are washed in the blood of Jesus shall never be drowned in the sea of sorrow. Observe also the tender pity of God in forgiving the sin of His suffering people. When your child has a fever, it may be he is fretful, and begins to talk foolishly. Maybe he talks unkind things against those very persons whom in his heart he loves best. Do you ever say to the child afterwards, "John, I am

very grieved that you said such shocking things about me and about your mother"? Far from it; you say, "Poor dear, he does not know what he is talking about; he is wandering in his mind." So does God deal with our naughtiness when we are under His hand; when He sees that it is rather weakness than wilfulness, He is very pitiful and full of compassion, and blots out the transgressions of His people. 3. See how the tenderness and pitifulness of God are also seen in the revelations He makes to His saints. So also in the overrulings of our sorrows His love is conspicuous. He often sends a great sorrow that we may not be compelled to bear a greater one. Thank God for the preventive operations of His providence! Bless Him, above all, for the sweet rewards that come to His tried people when afterwards they bear the comfortable fruits of His righteousness, and especially when He comes to them in the riches of His grace, and turns their midnight into everlasting day. In closing the second head I should like to say I wish we could all read the original Greek; for this word, "The Lord is very pitiful," is a specially remarkable one. It means literally that the Lord hath "many bowels," or a great heart, and so it indicates great tenderness. The other word is the complement of the first—"and of tender mercy." There is then, you see, in these two words, pity for misery and mercy for sin: there is inward pity in the heart of God, and outward action in the mercy of God; there is sympathy for suffering, and grace for guilt. These two things make up what we want. III. THE LESSONS TO BE LEARNED out of the whole subject. 1. The first is, be patient. The Lord never grieves us because He likes to grieve us. "He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." There is a needs be for every sorrow. Lie still, brother; let the Good Shepherd clip as He pleases; though He may cut very close to the skin, He is very pitiful, and would only rid thee of that which would harm thee. 2. The next lesson is, be penitent. Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. He welcomes all who repent; He is eager to forgive; delay no longer. 3. The last lesson is, be pitiful. If God be pitiful and of tender mercy, children of God, you are to imitate Him and to be pitiful too. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **And of tender mercy.**—*The mercy of God:*—Probably no one who believes that God is, disbelieves that He is merciful. But wherein the action of His mercy takes effect is not so clear but that minds may differ about it. Sometimes we figure the mercy of God acting like the mercy of man in granting exemption from responsibilities and liabilities. Mercy is said to be shown to a convict when the penalty imposed by law is in part or altogether remitted. There are difficulties in the way of thus construing the action of God's mercy. One is its contrariety to what we see of God in nature, in whose phenomena we can nowhere see any cut-off interposed between causes and effects, but a stringently maintained law of consequences. That this law of nature is also a law of moral nature seems to be attested by the spiritual maxim: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Another difficulty in the way of supposing that the mercy of God works by remission of consequences, like the mercy of man, is in the doubtful utility of such a method. It is hardly to be doubted that the moral tone of society would be far more healthful than it is were there less interference, in the name of mercy, with the consequences of violated law. For a man to imagine he may lie or steal, and escape the evil consequence, is most immoral and dangerous. It fosters this illusion, whenever a weak, good nature averts from a guilty back the scourge of just consequence. Mercy does not seek first to make men comfortable, but to make them morally sound and strong in conformity to right. For this, a strict subjection to the consequences of conduct, whether in the State or in the family, is indispensable. It is not in the way of release from any part of our just responsibilities that we must think of the mercy of God. "Every man shall bear his own burden." Quite congruous with this is a saying in Psa. lxii., where we shall find the mercy of God if we are thus strictly subjected to the law of consequences: "To Thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy; for Thou renderest to every man according to his work." While this affirms the benevolence of strictly holding us to accountability for whatever is our work, it also permits us to think of a procedure which—at least, in comparison with human judgments—deserves to be called merciful. When we discriminate in a man's work that which is strictly his from that which is the work of his parents, or teachers, or of disease, or of the spirit of his time, even a wicked man appears less culpable. Many a man shows the work of his father, or of his surroundings, mixed with his own. If childhood has been subjected to a training which stunts virtue or piety, the resulting vice or scepticism of the man is not all *his* work. To unravel the tangled skein of responsibility, to crown each man with the pearls or thorns which are due to the work that is strictly

his, is the perogative of that Divine judgment which the sinner, thus dealt with, may well deem merciful. In what appears to us the most execrable life, Omniscient may discriminate in the wreck the contributing agency of more than one wrong-doer. Where human judgments are unmerciful in loading one with the guilt of many, the mercy of God appears in apportioning to each no more than is strictly his own. To this we have to add the work of mercy in the forgiveness of sins—the blotting out of offences by the kiss that makes the prodigal again at one with the father—the inspirations of filial trust in the grace of God, by which the forgiven one is empowered to retrieve and repair the past, till the tear of repentance is dry in the joy of a complete remission of his sins. (*J. M. Whiton, Ph.D.*)

Ver. 12. **Swear not.**—*Against rash and vain swearing*:—I. Let us consider THE NATURE OF AN OATH, and what we do when we adventure to swear. It is an "assuming the name of our God," and applying it to our purpose, to countenance and confirm what we say. It is an invocation of God as a most faithful witness, concerning the truth of our words, or the sincerity of our meaning. It is an appeal to God as a most upright Judge, whether we do prevaricate in asserting what we do not believe true, or in promising what we are not firmly resolved to perform. It is a formal engagement of God to be the Avenger of our trespassing in violation of truth or faith. It is a "binding our souls" with a most strict and solemn obligation, to answer before God, and to undergo the issue of His judgment about what we affirm to undertake. Whence we may collect that swearing doth require great modesty and composedness of spirit, very serious consideration and solicitous care that we be not rude and saucy with God, "in taking up His name," and prostituting it to vile or mean uses; that we do not abuse or debase His authority, by citing it to aver falsehoods or impertinences; that we do not slight His venerable justice, by rashly provoking it against us; that we do not precipitantly throw our souls into most dangerous snares and intricacies. II. We may consider THAT SWEARING, AGREEABLY TO ITS NATURE AND TENDENCY, IS REPRESENTED IN HOLY SCRIPTURE AS A SPECIAL PART OF RELIGIOUS WORSHIP; in the due performance of which we avow God for the Governor of the world, piously acknowledging His principal attributes and special prerogatives; it also intimates a pious trust and confidence in Him. If we do presume to offer this service, we should do it in the manner appointed by God Himself; the cause of it must be very needful or expedient, the design honest and useful; otherwise we desecrate swearing, and are guilty of profaning a most sacred ordinance. III. We may consider THAT THE SWEARING PROHIBITED IS VERY NOXIOUS TO HUMAN SOCIETY. As by the rare and reverent use of oaths their dignity is upheld, and their obligation kept fast; so by the frequent and negligent application of them, by the prostituting them to every mean and toyish purpose, their respect will be quite lost, their strength will be loosed, they will prove unserviceable to public use. IV. Let us consider THAT RASH AND VAIN SWEARING IS VERY APT OFTEN TO BRING THE PRACTISER OF IT INTO THAT MOST HORRIBLE SIN OF PERJURY. For "false swearing," as Philo saith, "naturally springeth out of much swearing"; and "he" saith St. Chrysostom, "that sweareth continually, both willingly and unwillingly, both ignorantly and knowingly, both in earnest and in sport, being often transported by anger and many other things, will frequently forswear. It is confessed and manifest, that it is necessary for him that sweareth much to be perjurious." VI. Likewise THE USE OF RASH SWEARING WILL OFTEN ENGAGE A MAN IN UNDERTAKINGS VERY INCONVENIENT AND DETRIMENTAL TO HIMSELF. VII. Let us consider THAT SWEARING IS A SIN OF ALL OTHERS PECULIARLY CLAMOROUS, AND PROVOCATIVE OF DIVINE JUDGMENT. God is hardly so much concerned, or in a manner constrained, to punish any other sin as this. He is bound in honour and interest to vindicate His name from the abuse, His authority from the contempt, His holy ordinance from the profanation, which it doth infer. VIII. Farther (passing over the special laws against it, the mischievous consequences of it, the sore punishments appointed to it), we may consider THAT TO COMMON SENSE VAIN SWEARING IS A VERY UNREASONABLE AND ILL-FAVOURED PRACTICE, GREATLY MISBECOMING ANY SOBER, WORTHY, OR HONEST PERSON; but especially most absurd and incongruous to a Christian. IX. THE PRACTICE OF SWEARING GREATLY DISPARAGES HIM THAT USES IT, AND DEROGATES FROM HIS CREDIT, INASMUCH AS IT SIGNIFIES THAT HE DOES NOT CONFIDE IN HIS OWN REPUTATION; by it he authorises others to distrust him; it renders what he says to be in reason suspicious, as discovering him to be void of conscience and discretion, &c. X. TO EXCUSE THESE FAULTS THE SWEARER WILL BE FORCED TO CONFESS THAT HIS OATHS ARE NO MORE THAN WASTE AND INSIGNIFICANT WORDS; deprecating the being taken for

serious, or to be understood that he means anything by them. XI. But farther, ON HIGHER ACCOUNTS THIS IS A VERY UNCIVIL AND UNMANNERLY PRACTICE: some vain persons take it for a genteel and graceful accomplishment; but in truth there is no practice more crossing the genuine nature of gentility, or misbecoming persons well born and well bred. XII. Moreover, the words of our Lord, when He forbad this practice, SUGGEST ANOTHER CONSIDERATION AGAINST IT DEDUCIBLE FROM THE CAUSES AND SOURCES OF IT. XIII. Farther, THIS OFFENCE MAY BE AGGRAVATED BY CONSIDERING THAT IT HATH NO STRONG TEMPTATION ALLURING TO IT; that it gratifies no sense, yields no profit, procures no honour: the vain swearer has not the common plea of human infirmity to excuse him. XIV. Let us consider that, as we ourselves with all our members and powers were chiefly designed and made to glorify our Maker, which is our greatest privilege, SO OUR TONGUE AND SPEAKING FACULTY WERE GIVEN US TO DECLARE OUR ADMIRATION AND REVERENCE OF HIM, exhibit our love and gratitude towards Him, to profess our trust in Him, to celebrate His praises and avow His benefits: wherefore to apply this to any impious discourse, and to profane His holy name, is an unnatural abuse of it, and horrid ingratitude towards Him. Likewise a secondary and worthy use of speech is to promote the good of our neighbour, according to the precept of the apostle (Eph. iv. 29), but the practice of vain swearing serves to corrupt him, and instil into him a contempt of religion. XV. Lastly, we should consider TWO THINGS; first, that our blessed Saviour, who did and suffered so much for us, and who said, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments," thus positively hath enjoined: "But I say unto you, swear not at all": secondly, we shall consider well the reason with which St. James enforces the point, and the sting in the close of the text; "but above all things, my brethren, swear not, lest ye fall into condemnation." (*I. Barrow, D.D.*) *The prohibition of swearing*:—There was an old saying, now unhappily quite grotesque in its incongruity with facts, that "an Englishman's word is as good as his bond." What Christ and St. James say is that a Christian's word should be as good as his oath. There ought to be no need of oaths. Anything over and above simple affirming or denying "cometh of the evil one." It is because Satan, the father of lies, has introduced falsehood into the world that oaths have come into use. Among Christians there should be no untruthfulness, and therefore no oaths. The use of oaths is an index of the presence of evil; it is a symptom of the prevalence of falsehood. But the use of oaths is not only a sign of the existence of mischief, it is also apt to be productive of mischief. It is apt to produce a belief that there are two kinds of truth, one of which it is a serious thing to violate, viz., when you are on your oath; but the other of which it is a harmless, or at least a venial thing to violate, viz., when falsehood is only falsehood, and not perjury. And this, both among Jews and among Christians, produces the further mischievous refinement that some oaths are more binding than others, and that only when the most stringent form of oath is employed is there any real obligation to speak the truth. How disastrous all such distinctions are to the interests of truth, abundant experience has testified: for a common result is this—that people believe that they are free to lie as much as they please, so long as the lie is not supported by the particular kind of oath which they consider to be binding. But the main question is whether the prohibition is absolute; whether our Lord and St. James forbid the use of oaths for any purpose whatever; and it must be admitted that the first impression which we derive from their words is that they do. This view is upheld by not a few Christians as the right interpretation of both passages. But further investigation does not confirm the view which is derived from a first impression as to the meaning of the words. Against it we have, first, the fact that the Mosaic Law not only allowed, but enjoined the taking of an oath in certain circumstances; and Christ would hardly have abrogated the law, and St. James would hardly have contradicted it, without giving some explanation of so unusual a course; secondly, the indisputable practice of the early Church, of St. Paul, and of our Lord Himself. (*A. Plummer, D.D.*) *A warning against oaths*:—1. It has not been an uncommon thing for men to take vows in trouble, as if they would do them any good. They have promised if certain ends could be attained to pursue certain courses of life; and sometimes to give a supposed greater efficacy, they have bound themselves with oaths. The Hebrew Christians in the first century were peculiarly exposed to this. The evil of it lay in transferring their confidence from the grace and power of God to the vows they were making, and thus begetting in them a strong tendency to confidence in magic. 2. It may have been a warning to them, not to swear when they were brought before Roman magistrates, or were in the

company of Pagan persecutors, in order to show by such words that they were not Christians. 3. The injunction might have applied to the temptation there was among them to conspire together in sworn bands against their persecutors; as was frequently the case in their own age and has been ever since. James saw the futility of all seditious movements. He saw that it plunged his brethren only into deeper and deeper troubles; wherefore, he besought them not to seek such modes of relief, not to bind themselves to others, or others to themselves, in order to effect deliverance, but to put all in the hand of God. 4. But whether any or all of these considerations were in the mind of our author, it is quite certain that he pronounced a very emphatic denunciation against profanity. This is a sin against God and against one's self. It is a sin against God, because it deprives Him of the honour due to His name, and is in direct disobedience to His command. The sin is not mitigated by modifications of phraseology. In the next place, it is hurtful to any man to become an habitual swearer. It is an effectual bar to his ever being great. It is utterly impossible, whatever other gifts and opportunities be afforded, that a man shall ever reach the utmost possible greatness of humanity, who himself fails to have reverence for that which is great. Reverence is the spring of all aspiration, the foundation for all lofty upbuilding of character. (*C. F. Deems, D.D.*) *Profane swearing*:—The vice of profane swearing (and all swearing about ordinary matters is profane) is a strange one. Where is the pleasure of it? Where, before it becomes a fashion or a habit, is the temptation to it? Where, in any case, is the sense of it? There is pleasure in gluttony, in drunkenness, in lust, in pride, in avarice, in revenge. But where is the pleasure in an oath? The sensualist, the hypocrite, the miser, and the murderer can at least plead strong temptation, can at least urge that they get something, however pitiful, in exchange for eternal loss. But what can the blasphemer plead? what does he get in exchange for his soul? In times of strong excitement it is no doubt a relief to the feelings to use strong language; but what is gained by making the strong language trebly culpable by adding blasphemy to it? Besides which, there is the sadly common case of those who use blasphemous words when there is no temptation to give vent to strong feeling in strong language, who habitually swear in cold blood. Let no one deceive himself with the paltry excuse that he cannot help it, or that there is no harm in it. A resolution to do something disagreeable every time an oath escaped one's lips would soon bring about a cure. And let those who profess to think that there is no harm in idle swearing ask themselves whether they expect to repeat that plea when they give an account for every idle word at the day of judgment (Matt. xii. 36). (*A. Plummer, D.D.*) *Judicial oaths*:—That the condemnation does not extend to the solemn judicial use of oaths we see in the facts—1. That our Lord answered when questioned as on oath by Caiaphas (Matt. xxvi. 63, 64); and—2. That St. Paul at times used modes of expression which are essentially of the nature of an oath (2 Cor. i. 23; Rom. i. 9; Gal. i. 20; Phil. i. 8). (*Dean Plumptre.*) *The practice of the Essenes*:—It is not without interest to note that in this respect the practice of the Essenes, in their efforts after holiness, was after the pattern of the preaching of St. James. They, too, avoided oaths as being no less an evil than perjury itself (Josephus, "Wars" ii. 8, 85). They, however, with a somewhat strange inconsistency, bound the members of their own society by "tremendous oaths" of obedience and secrecy. (*Ibid.*) *Evil of swearing*:—Swear not at all, lest by swearing ye come to a facility of swearing; from a facility to a custom; and from a custom ye fall into perjury. (*Augustine.*)

Ver. 13. **Is any among you afflicted? let him pray.**—*Affliction's resource*:—The apostle here suggests the grand resource for affliction—it is God. We would render the word "pray," not in its narrower import of mere petitioning, but in its more enlarged construction, of converse, of fellowship, with God. I. GOD, THE EXCHANGE, THE COMPENSATION, FOR FORFEITED JOYS. If the poor child of adversity would be persuaded to lift himself from that scene of his sore travail to the fountain of supreme blessedness, to soar from that shipwreck of his creature joys to the uncreated centre of joy, then would he solve the grand moral of affliction. There is nothing but mockery in those spurious expedients of relief to which the worldling resorts. But there is ineffable beatitude in God. What a transition! From "broken cisterns, which can hold no water," to "the fountain of living waters"; from fallacious and treacherous joys to the fountain of perennial joy; from the very wreck and demolition of earthly hopes to Him who is the sun and consummation of all hope. Even believers are slow to make God their prime solace. They are

prone to transfer themselves to some new idol when one has been taken away; to doat with a morbid tenacity on visions of the past; to feed on the dust and ashes of their own profuse lamentations—the morose wakings of excessive grief. To all such the watchword prescribes itself—Betake you to God. II. GOD, THE CENTRE OF THE SOUL'S FELLOWSHIP. It is very marked, in the history of affliction, what a charm communion of mind with mind exerts. If there be any unison of sentiment at all, the reciprocity which occurs is most congenial; in point of fact it is one of the expedients to which affliction betakes itself to arrest the converse of kindred minds. There is probably no more potent creature resource. And we have only to estimate what a transcendent charm must lie in fellowship with God, in communion with Him who is consummate wisdom and excellence, and truth and benignity. III. GOD, THE FOUNTAIN OF EXHAUSTLESS SYMPATHIES. There is nothing which exerts such a charm in the hour of adversity as tender, sensitive fellow-feeling. And hence the downcast and sorrowful seek some sympathetic bosom into which they may pour their griefs. But for a sympathy surpassing all other sympathies, we point you to Christ. Repair to that bosom, all fraught with fellow-feeling; throw thyself into the embrace of that yearning tenderness. IV. GOD, A PRESENT HELP IN TROUBLE. There are two aspects in which this holds good. On the one hand, God is specially ready to lend His ear in the day of His people's affliction; and, next, the succour which He supplies is specially adapted to their emergency. (*Adam Forman.*) *Prayer in affliction:*—The family of the afflicted is a large one, and a wide-spread one. It forms a great nation on the earth; and its members are to be found in every country, and in every rank and condition of life. It is an old nation. The first human beings were the first members of it; and an unbroken succession has kept it up ever since. This is the one nation in the world that shows no symptom of decline or fall. It is an honourable nation. There was One belonged to it whose name hallows it: our Blessed Redeemer was a Man of sorrows. The wisest of men found that in much wisdom is much grief. Great forms of majesty: the just whose memory is blessed, the kind whose memory is loved, the ancient seer, the inspired apostle, the crowned martyr rise before the mind as it recalls the past, and reads the long roll of afflicted men. It is our own nation. Affliction is the birthright of all. Some of you feel it is so at this moment. Many have found it so, in the experience of departed days. All will find it so, sooner or later. "Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray." This is not the prescription of mere worldly wisdom, for the cure of great grief. There is no difficulty in this world in finding people who will give you advice as to what you ought to do, when great sorrow comes your way; Try change of scene, they will say; Go to places that suggest no sad associations and call up no bitter thoughts: Open your heart to the tide of cheerfulness that is flowing all around you. Or perhaps they may say, Go into society. Mix with your fellow-men. Or they will bid you trust to time—time the never-failing comforter. Or, if nothing else will do—if your affliction be one that clings to your life, and makes the condition of your being—then the worldly counsel would be to bear your grief like a man. Now I do not mean to say, nor did the apostle mean to say, but what there is some wisdom and some good in all these things. Still, the good man did not think that any of these ways of meeting affliction was the best. His way is very shortly named. "Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray!" No matter what be the cause of your affliction: no matter what be the particular pang with which it rends your heart: no matter what be the constitution of your body, or the complexion of your mind: here is a remedy which the apostle prescribes, without explanation or restriction, for all sorts and conditions of men. Surely then, if the apostle be right, there must be something very strange about prayer. The diseases of the body are many; but then the remedies which physicians prescribe for their cure are very various. But it seems that St. James was of opinion that no afflicted man could ever do wrong when he turned to prayer. And probably we may find the reason why the apostle attached such a mighty efficacy to prayer, when we consider two things about it. 1. First, the afflicted person should pray, because prayer is the best way to bring about the removal of his affliction. In speaking to Christian people, it is needless to say that prayer does not consist of words vaguely cast adrift with no clear end: prayer is a real speaking to a God who hears: a real asking Him for something, about which He will consider whether or not it be good for us: and then our asking, if it be good for us, will truly induce Him to give it us. And yet, I fear that all of us are often very far from properly feeling what a great reality there is in the power of prayer. When a friend you loved lay sick of some dangerous malady, tossing

restlessly on a sleepless pillow; and when you had mixed the composing draught and given it to his feverish lips, and then lifted up your heart to God on his behalf, did you feel that that prayer might be just as real a cause of repose or of convalescence as anything that medical skill could suggest, or careful love supply? When you were involved in some perplexing entanglement, were you sure that the silent moments you spent in prayer to your Maker, were just as useful towards clearing up the way before you, as all the address and prudence you were master of? Or, when sickness came your way, and you counted weary days of unrest and suffering, were you then sure that the morning and evening supplication might stand you in better stead than all your physician's skill? Do you, in short, remember every day of your life, that prayer is the best step towards any end you are aiming at; and that, of all the means that tend to bring about the purpose you are seeking to accomplish, prayer is the very last that you can in prudence omit? If you fail to do all this, you are showing by your practice that you do not truly feel the power of the agency which by prayer you can set in motion. 2. But I dare not say that prayer will certainly take away the affliction for the removal of which you ask. It will do so only if it be God's will it should; and He knows best whether your prayer should be directly granted. It cannot be, then, that St. James would have the afflicted pray, merely because by prayer they might reasonably expect to get quit of their affliction: there must be something about prayer even more salutary than its virtue to change the natural course of events: and apart altogether from the hope that thus he may find escape from the cause of his sorrow, there must be good reason in the nature of things why the afflicted man should pray. And such reason there is. Prayer has been the talisman that has made years of constant pain to be remembered as the happiest period of life; prayer is that which has made many a poor sufferer tell that it was good for him or her to be afflicted, for affliction had been the sharp spur to turn those feet into the narrow way, which otherwise might have trodden the broad road to perdition. Prayer, earnest prayer offered in the Saviour's name, never yet went for nothing. If it did not bring the thing it asked for, it brought the grace to do without it: but it never went to the winds. These sufferers found it so. Day by day, gentle resignation kept stealing into their soul, till not a thought ever disturbed their quiet, of what they might have been and were not: and till, from the bottom of their heart, they could pity the worldling that pitied them. For their affliction had been the severe discipline by which God had schooled them for a better country, and weaned their affections from the things of time and sense. (*A. K. H. Boyd, D.D.*) *Christian varieties*:—I. CHRISTIANS ARE SUBJECT TO A VARIETY OF EXPERIENCE. "Afflicted." "Merry." Suffering. Enjoyment. 1. They imply the existence of two opposite principles: good and evil. 2. The susceptibility of the human heart to the influences of circumstances. Like Æolian harp swept by wind. Emotions rise and fall with events. 3. The unsettledness of human life. (1) All are subject to them. (*a*) Both are found at the same time in different persons. (*b*) Both are found at different times in the same persons. (2) No one rests long in either. (*a*) The change from the one to the other is sometimes sudden. (*b*) The change from one to the other is sometimes extreme. (3) They are necessary—(*a*) To prevent evil. Pride on the one hand; despair on the other. (*b*) To promote good. Complete development of character. (4) They are under Divine control. II. CHRISTIANS HAVE A CORRESPONDING VARIETY OF RELIGIOUS DUTY TO DISCHARGE. "Pray." "Sing psalms." This teaches—1. The naturalness of religion. Instinctively men pray in troubles and sing in joy. Nothing arbitrary in piety. 2. The permanence of religion. Whether God "gives" or "takes away," the response is, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." 3. The value of religion. (1) In affliction it teaches prayer. This means communion with God. He is almighty, loving, unchangeable. (2) In prosperity it teaches praises. (*a*) Acknowledgment of the Author of it. (*b*) Satisfaction with the measure of it. (*c*) Enjoyment of the possession of it. Happiness is a religious duty; recommends religion; most resembles heaven. Conclusion: 1. Misery is possible in prosperity. Belshazzar, &c. 2. Joy is possible in adversity. "Rejoice in tribulation." 3. Uniformity of experience and duty in heaven. No prayer; no affliction. All prosperous; all sing. (*B. D. Johns.*) *Discipline of affliction*:—When one considers the amount of affliction which exists in the world, we may well wonder that the simple remedy in the text is as yet an untasted medicine to so many. Can it be that it is too simple? Can it be that, as there are so many who rate the efficacy of drugs by their loathsomeness to the taste, so men would rather seek some painful process or mighty labour than the simple means which God's Word provides? Such, indeed, was the temper of

Naaman (2 Kings v. 11, 12). And it is no uncommon temper; for men do not like to be treated like children, and they forget that unless they are so treated they lose the children's blessing, the children's kingdom! He who struggles with affliction without prayer struggles in his own strength alone, and rejects every other. And what is this but struggling against God; wrestling with Him, but not as Jacob did; and, therefore, coming off from the contest crippled indeed, but without the blessing which the patriarch won? Thus, indeed, a heart may be in some measure and in a few cases (for in the great number nature will rebel and revenge herself) hardened, rather than strengthened, under suffering. But a miserable comfort it would be, even though one did achieve a heart of stone! God grant that such an one may yet be smitten of God until the waters of healing gush forth! And in what spirit can affliction be received by persons who must believe, whether they will or no, that it comes from the hand of God? If not in the spirit of prayer, in what spirit besides? Must it not be even in the spirit of cursing? And cursing is a kind of miserable prayer; a prayer for evil, and not for good; a prayer, in fact, to the evil one instead of God. Those who have earnestly and perseveringly tried will not be at a loss to know the advantage of obeying the precept. But it will not be without use and interest even for them to recall the times of their trial—how they prayed, and how they were heard, in those extremities which brought them, as it were, immediately before the footstool and the mercy-seat of the Lord. It may be that they have never so prayed again—so passionately, so faithfully, so importunately! And it may be that this will explain many a failure in faith and duty, many a relapse into sin, which seemed impossible—ay, and was impossible—in the fervour of their devotion then! But there are many besides who have never tried. And these may ask the question, half-wondering, half-scoffing, "What will the afflicted man gain by praying? will he obtain the removal of his affliction?" In some cases he may obtain even this, but for the most part he will not. He must not expect it. Why should he expect it? How can he expect it, when he has once understood that his affliction comes from God? For what purpose but for good does God afflict those who pray to Him? And if for good, then, what good would it be to have the tribulation removed before it has had its perfect work? 1. The first answer to our prayers is patience under the trial. This is but little, indeed, in itself; but it is much when compared with anything that any other comforter can give. It makes a Christian look into his own heart; and it tells him—yea, makes him tell himself—how far less than his sins have deserved are all the chastisements which are laid upon him—how well, how mercifully he is dealt with by the God against whom he has sinned. And he has the conviction borne in upon his soul that he will not be tried above that he is able to bear, but that with every trial there will be given either the grace to withstand or a way to escape. 2. From patience, such patience as the mourner receives in answer to his prayer, there is a short, a scarcely perceptible step to comfort; and yet, short as the step is, this is a new gift, a most precious additional blessing. It dwells and reflects on the visitation which has called it forth; it realises His presence in the cloud; and, behold, the cloud becomes a pillar of fire giving light in the darkness! It sees the particular points in which mercy has tempered His judgments, and it feels, even if it cannot see, His lovingkindness interfused throughout the whole. And those who are thus comforted have a further and most precious privilege—to comfort others as none else can (2 Cor. i. 3, 4). It is the privilege of those who have been themselves cast into the furnace to give assurance of the Son of God walking with them in the midst of the fire. But comfort is not all we want; and God therefore gives us more. 3. More guidance we need, because our duties become by every trial new and multiplied. More strength we feel that we need, because our affliction has taught us our own weakness. But He has said that "His strength is sufficient for us; for in our weakness is His strength made perfect." He has taught His apostle, and us through him, to say, "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me"; as surely as Christ Himself taught us that "apart from Him we can do nothing." 4. And thus we are led on to look to the future: and that further blessing is revealed to us which our affliction is to work—the blessing of faith in God. By this we become no more servants, but friends, not only believing, but knowing what God doeth; not only obeying, but working with Him, through Christ, in His work. 5. And this brings hope with it; a hope unlike the earthly hopes which we have seen mocking us and coming to nought; or, if fulfilled, mocking us still more, till we loathed their fulfilment, and despised ourselves for indulging in them; but this, a hope that maketh not ashamed; for its root is in

the love of God and the Holy Spirit which He has given us; its blossom is in the multiplying graces with which the Saviour rewards every step in our sanctification; and its fruit is found in the certainty of that heavenly region where hope itself can no longer find a place, but dies into fruition, as the night dies into the morning. And can more still be said? Yes! there is one blessing further vouchsafed even in this world to those who are sanctified and purified by suffering, so much beyond all comfort and all hope, that the Christian who recognises it in the saints who are with Christ trembles and shrinks from appropriating it to himself, lest the very chastisements of God should minister to unchristian presumption. Yet it is written—written for our comfort and our glory—written, too, for our warning, lest we fall from such privilege and grace—that the children whom God chastises are thereby even conformed to the likeness of that only begotten Son who is the brightness of His Father's glory and the express image of His person. And if these are the earthly fruits of God's chastisements when sanctified by prayer, what are the heavenly? If these are even the earthly fruits—as most truly, most assuredly they are—who that has once tasted their power would pray for the withdrawal of his affliction, for the removal of the earthly trial which is working the eternal blessing? As we could not, as no Christian could pray—even though it were possible—to do away with the redeeming sufferings of His Saviour; so we may not, cannot wish deliverance from the sufferings whereby we are made unto Him. But as He prayed more earnestly in His agony, so must we in ours—not that the cup be removed, unless it be God's will, but that all His visitations may have their perfect work in us; that we may be indeed conformed to His likeness here; and that, with those who as joint-heirs with Him have entered into their inheritance, we may have our final consummation and bliss in His glory hereafter. (*Dean Scott.*) *Piety in unequal temporal conditions*:—1. Our temporal condition is various and diverse; now afflicted, and then merry. Our prosperity is like glass, brittle when shining. The complaint of the Church may be the motto of all the children of God (Psa. cii. 10). 2. This is the perfection of Christianity, to carry an equal pious mind in unequal conditions (Phil. iv. 12). Most men are fit but for one condition. Some cannot carry a full cup without spilling. Others cannot carry a full load without breaking. Sudden alterations perplex both body and mind. It is the mighty power of grace to keep the soul in an equal temper. 3. Several conditions require several duties. The Christian conversation is like a wheel—every spoke taketh its turn. God hath planted in a man affections for every condition, grace for every affection, and a duty for the exercise of every grace, and a season for every duty. The children of the Lord are "like trees planted by the rivers of water, that bring forth their fruit in due season" (Psa. i. 3). There is no time wherein God doth not invite us to Himself. It is wisdom to perform what is most seasonable. 4. It is of excellent advantage in religion to make use of the present affection; of sadness, to put us upon prayer; of mirth, to put us upon thanksgiving. The soul never worketh more sweetly than when it worketh in the force of some eminent affection. With what advantage may we strike when the iron is hot! When the affections are stirred up on a carnal occasion, convert them to a religious use (Jer. xxii. 10). When the affections are once raised, give them a right object, otherwise they are apt to degenerate and to offend in their measure, though their first occasion was lawful. 5. Prayer is the best remedy for sorrows. Griefs are eased by groans and utterance. We have great cause in afflictions to use the help of prayer. (1) That we may ask patience. If God lay on a great burden, cry for a strong back. (2) That we may ask constancy (Psa. cxxv. 3). (3) That we may ask hope, and trust and wait upon God for His fatherly love and care. (4) That we may ask a gracious improvement. The benefit of the rod is a fruit of the Divine grace, as well as the benefit of the Word. (5) That we may ask deliverance, with a submission to God's will (Psa. xxxiv. 7). 6. Thanksgiving, or singing to God's praise, is the proper duty in the time of mercies or comforts. It is God's bargain and our promise, that if He would "deliver us," we would "glorify Him" (Psa. l. 15). Mercies work one way or another; they either become the fuel of our lusts or our praises; either they make us thankful or wanton. Your condition is either a help or a hindrance in religion. Awaken yourselves to this service; every new mercy calleth for a new song. 7. Singing of psalms is a duty of the gospel. (*T. Manton.*) *Prayer in affliction*:—Who doubteth but God did mitigate the heaviness of Joseph, although He sent not hasty deliverance in his long imprisonment; and that as He gave him favour in the sight of the jailer, so inwardly also He gave him consolation in spirit? (*John Knox.*) *Prayer and*

praise v. oaths (ver. 12):—Prayer and praise, or (in one word) worship, according to St. James, is the Christian remedy for "allaying or carrying off the fever of the mind." (*A. Plummer, D.D.*) *Use of sickness*:—During Dr. Payson's last illness, a friend coming into his room said, "Well, I am sorry to see you lying there on your back." "Do you not know what God puts us on our backs for?" said Dr. Payson, smiling. "No," was the answer. "In order that we may look upward." **Is any merry? let him sing psalms.** —*Religious worship a remedy for excitements*:—Indisposition of body shows itself in a pain somewhere or other—a distress which draws our thoughts to it, impedes our ordinary way of going on, and throws the mind off its balance. Such, too, is indisposition of the soul, of whatever sort, be it passion or affection, hope or fear, joy or grief. It takes us off from the clear contemplation of the next world, ruffles us, and makes us restless. In a word, it is what we call an excitement of mind. Excitements are the indisposition of the mind; and of these excitements in different ways the services of Divine worship are the proper antidotes. How they are so shall now be considered. 1. Excitements are of two kinds—secular and religious. First, let us consider secular excitements. Such is the pursuit of gain, or of power, or of distinction. Amusements are excitements; the applause of a crowd, emulations, hopes, risks, quarrels, contests, disappointments, successes. In such cases the object pursued naturally absorbs the mind, and excludes all thoughts but those relating to itself. Thus a man is sold over into bondage to this world. He has one idea, and one only before him, which becomes his idol. The most ordinary of these excitements, at least in this country, is the pursuit of gain. A man may live from week to week in the fever of a decent covetousness, to which he gives some more specious name (for instance, desire of doing his duty by his family), till the heart of religion is eaten out of him. Now, then, observe what is the remedy. "Is any afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms." Here we see one very momentous use of prayer and praise to all of us; it breaks the current of worldly thoughts. And this is the singular benefit of stated worship, that it statedly interferes with the urgency of worldly excitements. Our daily prayer, morning and evening, suspends our occupations of time and sense. And especially the daily prayers of the Church do this. It is impossible (under God's blessing) for any one to attend the daily service of the Church "with reverence and godly fear," and a wish and effort to give his thoughts to it, and not find himself thereby sobered and brought to recollection. What kinder office is there, when a man is agitated, than for a friend to put his hand upon him by way of warning, to startle and recall him? It often has the effect of saving us from angry words, or extravagant talking, or inconsiderate jesting, or rash resolves. And such is the blessed effect of the sacred services on Christians busied about many things, reminding them of the one thing needful, and keeping them from being drawn into the great whirlpool of time and sense. 2. Next, let us consider how religious excitements are set right by the same Divine medicine. If we had always continued in the way of light and truth, obeying God from childhood, doubtless we should know little of those swellings and tumults of the soul which are so common among us. Men who have grown up in the faith and fear of God have a calm and equable piety; so much so, that they are often charged on that very account with being dull, cold, formal, insensible, dead to the next world. Now, it stands to reason that a man who has always lived in the contemplation and improvement of his gospel privileges, will not feel that agitating surprise and vehemence of joy which he would feel, and ought to feel, if he had never known anything of them before. The jailer, who for the first time heard the news of salvation through Christ, gave evident signs of transport. This certainly is natural and right; still, it is a state of excitement, and, if I might say it, all states of excitement have dangerous tendencies. Now, this advice is often given: "Indulge the excitement; when you flag, seek for another; live upon the thought of God; go about doing good; let your light shine before men; tell them what God has done for your soul." By all which is meant, when we go into particulars, that they ought to fancy that they have something above all other men; ought to neglect their worldly calling, or at best only bear it as a cross; to join themselves to some particular set of religionists; to take part in this or that religious society; go to hear strange preachers, and obtrude their new feelings and new opinions upon others, at times proper and improper. If there was a time when those particular irregularities, which now are so common, were likely to abound, it was in the primitive Church. Men who had lived all their lives in the pollutions of sin unspeakable, who had been involved in the darkness of heathenism, were suddenly

brought to the light of Christian truth. Their sins were all freely forgiven them, clean washed away in the waters of baptism. A new world of ideas was opened upon them, and the most astonishing objects presented to their faith. What a state of transport must have been theirs! And what an excited and critical state was theirs! Critical and dangerous in proportion to its real blessedness; for in proportion to the privileges we enjoy, ever will be our risk of misusing them. How, then, did they escape that enthusiasm which now prevails, that irreverence, immodesty, and rudeness? If at any time the outward framework of Christianity was in jeopardy, surely it was then. How was it the ungovernable elements within it did not burst forth and shiver to pieces the vessel which contained them? How was it that for fifteen hundred years the Church was preserved from those peculiar affections of mind and irregularities of feeling and conduct which now torment it like an ague? Now, certainly, looking at external and second causes, the miracles had much to do in securing this blessed sobriety in the early Christians. These kept them from wilfulness and extravagance, and tempered them to the spirit of godly fear. But the more ordinary means was one which we may enjoy at this day if we choose—the course of religious services, the round of prayer and praise, which, indeed, was also part of St. Paul's discipline, as we have seen, and which has a most gracious effect upon the restless and excited mind, giving it an outlet, yet withal calming, soothing, directing, purifying it. Let restless persons attend upon the worship of the Church, which will attune their minds in harmony with Christ's law, while it unburdens them. Did not St. Paul "pray" during his three days of blindness? Afterwards he was praying in the temple, when Christ appeared to him. Let this be well considered. Is any one desirous of gaining comfort to his soul, of bringing Christ's presence home to his very heart, and of doing the highest and most glorious things for the whole world? I have told him how to proceed. Let him praise God; let holy David's psalter be as familiar words in his mouth, his daily service, ever repeated, yet ever new and ever sacred. Let him pray; especially let him intercede. Doubt not the power of faith and prayer to effect all things with God. However you try, you cannot do works to compare with those which faith and prayer accomplish in the name of Christ. (*J. H. Newman, D.D.*) *A spirit religiously cheerful*:—When the poet Carpani inquired of his friend Haydn how it happened that his church music was always so cheerful, the great composer made a most beautiful reply. "I cannot," he said, "make it otherwise. I write according to the thoughts I feel; when I think upon God, my heart is so full of joy that the notes dance and leap, as it were, from my pen; and since God has given me a cheerful heart, it will be pardoned me that I serve Him with a cheerful spirit." *A poor voice for psalm singing*:—Old Thomas Fuller, who was as noted for his quaintness as for the wisdom of his remarks, had a defective voice; but he did not refuse to praise on this account. "Lord," he said, "my voice by nature is harsh and untunable, and it is vain to lavish any art to better it. Can my singing of psalms be pleasing to Thine ears, which is unpleasant to my own? Yet, though I cannot chant with the nightingale, or chirp with the blackbird, I had rather chatter with the swallow than be altogether silent. Now what my music wants in sweetness, let it have in sense. Yea, Lord, create in me a new heart, therein to make melody, and I will be contented with my old voice, until in due time, being admitted into the choir of heaven, I shall have another voice more harmonious bestowed upon me." So let it be with us. Let us ever sing in the same spirit and in the same joy and hope. *True merriment*:—Gr. *εὐθυμεῖ*—is he right set, well hung on, as we say? All true mirth is from the rectitude of the mind, from a right frame of soul that sets and shows itself in a cheerful countenance. (*J. Trapp.*)

Vers. 14, 15. **Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders.**—*The elders of the Church, the anointing of the sick, and extreme unction*:—I. The first thing to be noted in connection with this sending for the elders of the congregation by the sick man is, that in this Epistle, which is one of the very earliest among the Christian writings which have come down to us, we already find a DISTINCTION MADE BETWEEN CLERGY AND LAITY. St. James assumes as a matter of course, that every congregation has elders, that is a constituted ecclesiastical government. What the precise functions of the clergy were is not told us with much detail or precision; but it is quite clear that whatever the functions were they were spiritual rather than secular, and were duties which a select minority had to exercise in reference to the rest; they were not such as any one might exercise towards any

one. In the present case the sick person is not to send for any members of the congregation, but for certain who hold a definite, and apparently an official position. If any Christians could discharge the function in question, St. James would not have given the sick person the trouble of summoning the elders rather than those people who chanced to be near at hand. And it is quite clear that not all Christians are over all other Christians in the Lord; that not all are to rule, and all to obey and submit; therefore not all have the same authority to "admonish" others, or to "watch in behalf of their souls, as they that shall give account." The reason why the elders are to be summoned is stated in different ways by different writers, but with a large amount of substantial agreement. "As being those in whom the power and grace of the Holy Spirit more particularly appeared," says Calvin. "Because when they pray it is not much less than if the whole Church prayed," says Bengel. St. James, says Neander, "regards the presbyters in the light of organs of the Church, acting in its name"; and, "As the presbyters acted in the name of the whole Church, and each one as a member of the body felt that he needed its sympathy and intercession, and might count upon it; individuals should therefore, in cases of sickness, send for the presbyters of the Church. These were to offer prayer on their behalf." The intercession which St. James recommends, says Stier, is "intercession for the sick on the part of the representatives of the Church, . . . not merely the intercession of friends or brethren as such, but in the name of the whole community, one of whose members is suffering." II. The second point of interest is THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK PERSON BY THE ELDERS. What purpose was the oil intended to serve? Was it purely symbolical? and if so, of what? Was it merely for the refreshment of the sick person, giving relief to parched skin and stiffened limbs? Was it medicinal, with a view to a permanent cure by natural means? Was it the channel or instrument of a supernatural cure? Was it an aid to the sick person's faith? One or both of the last two suggestions may be accepted as the most probable solution. And the reason why oil was selected as a channel of Divine power and an aid to faith was, that it was believed to have healing properties. It is easier to believe when visible means are used than when nothing is visible, and it is still easier to believe when the visible means appear to be likely to contribute to the desired effect. Christ twice used spittle in curing blindness, probably because spittle was believed to be beneficial to the eyesight. And that oil was supposed to be efficacious as medicine is plain from numerous passages both in and outside of Holy Scripture (Isa. i. 6; Luke x. 34). A mixture of oil and wine was used for the malady which attacked the army of Ælius Gallus, and was applied both externally and internally. His physicians caused Herod the Great to be bathed in a vessel full of oil when he was supposed to be at death's door. Celsus recommends rubbing with oil in the case of fevers and some other ailments. But it is obvious that St. James does not recommend the oil merely as medicine, for he does not say that the oil shall cure the sick person, nor yet that the oil with prayer shall do so; but that "the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick," without mentioning the oil at all. On the other hand, he says that the anointing is to be done by the elders "in the name of the Lord." If the anointing were merely medicinal, it might have been performed by any one, without waiting for the elders. And it can hardly be supposed that oil was believed to be a remedy for all diseases. On the other hand, it seems to be too much to say that the anointing had nothing to do with bodily healing at all, and was simply a means of grace for the sick. Thus Döllinger says, "This is no gift of healing, for that was not confined to the presbyters; and for that Christ prescribed not unction, but laying on of hands. Had he meant that, St. James would have bidden or advised the sick to send for one who possessed this gift, whether presbyter or layman. . . . What was to be conveyed by this medium was, therefore, only sometimes recovery or relief, always consolation, revival of confidence and forgiveness of sins, on condition, of course, of faith and repentance." But although the gift of healing was not confined to the elders, yet in certain cases they may have exercised it; and although Christ prescribed the laying on of hands (Mark xvi. 18), yet the apostles sometimes healed by anointing with oil (Mark vi. 13). And that "shall save him that is sick," means "shall cure him," is clear both from the context, and also from the use of the same word elsewhere (Matt. ix. 22; Mark v. 23; John xi. 12). And "the Lord shall raise him up" makes this interpretation still more certain. The same expression is used of Simon's wife's mother (Mark i. 31). That St. James makes the promise of recovery without any restriction may at first sight appear to be surprising; but in this he is only following the example of our

Lord, who makes similar promises, and leaves it to the thought and experience of Christians to find out the limitations to them. St. James is only applying to a particular case what Christ promised in general terms (Mark xi. 24; Matt. xvii. 20; John xiv. 14, xvi. 23). The words "in My Name" point to the limitation; they do not, of course, refer to the use of the formula "through Jesus Christ our Lord," but to the exercise of the spirit of Christ: "Not My will, but Thine be done." The union of our will with the will of God is the very first condition of successful prayer. The apostles themselves had no indiscriminate power of healing (Phil. ii. 27; 2 Tim. iv. 20; 2 Cor. xii. 7–9). How, then, can we suppose that St. James credited the elders of every congregation with an unrestricted power of healing? He leaves it to the common sense and Christian submission of his readers to understand that the elders have no power to cancel the sentence of death pronounced on the whole human race. To pray that any one should be exempt from this sentence would be not faith, but presumption. Of the employment of the rite here prescribed by St. James we have very little evidence in the early ages of the Church. Tertullian mentions a cure by anointing, but it is not quite a case in point. The Emperor Septimius Severus believed that he had been cured from an illness through oil administered by a Christian named Proculus Torpacion, steward of Evodias, and in gratitude for it he maintained him in the palace for the rest of his life. Origen quotes the passage from St. James, and seems to understand the sickness to be that of sin. He interpolates thus: "Let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them lay their hands on him, anointing him with oil," &c. This perhaps tells us how the rite was administered in Alexandria in his time; or it may mean that Origen understood the "pray over him" of St. James to signify imposition of hands. With him, then, the forgiveness of sins is the healing. A century and a half later Chrysostom takes a further step, and employs the passage to show that priests have the power of absolution. "For not only at the time when they regenerate us, but afterwards also, they have authority to forgive sins." And then he quotes James v. 14, 15. It is evident that this is quite alien to the passage. The sickness and the sins are plainly distinguished by St. James, and nothing is said about absolution by the elders, who pray for his recovery, and (no doubt) for his forgiveness. When we reach the sixth century the evidence for the custom of anointing the sick with holy oil becomes abundant. At first any one with a reputation for sanctity might bless the oil—not only laymen, but women. But in the West the rule gradually spread from Rome that the sacred oil for the sick must be "made" by the bishop. In the East this has never been observed. Theodore of Tarsus, Archbishop of Canterbury, says that according to the Greeks it is lawful for presbyters to make the chrism for the sick. And this rule continues to this day. One priest suffices; but it is desirable to get seven, if possible. But the chief step in the development is taken when not only the blessing of the oil, but the administering of it to the sick, is reserved to the clergy. In Bede's time this restriction was not yet made, as is clear from his comments on the passage, although even then it was customary for priests to administer the unction. But by the tenth century this restriction had probably become general. It became connected with the communion of the sick, which of course required a priest, and then with the Viaticum, or communion of the dying; but even then the unction seems to have preceded the last communion. The name "Extreme Unction" (*unctio extrema*), as a technical ecclesiastical term, is not older than the twelfth century. Other terms are "Last Oil" (*ultimum oleum*) and "Sacrament of the Departing" (*sacramentum exeuntium*). But when we have reached these phrases we are very far indeed from the ordinance prescribed by St. James, and from that which was practised by the apostles. "And if he have committed sins, it shall be forgiven him." We ought perhaps rather to translate, "Even if he have committed sins, it shall be forgiven him." The meaning would seem to be, "even if his sickness has been produced by his sins, his sin shall be forgiven, and his sickness cured." It is possible, but unnatural, to join the first clause of this sentence with the preceding one: "the Lord shall raise him up, even if he have committed sins." In that case "It shall be forgiven him" forms a very awkward independent sentence, without conjunction. The ordinary arrangement of the clauses is much better: even if the malady is the effect of the man's own wrong-doing, the prayer offered by faith—his faith, and that of the elders—shall still prevail. (*A. Plummer, D.D.*) *The sick sending for the elders of the Church*:—1. From the supposition, "Is any among you sick?" The note is obvious. Christ's worshippers are not exempted from sickness, no more than any other affliction. Those that are dear

to God have their share of miseries. Austin asketh, If he were beloved, how came he to be sick? In the outward accidents of life God would make no difference. 2. From that "let him call for the elders." Note that the chief care of a sick man should be for his soul. Physicians are to be called in their place, but not first, not chiefly. Sickness is God's messenger to call us to meet with God. 3. From that "let him call." The elders must be sent for. A man that hath continued in opposition is loath to submit at the last hour and to call the elders to his spiritual assistance. Aquinas saith that this last office must not be performed but to those that require it. Possidonius, in the life of Austin, saith that Austin was wont of his own accord to visit the poor, the fatherless, and the widow, but the sick never till he was called. It is indeed suitable to true religion to "visit the fatherless," (chap. i. 27); but the sick must call for the elders. 4. From that "the elders." For our comfort in sickness it is good to call in the help of the guides and officers of the Church. They, excelling in gifts, are best able to instruct and pray. They can with authority, and in a way of office, comfort and instruct; the prayers of prophets have a special efficacy. 5. Again from that "the elders." Visiting of the sick should be performed with the joint care of Church officers; it is a weighty work, and needeth many shoulders; the diversity of gifts for prayer and discourse seemeth to call for it; it is the last office we can perform to those of whom the Lord hath made us overseers. 6. From that "let them pray." One necessary work in visiting is commending sick persons to God, and this prayer must be made by them, or over them, that their sight may the more work upon us, and our prayers may work upon them. 7. From that "and anoint him with oil." From this clause observe the condescension of God. The first preachers of the gospel of Christ had power to do miracles: the doctrine itself, being so rational and satisfactory, deserved belief; but God would give a visible confirmation, the better to encourage our faith. 8. From that "anoint with oil" in order to cure, note that the miracles done in Christ's name were wrought by power, but ended in mercy. In the very confirmation of the gospel God would show the benefit of it. 9. From that "in the name of the Lord." All the miracles that were wrought were to be wrought in Christ's name. The apostles and primitive Christians, though they had such an excellent trust, did not abuse it to serve their own name and interests, but Christ's; teaching us that we should exercise all our gifts and abilities by Christ's power to Christ's glory (Psa. li. 16). (*T. Manton.*) **Let them pray over him.**—*Praying for the sick:*—When we remember what prayer is, we cannot possibly deny its prevailing power. I. WE SHOULD ALWAYS BE HUMBLE IN OUR PRAYERS. The *Times*, in mentioning petitions which had been presented to the House of Lords, remarked of one, that it was rejected on the ground of an omission—after all, but a simple one—the word "humble" was left out. Doubtless, many a petition is rejected by a higher tribunal for lack of humility in the hearts of those who presented it. "Of all trees," says Owen Feltham, "I observe God hath chosen the vine, a low plant that creeps upon the helpful wall; of all beasts, the soft and patient lamb; of all fowls, the mild and guileless dove. When God appeared to Moses, it was not in the lofty cedar, nor the sturdy oak, but in a bush, a slender, lowly shrub; as if He would, by these elections, check the conceited arrogance of man." II. IMPORTUNATE EARNESTNESS is another characteristic of successful prayer. A clergyman who had been preaching to the young, closed with an appeal to parents, in these words: About two-and-twenty years ago, a small circle had gathered around the couch of an apparently dying infant; the man of God, who led their devotions, seemed to forget the sickness of the child in his prayer for his future usefulness. He prayed for the child, who had been consecrated to God at his birth, as a man, and a minister of the Word. The parents laid hold of the horns of the altar, and prayed with him. The child recovered, grew toward manhood, and ran far in the ways of folly and sin. One after another of that little circle were called away; but two, and one of them the mother, lived to hear him proclaim the everlasting gospel. It is no fiction," added the minister; "that child, that prodigal youth, that preacher, is he who now addresses you!" III. The prayers of the Church, when making special supplications for the sick, ALWAYS LEAVE IT TO THE WISDOM OF OUR HEAVENLY FATHER TO DETERMINE WHETHER RESTORATION TO HEALTH OR PREPARATION FOR A PEACEFUL DEATH SHALL BE BEST, and we beseech Him to grant the petition accordingly. Nothing could be more proper than this spirit of childlike submission. A father, once praying by the sick-bed of an only son, gave utterance to the rebellious petition, "Let him become what he will; so he may live, I shall be satisfied." Years and years passed by; the child

had been spared, grew up to manhood, passed through a course of crime too awful to be dwelt upon, and was tried, and condemned to die. As he went forth from the prison to the gallows, he said to his old, heartbroken father, with a careless air, "Will you see me to the tree?" What a lesson to those who, while beseeching the Lord for the removal of some bitter cup, have not learned to add in the Saviour's submissive words, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt!" (*J. N. Norton, D.D.*) *Prayer extending life*:—More than half a century since, Rev. T. Charles, of Bala, was evidently near death, when a prayer-meeting of his friends was held, in which earnest prayer was offered by an aged Christian for his recovery; especially asking that fifteen years might be added to the useful life of his servant. The prayer was exactly answered. Mr. Charles filled up the fifteen added years in great usefulness and in full expectation of release at its end. On his last visit to some friends, he said that he could not expect to see them again, as he was now in the last year of his life. Strange as it may seem, his death occurred just at the termination of the fifteen years. (*New Cyclopædia of Illustrations.*) *Prayer saving the sick*:—There are cases on record in medical history, in which the perfect peace of a soul entirely prepared for either alternative has actually arrested the march of disease, and made the patient literally out of weakness strong. There are cases on record in which it has been said by the physician to the sufferer, desirous to depart and to be with Christ: "Sir, in this state of joyous anticipation you cannot die." There are cases on record in which, according to promise, "the prayer of faith has saved the sick"; no other force even suggested as adequate to account for the victory of life over death, when physicians had withdrawn themselves from further effort, and could but watch inactive beside the bed of suffering. (*C. J. Vaughan, D.D.*) *Prayer for the sick*:—When one of his relatives was recovering from a dangerous illness, Bengel said—"I did not regard outward appearances, unfavourable as they were. I prayed, and hoped for a favourable answer and it has been given. I said nothing about it to any one at the time, but it came to me as a positive assurance that God will hear prayer." (*Bengel's Life.*) **Anointing him with oil**.—*Anointing the sick*:—I. EXAMINE THE PASSAGE. Epistle of James. The first epistle written. Point, the activity of faith. It must do something. Such active faith covers the whole life. This passage is found among practical directions. Affliction. Merry. Sick. A very natural and simple explanation has been given to this difficult and misused passage. Anointing the body with oil was the sign of health. Those who were sick might not be anointed; nor those passing through a time of mourning. The ancient customs in relation to anointing may be illustrated by our customs in relation to shaving the beard. The sick man will neither trouble himself, nor be troubled, about shaving; but as soon as he begins to recover he will return to his cleanly habits. So the ancients would neglect daily anointing while under sickness, and their return to their old ways was the sign of recovering. When, therefore, James enjoins the elders to anoint the sick man after prayer for his restoration, he really says, "Pray for him in perfect faith, and show that you have such strong faith by acting towards him as if he were restored to health again." The elders were to "help him rise, wash, and anoint." II. THINGS REQUIRING SPECIAL NOTICE. Age of miracles was not then passed. 1. The unconditional character of the promise. Not really without conditions. See the demand for faith, and for acts expressing faith. Rules should be stated without their exceptions. But all rules have such. Compare our Lord's strong sentences about prayer. 2. The meaning of the anointing with oil. After the prayer. Idea. (1) Symbolical of medicinal healing. Oil was a curative agent. (2) Sacramental; a help toward realising the action of Divine grace. Sight may be a help to the apprehension of spiritual things. Compare our Lord's touching those whom He healed: or making clay to put on the eyes of the man whose sight He restored. This the true sacramental idea. 3. The sense in which forgiveness is blended with recovery. (1) Sin regarded as scandal to the Church. Penitent, if sent for elders. (2) Sin as before God. With this the man himself must deal. All recovery is sign of Divine forgiveness. "Go and sin no more." III. REMOVING THE LOCAL AND TEMPORARY, WHAT MAY WE LEARN FROM THE PASSAGE FOR OUR TIMES? 1. The duty of showing sympathy with the sick. Example of Christ. Consider sickness from the Christian point of view. Issue of sin. Divine chastisement. Corrective discipline. 2. The duty of using means for the recovery of sick. Oil a curative agent in those days. So the elders were to use means. Anointing means "rubbing the body," or the affected parts. Symbol of all healing agents. Show how science

now takes the place of miracle. 3. The importance of recognising the power of the "prayer of faith." This was needed for miracle: much more is it needed for science. What, then, is our duty? To the sick belonging to our Church. Note that the duty rests on the sick to send for the elders, and on the elders to go when sent for. To the sick in general. Provision made for their relief. Support during sickness required. Prayer-power—faith-power—still more needed, if the spiritual ends, for which all sickness is sent, are to be reached. (*The Weekly Pulpit.*)

Vers. 16–18. **Confess your faults one to another.**—*Confessing of faults:*—These words imply, in the first place, that our religious life is not an isolated thing between each man and God, with which no other man has anything to do. All Christians are members of a body. If they come much in contact they are nearly related members. And no one has a right to fancy that his faults concern himself alone, and that no one else has an interest in his being a good man. The text implies further that we may get much help by being open about our faults. The apostle goes on to say, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray for one another, that ye may be healed." Prayer is a means by which every one can help his neighbour, and prayer is not the only means, but only one amongst many. Our friends can give us sympathy; can sometimes give us advice; can always give us encouragement; very often a friend's experience will help out ours, and make us see more clearly than we could do alone what we ought to do. But the chief benefit of being ready to confess faults which our conscience urges us to confess is, that we clear our own minds and strengthen our own wills. In the first place, a concealed fault has a most extraordinary power of infecting the whole character. The sin, while it is concealed, seems to enter into all you think or do. It seems to be a part of yourself. You cannot say, "It is not I that did it, but sin that dwelleth in me." No, the fact of your concealing it seems to make it peculiarly your own. It is not your fault merely; it is you. And all that comes from you partakes of it. All this is changed the moment you have told it. The act of telling it seems as it were to circumscribe it within its own proper limits. It is wrong; but there is the whole of it clearly in view. It no longer affects the rest of you or of your life. You have not got rid of it by telling of it. But you have got rid of this infection which it formerly carried with it. You have shut it up within itself. You have separated yourself from it, and it from yourself. Again, closely connected with this is the fact that a concealed fault lays a peculiar and very heavy burden on the soul. Over and above the remorse for the fault itself, the shame of having it hid in the heart, and unknown even to dear friends, always makes the hider feel as if he were acting a lie; and he despises himself in the midst of every word of praise that he may win. And, once more, confessing the fault pledges the will to try to prevent a return of it, and no other pledge is equally strong. The resolution of the man who is hiding within him the memory of wrong is sure to be weak, wavering, fitful. The resolution of the man, whose repentance has been stamped and marked by confession, is clear and strong. However weak he feels, he feels, too, that he knows what he has to do and means to do it. And all this applies particularly to secret faults, which are hidden from all eyes but those of the doers. But much of it applies also to faults which are not hidden; but being known to all who know us intimately, yet are not confessed to be faults. There is a great difference between the repentance which simply endeavours to change, and that which not only endeavours to do so, but openly yet humbly confesses that it means to do so. Two questions remain: To whom you should confess your faults? and how? And both of these questions must be left very much to your own judgment. As a general rule, it may be said that one great duty of intimate friends is to supply each other with that help which Christian sympathy can give. A man has almost always amongst his friends some one, to whom he would not be utterly unwilling to tell all that lies on his own conscience. There may be some matters that require more experienced advice. There are some confessions which we are bound to make, not for the sake of ourselves and for our own spiritual improvement, but for the sake of justice: thus, for instance, if you have either purposely or unintentionally accused your neighbour falsely, it is to himself that you are bound to make the confession. All these points must be left to your own decision. So, again, it must be left to your own judgment how you will confess a fault. Nothing is more mischievous than to confess it in any such way as to give yourself a pleasure in doing so. (*Bp. Temple.*) *Confession:*—Besides that to God, we may hold many sorts of confessions necessary before men; as—1. Some public. And so by the Church in ordinary or extraordinary humiliation (Lev.

xvi. 21; Neh. ix. 3). So also to the Church, and that either—(1) Before entrance and admission, in which they did solemnly disclaim the impurities of their former life, professing to walk suitably to their new engagement for time to come (Matt. iii. 6; Acts xix. 18). Or—(2) Upon public scandals after admission, for of secret things the Church judgeth not; but those scandalous acts, being faults against the Church, cannot be remitted by the minister alone; the offence being public, so was the confession and acknowledgment to be made public (2 Cor. ii. 6; 1 Tim. v. 20). Now this was to be done, partly for the sinner's sake, that he might be brought to the more shame and conviction; and partly because of them without, that the community of the faithful might not be represented as an ulcerous, filthy body, and the Church not be thought a receptacle of sin, but a school of holiness. 2. Private confession to men. And so—(1) To a wronged neighbour, which is called a turning to him again after offence given (Luke xvii. 4), and prescribed by our Saviour (Matt. v. 24). God will accept no service or worship at our hands till we have confessed the wrong done to others. So here, confess your faults one to another, it may be referred to injuries. In contentions there are offences on both sides, and every one will stiffly defend his own cause, &c. (2) To those to whom we have consented in sinning, as in adultery, theft, &c. We must confess and pray for each other (Luke xvi. 28). It is but a necessary charity to invite them that have shared with us in sin to a fellowship in repentance. (3) To a godly minister or wise Christian under deep wounds of conscience. It is but folly to hide our sores till they be incurable. When we have disburdened ourselves into the bosom of a godly friend, our conscience findeth a great deal of ease. Certainly they are then more capable to give us advice, and can the better apply the help of their counsel and prayers to our particular case, and are thereby moved to the more pity and commiseration; as beggars, to move the more, will not only represent their general want, but uncover their sores. (4) When in some special cases God's glory is concerned; as when some eminent judgment seizeth upon us because of a foregoing provocation, which provocation is sufficiently evidenced to us in gripes of conscience, it is good to make it known for God's glory (2 Sam. xii. 13; Josh. vii. 19). So when Divine revenge pursueth us ill we are brought to some fearful end and punishment, it is good to be open in acknowledging our sin, that God's justice may be the more visibly cleared; and hereby God receiveth a great deal of glory, and men a wonderful confirmation and experience of the care and justice of providence. (*T. Manton.*) *Faults:*—Nothing can be further from that discreet good sense which pervades the New Testament, than to inculcate a habit of tattling about one's self. There is a reserve in this matter which belongs to true delicacy, and so to wisdom. Yet we are commanded to confess our faults. We are to admit them when they occur, and when they are charged upon us. I. THE TERM "FAULT" IN SCRIPTURE IS FREQUENTLY EMPLOYED AS SYNONYMOUS WITH "SIN." It also has a special sense, and relates to small sins. Faults represent the unconscious imperfections of moral conduct—the ten thousand little sins of daily life which do not argue intentional wrong, and which yet are annoying and mischievous. Faults in this point of view belong to every part of a man's nature, and to every portion of his conduct—to the tongue, to the hand, to the temper, to the reason, to the conscience, to every affection, and to every sentiment. There is no one part of a man's nature that is without fault; and no man can carry himself through a single day without faults multitudinous. They are the signs and tokens of men's universal imperfection. There are two extremes of opinion respecting faults. The one regards them with an excessive, uncharitable emphasis of blame. The other sometimes utterly ignores them, and sometimes ostentatiously undervalues them, as factors of moral results. Either extreme is wrong. Faults are not sins, necessarily, though they breed sins; and yet, they are not harmless. There is great danger in them, and great mischief in them, and great misery in them. They should therefore be studied, outgrown, corrected. II. LET US CONSIDER THE EFFECTS, UPON HUMAN LIFE AND CHARACTER, OF FAULTS—not of grave mistakes; not of great sins of the strong arm and nimble foot; but those ten thousand little things that men do which are not just right, which they themselves could wish they had not done, and which everybody else could wish they had not done, but which are passed by, and of which it is said, "These are their weaknesses." We say, by way of excusing them, "We all have our faults." And so we brush them away. There is a right charity on this subject; but it is wiser for each of us to take heed of our faults. For—1. Faults are often stepping-stones to heinous sins. They go before and prepare the way. They tend to dull moral sensibility. This is especially true of faults in the direction of the moral sentiments. A very slight carelessness

in truth-telling will lead by and by to the gravest temptations towards falsehood. Small faults are baits and toles to draw men up to greater ones, so that their mischief is not measured by their own diameter, but by that which they lead to. There is a little gipsy girl in the old castle, and some one says to the lord, "You have an enemy there." "What! that little gipsy girl?" says the lord, "what can she do? Here am I with my armed men; and every gate and door and window is bolted and barred. I guess she cannot take the castle." No, she cannot take it; but at dead of the night she can go and draw back some bolt, and let men in that can take it. 2. Faults unwatched tend to run together, and so to become far more potent than they are in detail. A little sharpness in a person's voice occasionally is not unpleasant. A little spirit is necessary. It is of the nature of spice. Life without anything in it, you know, is dough; and therefore a little temper—just a little spice—raises the dough, and makes bread of it. But a little more temper, and a little more, and a little more, and you are a shrew and a scold. The result is of great moment, but it is made up of the sum of little things, each one of which is apparently of not much importance. 3. Faults also prevent true growth in life. There is a great difference, of course, between faults that prevent growth, and those that do not. There are many that do not seem to do it; but there are some that do do it. You may give a tree a good soil, and a good summer; and if that tree is a little sluggish, and it falls behind a little, it will be attacked by moss, which is a parasitic plant which draws its nourishment partly from the tree, and partly from the air; and it will very likely be attacked by a fly which is another kind of parasite that feeds upon the leaf. Each particular speck of moss, each particular fungus, that hangs itself upon the tree, amounts to very little. One apple-tree is ten million times bigger than one of those little plants that feed on it; but each one of these epiphytes shoots its little roots into the tree; and being multiplied by millions, they suck out the sap, and diminish the vigour of the tree, and prevent its growth. There are thousands of little faults that multiply on men, and act in the same way. The men become bark-bound, and leaf-blighted, and cease to have moral growth. 4. Faults, again, propagate themselves silently and secretly, and very dangerously; and they do mischief far from the point at which they start, and do mischiefs, too, that apparently are quite beyond their own nature. A picture may be spoiled by being torn, or slashed; a bomb or ball may burst through the canvas and destroy it; but then, a picture in a neglected convent may be steamed by the range, and smoked by the chimney, and dimmed by the gathering dust of ages, and be put out by these silent incrustations of time as effectually as if it were taken out of the frame and burned. And as it is in art, so it is in character. You can overlay beauty, you can mar perfectness of quality and faculty, by little faults. And the displeasure is greater, frequently, when the thing is marred, than when it is destroyed. A man has a large emerald, but it is "feathered," and he knows an expert would say, "What a pity that it has such a feather!" it will not bring a quarter as much as it otherwise would; and he cannot take any satisfaction in it. A man has a diamond; but there is a flaw in it, and it is not the diamond that he wants. A man has an opal, but it is imperfect, and he is dissatisfied with it. An opal is covered with little seams, but they must be the right kind of seams. If it has a crack running clear across, it is marred, no matter how large it is, and no matter how wonderful its reflections are. And this man is worried all the time because he knows his opal is imperfect; and it would worry him even if he knew that nobody else noticed it. So it is in respect to dispositions, and in respect to character at large. Little cracks, little flaws, little featherings in them, take away their exquisiteness and beauty, and take away that fine finish which makes moral art. How many noble men there are who are diminished, who are almost wasted, in their moral influence! How many men are like the red maple! It is one of the most gorgeous trees, both in spring, blossoming, and in autumn, with its crimson foliage. But it stands knee-deep in swamp-water, usually. To get it, you must wade, or leap from bog to bog, tearing your raiment, and soiling yourself. I see a great many noble men, but they stand in a swamp of faults. They bear fruit that you fain would pluck, but there are briars and thistles and thorns all about it; and to get it you must wade your way through all these hindrances. 5. Faults are great wasters of happiness. They are the source of frets. They mar our peace. They keep up petty discords. They are so small as to elude the grasp. They are like a piano that has been standing all summer in an empty house without being tuned. Some of the notes are too low, and some too high; and they are all of them just a little out of tune. The instrument is good and sound, and pretty nearly chorded; but it is not quite in tune.

And the not quite takes away all comfort from the musician who sits down to it. He plays, it may be, through the middle range without much discomfort; but when he strikes a note in the upper range, it makes him cringe. And so it is with happiness. Happiness is harmony. It requires the faculties to be harmonious all the way through. Violent excitement is seldom a source of great happiness. It gives joy for the moment, but it is not often the source of what we call true happiness. That comes from a lower range of action. 6. Faults are also dangerous, in their own way, because they have insect fecundity. They art apt to swarm. And though a few of them may not do much harm, when men come to have a great many of them they will avail as much as if they were actual transgressions. It is not necessary that there should be wolves, and lions, and bears in the woods to drive hunters out of them. Black flies, or mosquitos, or gnats, will drive them out, if there are enough of them. These little winged points of creation make up what they lack in individual strength by their enormous multitude. III. WE ARE COMMANDED, THEN, TO CONFESS OUR FAULTS. To whom? The priest? Yes. If any man knows a priest who is a good man, and is willing to listen to him and give him good advice, there is no earthly reason why he may not go to him, as a sensible man who has a heart of sympathy, and a desire to help his fellow creatures. But that is not what is meant, evidently, in the text. "Confess your faults one to another." Frequently a man will admit his great sins, but not his faults. The apostle says, "You are to own your faults." If a man says, "You were proud," say, "Yes, I was proud." "You ought not to have done that." "Well, I ought not to have done it." "You said that through vanity." "It is true, I did. I was under the influence of vanity, and I sacrificed you through vanity. I confess it. Help me out of it next time." How wise, then, is James's command, "Confess your faults one to another." Nor is that all—"and pray one for another." If we prayed more we should blame less; we should be far more tolerant; we should not suspect so much; we should not carry stories so much; we should not do wrong so much. For, there is nothing that makes a man so charitable as that which he has himself suffered. An old veteran, who has gone through a hundred battles, and is as firm as a rock in the midst of dangers, has a young officer under his command, who in his first action quivers with fear, and trembles like an aspen leaf. If this superior officer had never seen any service, he would scoff at the young man, and laugh him to scorn; but instead of that, the true man and veteran comes up to the frightened soldier, and says, "My young man, keep cool. You are doing well. I was as scared as you are when I first went into action; but I got over it, and you will get over it." What balm! what magnanimity! There is nothing like the sympathy which is created by our own experience By confessing our faults one to another, and praying for one another, we learn humility on the one side, and on the other side that large charity which covers transgression and hides a multitude of sins. Finally, while we are striving to bear our own burdens, and to sustain the faults and shortcomings of our fellow-men, let us remember every day what Christ is obliged to bear in and for us. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Confession of faults*:—The case before us supposes a Christian who is sick, and who has committed no great crime, no crying sin, but a fault towards his brother. He is the man whose case was mentioned in the preceding verses. His faults had brought him to his bed, his sickness had brought him to penitence; he desires to be forgiven and healed. He sends for the Church officials, who use first the physical agents of remedy, and then engage in prayer. Now, says the apostle, "Send for your brother, against whom you have committed a fault. Confess your fault to him; perhaps that will bring him to perceive that he has had faults towards you. When you have prayed together, you for him and he for you, and have come to be loving friends again, then all may go right, and the peace of your mind will advance the recovery of your body, and so you may be healed." In this whole matter of confession it is important to guard against morbid feeling and mistaken action. Where another is concerned, and such a sin is committed that the acknowledgment to him or to the world would put him in no better position than he is now, why should there be any confession made? Confession to other than the offended party, or even to the injured party, may itself become injurious to a wide circle. The confession should not be made to a third party, but only to the party involved in the difficulty. That confession should always be made in a truly devout spirit; in a spirit consistent with acts of prayer. It must not be done perfunctorily, merely to get through a duty, but must come from the heart, just as prayer must come from the heart; and must leave the confessor in that state of mind which prepares him to go to the Heavenly Father

and invoke all blessings upon the brother whom he has offended. And this points us to the ethical lesson on the other side, which is often overlooked. When my brother is convinced that he has committed a fault against me, and being sick and unable to visit me, sends for me and begins to make confession, I must not draw myself up haughtily and tell him I am glad he has come to his senses at length. I must listen very patiently and humbly to his confession, examining my own heart to see whether there might not have been something in my conduct to betray my brother into his fault, and whether, also, I may not have resented his fault as to be betrayed by indignation into a fault on my own part. I must listen with the greatest gladness, seeing that he has been brought by the Spirit of God to such a state; and I must earnestly desire to be in as proper a moral position toward him. If all this be done, then immediately after confession will follow forgiveness and prayer. He that had done the wrong and he that had received it will pray each for the other, and there will be real, unaffected love; and a state of love amongst all Christians is that which every man who loves our Lord Christ does most intensely long for. (*C. F. Deems, D.D.*) *Confession difficult:*—A very learned man once said, "The three hardest words in the English language are, 'I was mistaken!'" Frederick the Great once wrote to the Senate: "I have lost a great battle, and it was entirely my own fault." Goldsmith says, "This confession displayed more greatness than all his victories." Do not be afraid to acknowledge your mistakes, else you will never correct them; and you are really showing how much wiser you are than when you went astray. **Pray one for another.**—*Intercessory prayer:*—It is very hard to understand how prayer does good to the person that offers it. It is quite impossible to give any satisfactory explanation of the truth, though we hold it as we hold our lives, that prayer is heard and answered, and all this without a constant miracle. That is hard to understand, though we are quite sure it is all perfectly true. But it is a much more mysterious thing—and in some points of view it is a very awful thing—to think that prayer for others may truly affect their state, both here and hereafter. Now perhaps the best way of bringing our minds in some measure to understand all this, is to set it before us, that all this is no more wonderful than certain other arrangements in God's Providence. It is just as hard to explain why your eternal destiny may be affected by another person's conduct, as by his prayers. Yet we know it is. But still, it is all very strange. And so, if you would ask a good man to do you a good turn, you can never do so better than by asking him to pray for you. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." We all need to feel this more than we do. No doubt there are few requests and few promises ever made with so little sense of what is meant by them as that to pray for another. A person will say that his prayer is that such a friend may be happy; while in fact he never really went to God's footstool with such a prayer at all. And it may be said, in a single sentence, that intercessory prayer for others is sometimes characterised by what is even worse than unreality. Sometimes the most ill-set and malignant thing that one man can do towards another is to pray for him, or to threaten to pray for him. Oh, let there never be admitted to our minds the faintest idea of hitting at somebody in prayer! Let intercessory prayer always be offered in love. And though the humblest and poorest, there is no saying the good you may do—do to your children, do to your friends, do to those who preach the gospel to you, do to the whole Church of God, by your earnest and persevering prayers. Not much need be said as to the way in which we ought to pray for those we love. We pray for them as we pray for ourselves. We ask God to give them the same things we ask for ourselves. We ask for guidance through this present life, and for glory afterward, through the precious sacrifice of Christ, and the precious influences of the Holy Spirit: and we ask, as the occasion arises, for all the multitude of separate blessings which are included under these. And as the occasion arises, too, we should do all we can to bring about the things for which we pray. You know the great familiar rule for every Christian's work and prayer: it is to pray as earnestly as if we could do nothing by ourselves; and at the same time to work as hard as if we could do everything by ourselves. It has been well said, that if you want God to hear your prayers for others you must hear them yourselves. It is as mere a mockery to pray that those you love may be brought to Christ, and at last to heaven, while yet you never move a finger to bring them, as it would be for a man to sit down idly amid his heaps of quarried stones and pray that his house may be built, while yet he never moves a hand to build it. And yet, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it"; they are but the two aspects of one great truth. And indeed, it is only in regard to spiritual things that

you will find people so forgetful that pains must go with prayers. You do not pray that your little boy may be a good Greek scholar, and yet never teach him Greek. You do not pray that your friend may not fall into a pit hard by on his way on a dark night, and yet never warn him that the pit is there. Now, just act on these plain rules of sound sense, as regards the most important things of all. You may indeed pray for those for whom you can do nothing else; but there are those for whom you ought to pray, for whom you may do much more. Pray for your children, and try to train them in the right way. Pray for your friends, and never miss the chance of doing them a good turn, for this life or the next. Pray for the heathen, and help the agencies for their conversion. Pray for the sorrowful, and never lose the opportunity of comforting a sad heart, and a kind word may go far here, or even the hearty sympathy, felt though unexpressed. (*A. K. H. Boyd, D.D.*) *Mutual prayer*:—I. THE PRINCIPLES OF THE TEXT. 1. Prayer should be united and mutual; with each other and for each other. The secret root of piety is to be watered in private; but then this will prompt us to social efforts. To prevent selfishness we should pray with others, and learn to say "our Father." It has a happy effect on men to hear themselves prayed for, and may set them to pray for themselves. It promotes mutual love and sympathy to pray together. It also heightens the flame of our devotedness and zeal. It often corrects and regulates our prayers, which in privacy might grow erratic or careless. It is due to the interests of Christ's Church that we should unite in prayer. 2. Mutual prayer demands mutual confidence and love. Quarrelling and fault-finding separate us from one another. First, we should confess our faults one to another, with real sorrow for them and determination not to repeat them. Then we should forgive each other freely, and from our hearts. Not to forgive hinders prayer (Mark xi. 25). To this must be added zealous interest in each other's spiritual good, not cold and haughty distance and mutual estrangement ever after. 3. True prayer must be righteous. We must seek righteous ends. We must be influenced by righteous motives. We must seek right things. 4. Our prayer must be earnest. The words "effectual fervent" are one in the original, where the term denotes labouring, energetic, agonising prayer; prayer in the spirit, prayer with our whole heart and strength, and under the impulse and guidance of God's Holy Spirit. II. THE ILLUSTRATION (1 Kings xviii. 41, &c.). 1. Elijah was a righteous man. 2. Yet he was nothing more than a man. 3. He gave himself to prayer to fulfil the purposes of his mission. 4. His prayer was effectual in regard to material things. 5. His prayer at first was for temporal evil. 6. It was for a public benefit. III. LESSONS. 1. In some cases unite to prayer for temporal good, when it is for God's glory. 2. Unite to prayer for spiritual blessings; for the deepening of God's work in your own hearts—for the conversion of friends—for the welfare of the Church you belong to—for a blessing on God's Word; for a revival of religion at large. (*Congregational Pulpit.*) *Intercessory prayer*:—Christianity brought with it a new phenomenon in the spiritual world, if such an expression be permitted, and that phenomenon was the sudden and extraordinary development of intercessory prayer. There was little of this in the old world among Jews or pagans. Prayer was individual; each man asked of God what he felt himself to be in great need of. If in sickness, he asked for health; if in poverty, he entreated for wealth. At the outside, he only prayed for near friends and relatives when in danger of death. The Jew, no doubt, had a nobler and fuller type of prayer, and he supplicated for Israel. His individuality was but an atom in the great bulk of his people, and he did pray God to deliver His people out of adversity, and to strengthen it against its oppressors. It is doubtful whether the heathen had any such practice of prayer for his race and nation. He offered to the genius of the empire, but that was but a homage rendered to the jealous divinity who was supposed to watch over the welfare of Rome. The death of Christ, the proclamation of the kingdom, seems to have opened the eyes of all those who received the gospel to the common brotherhood of mankind. With a shock of surprise they saw that all mankind are members of one family, that all are linked together by common interests. This is an age of philanthropy, when there is a real desire to relieve all of their burdens which weigh unjustly, and to redress all wrongs, and where there is not such a real desire, one is simulated, and it becomes a sort of political and social clap-trap—simply because philanthropy is fashionable. But in this bustling, eager age, when we are all trying to rectify abuses and remedy ills, how much is done on the knees? How much of intercessory prayer goes on? We are, in too many cases, endeavouring to better the world without seeking God's help and God's guidance. We are not all able to do much to redress the wrongs done in

this world; to relieve the darkness, to ease the burdens, to staunch the tears that are shed, because we have not all the means, or the ability, or the opportunities, but we can all pray, and by our prayers may effect far more than can they who, with means, ability, and opportunity go to work in a philanthropic spirit, but without Christian faith and devout prayer. (*S. Baring Gould, M.A.*) *Intercession:*—Serjeant William White tells us in his biography of his friend Serjeant William Marjouram that the latter could say, eight years after they first met, when Marjouram led White to the Saviour, that he had not failed one single day to remember him in his prayers. *Litany day:*—Mr. Romaine used to spend two hours every Friday in intercession for his friends, having their names written down, and pacing his room in thought and prayer about their particular wants. He used to refer to Friday as his "Litany day." *Intercessory prayer needed:*—A true Christian will value the intercession of the humblest believer. So did good Dr. Davenant, Master of Queen's College, Cambridge. Being appointed to the bishopric of Salisbury, and taking leave of the inmates of the college, he asked an old college servant, John Rolfe, to give him his prayers. The old man naturally replied that he had rather need of those of the bishop. "Yea, John," replied the latter, "and I need thine too, being now to enter into a calling wherein I shall meet with many and great temptations." *Value of the intercessions of the good:*—Hamilton says of the departed McCheyne: "Perhaps the heaviest loss to his brethren, his people and the land, is the loss of his intercessions." (*Sword and Trowel.*) **The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man.**—*Effectual prayer:*—We are often told that no prayer can be effectual in securing the blessing sought unless it is consistent with God's will to grant it. But the all-important question at once arises, "How can I know what is and what is not consistent with God's will?" Suppose I have a sick child for whose recovery I am intensely anxious. I am told that if his restoration to health is in harmony with God's will, I may pray for it in the confident expectation of receiving an answer to my prayer. But how can I know whether or not it is so? Clearly, I cannot know it unless God Himself informs me. What, then, shall I do? Shall I leave the sick one in the hands of God to have the issue of his sickness determined simply and alone by the will of God? This would be to deny the utility of prayer. But though I know not what God's will concerning my child may be, I am most diligent to use the power of prayer for his recovery, just as I use the power of medicine or of nursing. Is it said that I am to pray with a submissive spirit? Very true; as soon as any occasion for submission appears. But there is neither occasion nor room for it, till I learn that God cannot grant my request. I saw the other day a man attempting to split a rock with a sledge-hammer. Down came the sledge upon the stone as if it would crush it, but it merely rebounded, leaving the rock as sound as before. Again the ponderous hammer was swung, and again it came down, but with the same result. Nothing was accomplished. The rock was still without a crack. I might have asked (as so many are disposed to ask concerning prayer) what good could result from such a waste of time and strength. But that man had faith. He believed in the power of that sledge. He believed that repeated blows had a tendency to split that rock. And so he kept at it. Blow after blow came down all apparently in vain. But still he kept on without a thought of discouragement. He believed that a vigorously swung sledge "has great power." And at last came one more blow and the work was done. That is the way in which we ought to use prayer. God has told us that "the earnest prayer of the righteous man has great power." We ought to believe it, just as that man believed that his sledge had power. And believing it, we ought to use prayer for the attainment of spiritual results with just such confidence of success as that man used his sledge. But says one, "I don't know whether the thing for which I am praying is consistent with the will of God." No matter whether it is or not. That is not a question that there is any need of determining or asking. We don't know God's will about any of our plans for the future. But that doesn't paralyse our efforts or lead us to distrust the efficiency of the means we use for accomplishing those plans. A young man wishes to secure an education. He knows nothing of God's will in the matter, nor does he hesitate a moment because of his ignorance. He simply knows that God has established certain means to be used for attaining the end desired, and that if he faithfully and perseveringly uses these, he may reasonably hope to succeed. It is true he may fail. It may be God's will that he should die within a year. Or some one of the many obstacles in his path may prove entirely insurmountable. But he is to take no notice of any such possibilities. He is to commence and prosecute his studies as if he knew that, if industrious and persevering, he would

certainly succeed. This is the way to succeed. And this is the only way. Earnestness, perseverance, unflinching resolution, have ten thousand times made not only possible, but actual, what would otherwise have been impossible. It is just so with prayer. We are no more to concern ourselves about God's will concerning the things for which we pray, than about His will concerning the things for which we toil. We are to recognise and hold fast the fact with both hands, with memory, mind, and heart, that prayer is a means appointed of God for securing spiritual results, as industry and resolution are for achieving results in temporal things. And that is a universal law of God's government, that the more earnestly and perseveringly we use any means that God has appointed, the more certain are we to attain the end we seek. And believing these things, we are to act accordingly. We are to use prayer with just as much expectation of accomplishing something by it, as we use industry. We are to believe with all the heart that "the earnest prayer of the righteous man has great power." (*Christian Age.*) *Inwrought energetic prayer*:—A person often says to his friend, or to his minister, "Pray for me. You are a good man, and 'the fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.'" If that be the meaning of the verse—if "a righteous man" means a good man, who could appropriate it? God says, "There is none righteous; no, not one." But there was a depth in those words which the centurion said of Christ—which probably he little thought of when he said them, "Truly this was a righteous man!" Observe, "a righteous man"—not by virtue of His Deity, but as man. He became man, and then as a man He fulfilled the whole righteousness of God's law. That righteousness God accepts as if it were ours. He imputes it to us; He sees us in it; that which that holy, pure eye could never have seen us without—righteousness. Therefore a "righteous man" means a justified man. And here is the comfort: the humblest believer may go and plead the promise, and may go in the simple confidence that Christ has justified him; and though both he and his prayer be utterly vile, still its unworthiness does not destroy its worthiness or destroy its claim—for God hath written it, and He cannot deny it—"The effectual fervent prayer of a justified man availeth much." But there is another condition: it must be "effectual fervent." There is some difficulty in arriving at an accurate definition of the meaning of these words—for, in the original, the words are but one; and the first and closest signification is "wrought in"; the wrought-in prayer, "the prayer wrought in the soul of a justified man availeth much." Therefore the primary idea is that the prayer that "avails much" is a prayer that is wrought into a man's soul by the Holy Spirit. When you go to pray it may seem to you as if you originated your thoughts. But it is not so. As the flame which bore up the sacrifice from the altar first came down upon the altar from heaven, so the first spring and power of all prayer is from above. Prayer is an inward creation of the Holy Ghost. Let me place this matter in its true arrangement. God, in His sovereign love and His free mercy, wishes to give you something. Say it is the pardon of your sins. It is a part of His way of doing it that He sends the Holy Ghost to work in your heart a desire after the very thing which He is meaning to give you. So that you do not so much obtain the good because you ask it, as that you asked it because it is God's mind to give it. The desire, and the prayer that expresses the desire, are the machinery by which God is giving effect to His own preordained plan. Let me offer you one or two suggestions to make more energetic prayer. Much prayer is enfeebled from a want of faith in your own prayers. Fill yourself with appreciations of the power of prayer by carrying in your mind some promise that God has made. Then remember that all prayer—if prayer—must be communion. Prayer alone is not communion. Communion is a double process. It is God speaking to us, and then we speaking to God. That is communion. Therefore listen for voices, and let your prayer be the echo. Throw as much of the Bible as you can into your prayer, because it will be pleasant to God to have His own word brought back to Him. He will give much to His own arguments. Always let there be a little preparation before you kneel down. Tune the mind. Get into a certain atmosphere. Settle your subjects. Give them a little order, not too much, not to make them mechanical, but still with some method. It is a great help in prayer to have determined beforehand a little method. "Take with you words," is God's command. When you begin to pray, set before you, and take as the ground of your prayer, some particular attribute of God suited to the subject which you are going to make the special subject of your petition. Deal much with that particular name or title of God. It makes an adequate basis. Have arguments to back your suit; especially that strongest one, "It is for Thy glory." That is the

most important of all things, when we are in prayer, to tell God it is for His own faithfulness and for His own glory; to remind yourself, and remind God, of former answers He has given you in prayer. "Thou hast been my succour." Whoever would pray to profit must pray praisingly. And then press forward. Pray with a holy, bold resolvedness. And then put the name of Jesus—that grand name of Jesus—clenchingly, commandingly. And when you have done—when you have shot the arrow—wait; follow it with your eye, and look up and see when and where the answer is going to come down. And let me remind you there is one kind of prayer to which the text particularly refers—intercessory. May we never forget it. Do not let us forget it as ministers and people. It is the life, it is the joy, it is the strength of the prayer, when it is held together by intertwining threads of intercessory prayer. (*James Vaughan, M.A.*) *The prayer of faith*:—I. THE PRAYER OF FAITH IS CONSISTENT WITH THE UNCHANGEABLENESS OF GOD, WHEN BOTH ARE SCRIPTURALLY DEFINED. II. IT IS CONSISTENT WITH NATURE AND MIRACLES. God can and will perform what He has promised. III. THE SCRIPTURAL CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH A MIRACLE MIGHT BE WROUGHT AND THE ANSWER TO PRAYER BELIEVED. 1. There is a plane of prayer which is acceptable, which has true faith, but which is offered in the ordinary conditions of a secular yet pious life, without special stress of emotion or elevation of view. 2. The element of time in prayer is important. In respect to the kingdom we shall not have the harvest with the seed-sowing, but after. 3. There are unlimited possibilities in Christian prayer. The Spirit is given to help our infirmities, when we know not what to ask for. The Church will ask more, receive more, and do more. (*R. B. Thurston, D.D.*) *Is prayer efficacious?*—Has it never happened, when travelling, that you have stopped among the ruins of an old building, and there evoked, by thought, a vanished past? And if the stones which surrounded you were those of a church, have you not experienced a strange emotion in imagining all the generations which had passed through that enclosure, all the prayers which had been heard there. Well! an analogous spectacle in the moral world impresses me. There also we shall meet with ruins which sin heaps up every year, ruins of souls made for a superior life, and degraded by vanity, by selfishness, by lusts. . . . But search thoroughly, and, under the thick coating of vice or of indifference, you will find the traces of a sanctuary, you will recognise vestiges which will tell you that those souls ought to belong to God. Of those vestiges I wish to point out only one: it is the instinct of prayer living in the depth of every man's soul, which is found always and everywhere, which makes the rough face of those poor savages, whose mouth hardly stammers out a human language, to turn towards heaven in their afflictions. How great is that instinct, and how shall we not admire its beauty! Here is a weak, ignorant being, who will pass away, and who unites himself to the all-powerful God, to the Author of all life, of all intelligence; here is a being hitherto selfish and defiled, who returns trembingly to the Author of all love and all holiness; he considers in his soul His sovereign power and goodness, he restores to Him, in acts of thanksgiving, the life he has received from Him. But, while showing what is admirable in that instinct of prayer, how can we help thinking with sorrow of the way in which it has been perverted? What has prayer, almost everywhere, become? An outward act, a religious routine, and nothing more. The spirit has disappeared and the form alone has remained. Is prayer efficacious? What a strange question, you will say, for why should we pray if we believed we were fulfilling a useless act? That is evident; but you must understand us. In a general sense, all will grant that prayer operates; but on whom does it operate? Is it on us simply? Such is the question. First of all, here is a reflection which should occur to you. If prayer can and ought to act only on him who prays, I ask what is the meaning of all the prayers we address to God for others? That remark made, I interrogate the human soul as to that instinctive and universal impulse which induces it to pray. What does it, then, want? To raise itself simply to God, to unite itself to the Source of all good, to calm itself in the contemplation of universal order, to learn to resign itself before inflexible necessity? Ah! who would dare to say so except by denying the reality of things? What! that shipwrecked man who lifts a look of anxious expectation towards God, that mother whose heart is rent at the sight of her child in agony, or that other one who trembles at the thought of the temptations which will destroy her son; do you believe that they do not ask, do you believe that they have not an ardent and profound confidence that they will act on the Divine will, that they will modify the course of things? But you cannot, you dare not, say so, and, behold, you are reduced to maintain that they are all

victims of a presumptuous illusion. An illusion! but whence comes that illusion which I find everywhere and always, that illusion which neither education, nor influence, nor example could plant in those depths of the human soul, from whence it comes out at critical hours? Therefore it will be God who must have put it in us; God who must have created in our soul that hunger without nourishment, that thirst without mitigation; God who must have said to His creature, "Thou shalt always ask Me, but I will never answer thee." No, no; I believe in that spontaneous testimony of the soul. God will, God must reply to that desire. Moreover, we are Christians; the best and most sublime things we know respecting God we owe to Jesus Christ. What idea does Jesus wish to give us of prayer? Is it simply, in His eyes, an exaltation of the soul, a spiritual exercise, and, if there is an idea which is familiar to Him, which comes back each instant to His lips, is it not that prayer is a real request which obtains its reply, that it acts on God, that it can modify events, that its action depends on the intensity of faith? And besides, what Jesus here teaches is that which comes from the whole of Scripture with an evidence that no other explanation will be able to weaken. Recall the sublime scene where Abraham intercedes with God to delay the punishment of Sodom; recall the wrestling of Jacob with the angel, and that name of Israel, which means "a conqueror of God"; then, leaping over centuries, see the Canaanite woman at the feet of Jesus Christ, wresting from Him, by her supplications, her tears, her admirable faith, the cure He seemed at first to refuse her, and tell us if prayer, such as Scripture presents it to us, is not a sovereign act which operates on us first of all, but also, apart from us, on others, on events, on the world, and, to employ the bold paradox of Scripture, even on God Himself. To have both the cry of nature and the Divine word for one's self, is not that essential, and what more is necessary for Christians? On that ground I place myself, in order to approach the objections by which men seek to shake our faith. You know the first, the oldest objection. They tell us that prayer cannot be efficacious because it would change the laws of nature. Is that true? Well, O reasoner! why then should you act? Why do you take a step, even one? Why do you seek for your nourishment? Why do you sow? Why do you build? Each of your acts is in the most flagrant contradiction to your system. You cannot modify nature, and every instant you modify it! I know how we shall be answered. It will be said that, when man acts on nature, he does it in an outward, visible manner which every one can appreciate, and that there is no relation between that action and the action claimed for prayer. But that was not the question. It was, you know, to prove that man can modify nature; and we have seen that he can do so. I am told now that it is inconceivable *how* that action will take place under the influence of prayer. But how many of those *hows* are there that we could understand and resolve? Do you conceive how the will which is spiritual can act on matter? Do you know how my hand obeys my intellect? Does not mystery surround you here on all hands, and do the most learned penetrate it better than the most simple? There is another objection opposed to us when we affirm that we can, by prayer, modify the course of events and operate on God Himself. Objectors say to us that it is doubting the wisdom and the goodness of God, that it is substituting our action for His, that an inconceivable pride is there, and that the sole attitude which becomes us in respect to Him is the waiting on and submission to His will. Let us remove what is specious from that objection. When we say that a man acts, by his prayer, on God Himself, we babble in the speech of man of things which are beyond us, the Divine will being incapable of yielding to ours, and remaining as the last word and the explanation of all. Having said this, we shall remark that the objection put before us is destroyed, like the preceding, by itself. The wisdom and goodness of God should prevent us from addressing our demands to Him, they tell us; but what would you answer him who, in the name of the same principle, should pretend to condemn the labour of man? We should answer, "Yes, assuredly God wills that I should live, but He wills that I live by labouring, and for that He has placed the instinct for labour in me. Now, if I did not obey that instinct, His will, however good it may be, would not be realised in respect to me. It therefore depends on me, on my labour, that the will of God should be accomplished." Well! what is true of labour is true of prayer also. Yes, God wills that such an end be attained, that such a result be produced; but there is a condition to it, it is the labour of the soul, in a word, it is prayer. If I do not pray, that Divine will will never be accomplished. There remains the most popular and oftenest repeated objection; it is that which people pretend to draw from experience. "If prayer were

really efficacious," they say, "if it operated on others, on events, on the world, we should see its effects." But who are they, then, who pretend thus to judge the results of prayers of faith, and so discern their reality? Do they know if those prayers were true and sincere? Do they know what sentiment dictated them? They are astonished at their small amount of efficacy, but it would be necessary first to know if they could rise to God. What do you think of those selfish or vicious prayers which only interest or passion has inspired? In order to appreciate the visible effect of prayers we must therefore judge what the prayers themselves are worth, and what inspection of man could discern their value? That is what must be first remembered; and now let us view more nearly the objection opposed to us. People show us prayers which remain unanswered, prayers of the most believing, of the most pious, of the most humble redeemed by Jesus Christ, and they tell us it is impossible, in face of such a fact, still to affirm with my text that prayer is efficacious. Well! to that argument of experience, experience may reply. I appeal to those who know how to pray, and who are apparently the best judges in that matter. I appeal to them confidently, and I know that they will testify firmly that prayer is efficacious. Besides, there are visible results of prayer which impress themselves so evidently that none can deny them. When, forty centuries ago, we could have seen, in the plains of Chaldea, the obscure chief of an unknown tribe bending the knee before Jehovah and invoking Him for his son, in the persuasion that all the nations of the earth should be blessed in his name; when, two thousand years later, we could have heard a handful of Galileans praying in an upper room in Jerusalem, and imagining that the world would be conquered by the faith of which they were witnesses, we might have been tempted to smile before the prayer of Abraham and before that of the first disciples of Christ. Who to-day would dare to say they were deceived? To-day the third of humanity beholds in Abraham the father of believers, and the prayer of the apostles is repeated by the Church growing in all points of the universe. (*E. Bersier, D.D.*)

Effectual prayer:—I. THAT PRAYER MAY PREVAIL WITH GOD. This fact is more doubted than denied. Let us, then, notice, that all our objections to a full belief in the efficacy of prayer arise from a greater confidence in our own unaided reasonings, and certain intuitive convictions, than in the testimony of God. In this connection, therefore, I would remind you of one or two facts, which tend to modify an extravagant confidence in our reason. One is this: The Author of nature has not consulted human wisdom in the arrangement of even material causes. We know that fire consumes wood. But how do we come to know it? By reasoning beforehand how it ought to be? No; there is not a single law of matter or mind that man has found out by anticipation. But again: The Author of nature has contradicted the wisdom of man in the constitution of the universe. I mean by the wisdom of man, his mere logic, independent of his observation, and those impressions or perceptions to which men yield such firm credence, even in opposition to the Scriptures. For more than five thousand years from the creation of the world, the wisest men were continually making the most egregious blunders in describing the processes of nature. But when Lord Bacon at length arose to disenthral the human mind, he showed that, except in the department of abstract truth, as mathematics and metaphysics, they must look outward; that evidence, not intuition, must guide them. Conjectures concerning the Creator's plans and modes of action were useless; and, if confided in, injurious. If, then, men have reasoned so short of the truth, in regard to material causes, why should we trust our reason against the testimony of God in the higher departments of truth? These general considerations we adduce before making a more particular examination of the objections which human reason presents to the efficacy of prayer. It is perfectly manifest that there is no solid, rational ground for denying or doubting the efficacy of prayer, because the whole subject lies beyond the sphere of intuitive or abstract reasoning. Yet there are objections which these general views are not sufficient to remove. One may be thus stated: "We are conscious of an immeasurable disparity between the Infinite mind and our limited understandings. We cannot teach Him anything. Is it not, then, a loss of time, and a vain ceremony, to make such addresses to the Deity?" This is the strongest form I can give the objection. Now, there are at least three distinct grounds upon which its entire futility can be shown: the very nature of communion; the relations and feelings of a teacher; and those of a parent. If there be a possibility of such a thing as communion between God and His creatures, then that communion must be the interchange of thoughts and feelings. So that, unless it can be shown that the Creator is for ever to be cut off

from all intellectual and social communion with all His creatures (for the objection as really lies against His communion with angels and archangels), then our intellectual disparity is not a good and sufficient reason why we should not pray. Moreover, we can learn from the feelings of a teacher who takes a deep interest in the communication of his pupil, how God can be pleased to hear our prayers. It is not so much that the pupil imparts any information, or that his notions are all correct; but it is because he is making progress, and because this is the way in which he is to be developed. Our Heavenly Father may see that by no exercise we perform do we make such progress in all spiritual attainments as by fervent, energised prayer. And then, again, the parental feelings explain much. In the nursery, words are not weighed with the balance of the schools. A kindred difficulty to this is, that "there is such majesty and grandeur in the King of heaven that we are too mean to approach Him." It may suffice now to say, in reference to this embarrassment, that it can be turned into an encouragement by applying to it one passage of the Word: "If I be a Father, where is My honour; and if I be a Master, where is My fear?" The legitimate consequence of His majesty and authority and glory is to exact homage, adoration, and praise. There is one blessed line of Scripture worth infinitely more than all the deductions of an earth-born wisdom: the High and Mighty One declares, "Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth Me." Another doubt arises from the Divine goodness, about which we sometimes reason thus: "If God is infinitely kind, and disposed to promote our welfare, then He will not withhold any blessing, simply because we do not ask for it, or ask without sufficient fervour; nor would He more bestow it for our asking." Now, upon all this logic we ask two questions: Is it so in fact? and ought it to be so of right? As to the matter of fact, we may make our experiment in any department of life. Man needs, for example, an abundant supply of the fruits of the earth. Let him, then, apply this short-hand inference from God's goodness to this case. God is kind, and disposed to bestow every good thing on all His creatures; therefore He will not withhold any needful quantity of Indian corn and wheat and vegetables, simply because we do not perform this or that agricultural operation, nor is it reasonable to think He will the more bestow it for our labours. Does Omnipotent Goodness require the aid of ploughs and harrows to feed His children? Here we see the reasons to be entirely contradictory to facts; for we know that it holds true in regard to every department of life, "the hand of the diligent maketh rich, but the sluggard cometh to want." And there can be no reason, derived from the kindness of God, to show that it is not as true of praying as of ploughing. And as we can see how the welfare of man and of society is promoted by the arrangement which creates a necessity for labour, and how this arrangement is a fruit of the Divine goodness in all the arts and employments of life, so we can see how the goodness of God may have made prayer a necessary means of procuring many indispensable blessings, on account of its direct benefit to us. Nothing in its place more cultivates the character than fervent, effectual, or energised prayer; and there is, in itself considered, no higher privilege to man than this communing and pleading with the Most High. A fourth difficulty is with the omniscience, foreknowledge, and unchangeableness, of God. The force of the objection is this: "If He has determined from all eternity what He will do, or if He knows everything that we can tell Him, our telling Him cannot change His view, so as to induce Him to change His purpose." This chilling argument is with many persons very powerful. They might just as well refuse to plant as to pray on this ground. God knows the results in the one case as much as in the other; and your sowing the seed in expectation of a crop is just as inconsistent with His foreknowledge as your praying for rain, or success in business, or the conversion of a soul, in expectation of such result. Let it be borne in mind, that no such view of God's attributes should ever be held as reduces him to a machine, an automaton, instead of a rational being, thinking, deciding, and acting, in view of facts. A kindred objection to prayer, and almost identical with this, is that "God is acting from fixed laws; prayer for rain can do no good, because rain is the result of specific material causes, which act by regular and purely mechanical forces; not depending upon any present volition of the Creator, but merely upon that original volition which called them into existence." Now, here it is assumed that no other than material causes or forces can affect matter. This is contradicted by creation, by miracles, and by the moral purposes for which the universe was created. It assumes that God has left no place for His own direct action. It assumes that you know all the causes of events; and that prayer is not one. The holiness and justice of God,

too, have discouraged some from praying. This I esteem as really the greatest difficulty on the whole subject; and yet that sceptics never suggest, and the worldly-minded do not feel. The other difficulties exist only in our imaginations; this lies deep in the character of Jehovah, and the principles of His eternal kingdom. This is a difficulty which no reasoning would ever have removed, which no efforts of man could ever have diminished. To meet and remove this, the whole arrangement of the incarnation, death, resurrection, and mediation of Christ was made. II. PRAYER WILL PREVAIL WITH GOD. Let us turn to—1. The commands. They are such as these: "Pray without ceasing." "I will, therefore, that men pray everywhere." "The end of all things is at hand; be therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." "Seek the Lord while He may be found." Commands of this nature abound, and are addressed, with the other general precepts of God's law, to all mankind. 2. Promises to prayer, lavished in prodigal bounty, like the rich fruits of the earth, springing up through all these glorious fields of revealed truth and grace. "Ask, and it shall be given you. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. He will regard the prayer of the destitute. He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." 3. The doctrine of prayer. It is connected in Scripture with the Trinity. The Father is represented as on a throne of grace. The Holy Spirit is represented as interceding for us, by creating within our hearts the desire to pray, and teaching us how to address the Most High. The Son is represented as interceding in heaven for us. This is the Scriptural doctrine of prayer. And it evidently involves the fact that God regards prayer as an important exercise on our part. 4. The history of prayer is among the most interesting portions of the Bible. III. THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER IS PROPORTIONED TO ITS FERVID ENERGY. We instinctively feel that the highest degree and the strongest expression of approbation belongs to the highest forms of character. But there is no more distinctive exhibition of the highest form of religious character than the habit of fervent and earnest prayer. It is connected with the most thorough conquest of that enslavement to sense which is the curse and degradation of man. It shows a mind living in the precincts of the world of light. It is a conquest over that indolence and brutal sluggishness which mark our debased enslavement to an infirm and earth-born body. The energetic prayer shows that the soul has caught at least a glimpse of the heavenly glory; breathed the pure breath of a heavenly atmosphere; enjoyed communion with its Divine Saviour; burst for a moment its accursed bonds; and now it cries, "My soul thirsteth after God, in a dry and thirsty land, where no waters be." Such is prayer, "the effectual, fervent prayer, the inwrought prayer of the righteous man." It burns on the heart as God's holy altar; it consumes the idols of the heart; it makes a sacrifice of every interest and every faculty; there is a life given up there, "a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God." And is it not probable that God will accept such sacrifice? that He will signally express His approbation of a prayer which is wrought in the soul by the gracious power of His own Spirit, Who thus "maketh intercession for us"; and wrought in the soul, too, by your own earnest endeavours to learn to pray, and to be ready to pray? (*E. N. Kirk, D.D.*)

Strong crying:—If we were looking at a steam-engine, and meditating over the motive power of it, we should scarcely direct our thoughts to the safety-valve, or say of it, "What a mighty power is stored up in this little lever!" On the contrary, our attention would be fixed on the piston and the steam at the back of it, and on the laws which govern its production, expansion, and condensation. And we need scarcely say that there is not much in common between those who regard prayer simply as an emotional safety-valve, and those who look upon it as one of the great moving forces of the spiritual world. It happens often enough that there are forces in the world of which people generally are ignorant, or of which they have a totally inadequate idea. As, for instance, we have known cynical politicians deride the expression of public opinion, as being only valuable as a political safety-valve, and useful to keep the "many-headed monster," the populace, from more dangerous courses; but not once or twice have they been awakened to find that there is nothing to stand before the rush of a well-formed public sentiment. So that we say rightly public opinion is of great force. And certainly the idea which the majority of folk attach to the word prayer is but very incommensurate to the part which it occupies, not only in the development of the life of the individual soul, but in the life and lot of the world at large. On the other hand, the force of prayer has been understood by the really spiritual writers of every school and of all time. They knew that prayer is one of the secrets of life; that he who lives prays, and he who prays lives; that he who prays works, and he who works prays; and so large a part of

the spiritual life is comprised in the one word prayer, that we find them describing the soul's advance by the character of the prayer which springs from it. May we not say that our Lord Himself was careful enough both in example and teaching to lead His scholars along this way, making them aware that a great part of the soul's education was education in prayer? He began by making them feel that they really didn't know what prayer meant, though they had been taught to say prayers almost since they could speak. So He brings them to a point where they say, "Lord, teach us to pray," &c.; encourages them further by admonitions to ask, seek, and knock; tells them that if they ask for bread and fish, they won't get stones and snakes; leads them on until they acquire the sense of the need of a larger faith; instructs them that prayer is the function of an organ of the spiritual life, and must be as constant and persistent as breathing or other natural functions, so that men ought always to pray and not to faint, and that they should keep awake at all times praying, if they are to be found worthy to stand before the Son of man. Finally, one of His last counsels, just before the last great objective teaching of His own life on the subject, connects the force of their prayer with the state of their life (John xv. 7). (*J. Rendel Harris.*) *The necessity and efficacy of prayer:*— I. SOME CAUTIONARY REMARKS. 1. Let us beware of the influence of merely human passions in our solemn approach to the Searcher of hearts. It is by no means impossible that a man of ardent feeling should deceive both himself and his friends, when his natural impetuosity is directed to religious objects. Passion may be mistaken for spirituality; and the danger is greatly increased by the fact that every object that is made the subject of prayer is of deep importance, and therefore worthy of the liveliest emotions of the heart: we ought to be fervent in spirit. Prayer without importunity is like a material body without the breath of life; but our fervency must also be well regulated by consistent knowledge and holy principle. Our feelings may be excited on religious subjects as well as others, even to excess; and the language adopted under their influence will be forcible and strong, while yet the real principle of holiness, the essential spirituality of devotion, may be utterly unknown. Sudden and powerful impulses are always to be suspected; they are not acquired by knowledge; they are not corrected by rational and sober reflection; they are generally the offspring of a rude, untaught, but active mind; and the only answer we can reasonably expect to the unhallowed effusions of human passion, mistaken for prayer, is a rebuke. "Ye know not what ye ask; ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." We justly attach every idea of solemnity and importance to all things connected with a religious profession, and to the observance of all religious duties; but prayer is, without exception, the most solemn act in which a creature polluted with sin, and laden with guilt, can be engaged. If at any time our understanding ought to be in full exercise, if in any case the words of our mouth and the meditation of our heart ought to be distinguished by correct knowledge, by serious and deliberate reflections, and by unimpassioned sobriety of mind, it is when we seek the privilege of intercourse with the Father of light, and when we address Him professedly on the subjects of eternal moment. 2. It is very important that we be guarded against unwarranted expectations in answer to prayer. We are not allowed to expect, by any promises of Scripture, that we shall, by our prayers, accomplish anything out of the general order of nature; or that God will, for our sake, effect some great object without the application of appropriate and efficient means. If we ask what we have no right to ask; if we apply to the only wise God for that which we cannot assure ourselves is according to His will; there is no scriptural encouragement to expect a favourable answer: in that case, we shall "ask and receive not, because we ask amiss." It is perfectly consistent with our acknowledged circumstances to pray for our daily bread; to solicit the protection of Him in whose hands our life is; to "acknowledge God in all our ways": but it is not to be supposed that the desires and feelings of man, especially in relation to things temporal, should ever be made the standard or rule of the Divine government. Most persons are sometimes placed in a position which would induce them, unless their feelings were chastened by the mighty power of religious principle, to present very improper requests before the throne of God; and many would be glad to get to themselves a distinguished name as having power to prevail with God, being great in prayer and faith; but as the Word of God, which is the only rule of prayer and faith, does not encourage, in any instance, an expectation that the sovereign King should suspend for a single moment the course and order of His ways for our sake; much less can we expect any Divine interposition of an extraordinary and miraculous character

without betraying an arrogance of heat, most opposite to the lowly, humble, unassuming spirit of the gospel of Christ. 3. Yet, on the other hand, it is highly important in this age of scepticism to be protected against any doubt of the real efficacy of prayer. It does not follow that because a duty so reasonable, a privilege so excellent, is sometimes misunderstood, and often perverted to evil purposes, therefore it is to be rejected altogether: nor can we allow ourselves to be despoiled, by any specious reasonings called philosophy, of the never-failing source of encouragement we experience in an unshaken conviction, that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Prayer is effectual for every purpose of essential importance; desires may be uttered in the language of prayer, the object of which would be to gratify a lofty or a worldly disposition; but the great object of all religion, especially of this most solemn act of devotion, is to subdue the influence of earthly gratifications, to promote the purity of our hearts, and to accomplish the salvation, the eternal well-being of our immortal souls. It were folly to ask who among men are most distinguished by such high and happy attainments. No one who is conversant with the Scriptures, or with the state and history of the Christian Church in every age, will entertain the hope that even the purest devotion will fortify his physical nature against the attacks of disease, or protect him from the accidents of human life, or save him from the anxieties that are involved in the very pleasures of relative and domestic society. Neither will he suppose that his prayers will create wealth, or command the success he may desire in the common pursuits of business, or raise him to an elevation in the ranks of society that would gratify an ambitious mind. Religion is not designed to make us men of the world. II. THE APOSTLE'S INSTRUCTIONS. 1. Let it never be forgotten that prayer must always be offered in the name of Christ. To reject the Divinely appointed method of justifying the ungodly, is to reject the righteousness of God: this itself is immorality. 2. The prayer of the righteous is sincere; it is prayer that goeth not out of feigned lips, it is the sentiment of the heart. 3. Prayer must be fervent and importunate. Our own individual necessities, our own immortal souls, the situation of all our fellow creatures, the state of the whole world at the present moment, the character of the times, and the prospect of the Church, all call, and loudly, for energetic prayer. 4. The success of prayer is intimately connected with our habitual character. The prayer of a righteous man will prevail. (*S. Morell.*) *Effectual prayer:*—"Do not *break*," said the Bow to the String one day, putting a stretch upon its power. "I will do my utmost," answered the String; and with a twanging sound the arrow shot forth, pierced the air, went straight to the mark, and gained the prize. The arrow which is shot from a loose cord drops powerless to the ground, but from the tightly-drawn bow-string it springs forward and reaches the object to which it is directed. *Prayer the secret of strength:*—There is an old story of mythology about a giant named Antæus, who was borne by the earth. In order to keep alive this giant was obliged to touch the earth as often as once in five minutes, and every time he thus came in contact with the earth he became twice as strong as before. The Christian resembles Antæus. In order to become and continue a truly living Christian, the disciple must often approach his Father by prayer. **Elias was a man subject to like passions.**—*Good men of like passions with the frail:*—1. God's eminent children are men of like passions with us (1 Pet. v. 9); they are all troubled with a naughty heart, a busy devil, and a corrupt world. When we partake of the Divine nature we do not put off the human; we ought to walk with care, but yet with comfort. 2. It is no injury to the most holy persons to look upon them as men like ourselves. There is a double fault; some canonise the servants of God, not considering them in their infirmities, make them half gods, who were by privilege exempted from the ordinary state of men, and so lose the benefit of their example. Others reflect only upon their infirmities, and instead of making them precedents of mercy, make them patrons of sin. 3. In the lives of God's choicest servants there was some considerable weakness. Elias, in the midst of his miracles, was encumbered with many afflictions. Paul had "abundance of revelations," but "a thorn in the flesh." In the life of Jesus Christ Himself there was an intermixture of power and weakness; of the Divine glory and human frailty. And all this to show that in the highest dispensations God will keep us humble, and in the lowest providences there is enough to support us. 4. Grace is not impassible, or without passions and affections. The stoics held no man a good man but he that had lost all natural feeling and affection. Elijah was a man of like passions. Grace doth not abrogate our affections, but prefer them; it transplanteth them out of Egypt that they may

grow in Canaan; it doth not destroy nature, but direct it. 5. All that God wrought by and for His eminent servants was with respect to His own grace, not to their worth and dignity. God did much for Elijah, but he was a man of like passions with us; though his prayers were effectual, yet he was, as every believer is, indebted to grace. When we have received a high assistance, yet still we are unprofitable servants (Luke xvii. 10). 6. Where the heart is upright our infirmities shall not hinder our prayers. Elijah was a man of like passions, yet he prayed, and it rained not; imitate his faith and earnestness, and your infirmities will be no impediment (2 Chron. xxx. 19). Those that do not allow their infirmities may pray with hope of success. God knoweth the voice of the Spirit; our fleshly desires meet with pardon, and our spiritual with acceptance. 7. From that "he prayed earnestly," or prayed in prayer. This is our duty, to pray in prayer. Not only to say a prayer, but to pray a prayer (Rom. viii. 26). Let not the heart be wandering while the lips are praying; lip-labour doth no more than a breathing instrument, make a loud noise; the essence of prayer lieth in the ascension of the mind. 8. It is sometimes lawful to imprecate the vengeance of God upon the wicked. (1) There is a great deal of difference between public and private cases. In all private cases it is the glory of our religion to bless them that curse us, to pray for them that despitefully use us. (2) In public cases we must not desire revenge directly and formally; so our prayers must respect the vindication of God's glory, and the avenging of our own case only as it doth collaterally and by consequence follow thereupon. (3) God's people do not desire vengeance against particular persons absolutely, but in general against the enemies of the Church, and expressly against such as are known to God to be perverse and implacable. (4) Their ordinary prayers are against the plots rather than the persons of their enemies. They can love the nature, though they hate the sin. 9. God may continue judgments, especially that of unseasonable weather, for a long time. Second causes do not work by chance, cannot work at pleasure. This is the bridle which God hath upon the world; the ordering of the weather is one of the most visible testimonies of His power and goodness. 10. Lastly, observe how sad it is for any to provoke the prophets of the Lord to pray against them. There is much in their messages, and there is as much in their solemn prayers. (*T. Manton.*) *God's good men:*— I. THE CAPACITY OF HUMANITY. We have probably been impressed with some form of the idea that man, as yet, has only begun to use the powers that are in him, that he walks on earth fettered by many limitations. The question is whether we shall take the average of humanity, and think of the few men who stand above it as exceptional beings, or whether we shall think of them as the standard-bearers of the great advancing army; as the types and prophecies of what shall sometime be the common attainment. Here lies the chief danger, that a man will think that the superior piety of some one, to whom he looks with reverence, is entirely out of his reach, something beyond the range of his capacity. He thinks of the saints as beings of a different order; he asks them to pray for him, and he puts great faith in their prayers; but this is not treating them right; they are but men and women of like passions as we are. They have had to conquer their temptations, overcome their difficulties, and tremble in weakness before they could stand in strength. If they could pray, you can pray; if they had to step up by the Master's side to live the brave and noble life He led, then, by the same course, and not by clinging to their sainthood, can you go up and become as they are. The line of sainthood superstitiously used has kept men away from God, instead of bringing them to God. But the same thing is going on wherever men forget that the great and good among them are not to be taken as exceptions, but as types and models of all that we may and ought to be. We forget that Christ incarnate was such as we are, and some of us are putting Him where He can be no example to us at all. Let no fear of losing the dear, great truth of the divinity of Jesus make you lose the dear great truth of the humanity of Jesus. No man can know how far he is from God until he has had some vision of himself close to God, held in His arms, pressed to His bosom. To be capable of God, to know that God can fill us with Himself, and make us strong in Himself, this is the promise of infinity. Looking on into futurity, you cannot begin to see the end of these paths upon which you are now entering; but you can be all you need to be; you can know all you need to know; where other men have gone you can go, and what they have done you can do. From the men who have won in this life and passed on we should gather hope and courage. II. THE LIKENESS OF MEN TO ONE ANOTHER. The inequalities of birth and education, the diversities in moral nature surrounding us on every side, compel

us to ask what there is left that is common to all men? What is it that really likens all men to one another? The answer is to be found in that ancient figure of the Bible which represents God as our Father. In a household, or family of children, there are inequalities enough; but there are certain things which they all have in common because they are all members of the same household. One is brave, another is timid; one is prudent, another thoughtless; one is headstrong, another is docile; yet in all their differences of character they are alike in that they have their father's nature and their household rights. Each, while possessing something distinct from the rest, will have those qualities which mark him as a member of that family. Paul and I are brothers. But, because he wrote an Epistle to the Hebrews, shall I suppose that I can reason and write upon those sublime mysteries? There are certain qualities peculiar to Paul which constitute his manhood; but not one of us can read the story of his life without feeling ourselves grander and holier for it. So always try and believe about the noblest of your race, the men or women in your own circle whom you know to be beyond yourselves in attainment, who possess something personal which you can never represent, that, so far as they show out humanity, the lustre and completeness of human nature, you may get new courage and faith in yourselves from what you see them do. III. SPIRITUAL POWERS ARE THE MOST COMPLETE STEP OF OUR HUMAN NATURE. Religious nature is very different in all of us; but it is in all of us. The different forms of its utterance are apt to bewilder. We are apt to settle on certain forms, and, because we do not find them everywhere, we think it cannot be that the relation of the child's soul to the father's soul constitutes religion. We may appeal to man's consciousness for this. Here, James says, is a man in the attitude of prayer; no matter if separated from us by centuries, and no matter if immensely stronger in faith—nevertheless, he is "a man subject to like passions," and to his prayer there comes the answer. He prayed for certain things—rain, food; no matter what it was—he wanted something he could not get out of himself, or out of his own nature; but he had a right to pray as the Father had told him, and because of his needy human nature, and because of his sacred rights as a child of God. Here is a man who says, "I cannot pray; I am too far from God, I am too worldly," &c. Are you not needy, and His child? Is not your nature full of the wants He has taught it to feel, and are not your rights as the rights of a child to its father? Your need and your nature as a child of God are all the credentials you want; take these, cast yourselves down beside Elias, and David, and the praying Jesus, for they were all men of like passions with you, and the grace they needed shall be given you as it was given unto them. (*Bp. Phillips Brooks.*) **Prayed earnestly that it might not rain.**—*Prayer a good remedy in desperate cases:*—1. When God meaneth to bestow blessings, He stirreth up the hearts of the people to pray for them. God that decreeth the end, decreeth the means (Ezek. xxxvi. 37; Jer. xxix. 12). 2. Though we are sure of the accomplishment of a blessing, yet we must not give over prayer. God's children are never more diligent and free in their endeavours than when confident of a blessing; hope is industrious, and draweth to action. 3. Prayer is a good remedy in the most desperate cases, and when you are lost to all other hopes, you are not lost to the hopes of prayer. 4. The efficacy of prayer is very great. Certainly they that neglect prayer do not only neglect the sweetest way of converse with God, but the most forcible way of prevailing with Him. 5. There is a mutual dependence and subordination between all second causes. The creatures are serviceable to one another by mutual ministries and supplies; the earth is cherished by the heat of the stars, moistened by the water, and by the temperament of both made fruitful, and so sendeth forth innumerable plants for the comfort and use of living creatures, and living creatures are for the supply of man. (*T. Manton.*) *Prayer and natural law:*—Why did Elijah pray that "it might not rain"? Because the whole house of Israel had forsaken God, and he saw that nothing but severe judgments would bring them to penitence and obedience. Why did Elijah pray that the punishment might take this particular form? Ahab had introduced two kinds of idolatry into Israel—the worship of Ashtaroth, and the worship of Baal. Ashtaroth was a female god, the impersonation of sensuality and debauchery, and her worship was similar to that of Venus. Baal, on the other hand, was a male deity, representing the productive powers of the sun. Thus the people worshipped "the grossest sensualism and materialism." Do you not see what a deadly blow the prophet aimed at this two-fold idolatry when he prayed that "it might not rain"? Let famine stalk throughout the land, let it enter the proudest palaces and the humblest cottages,

what a ghastly shadow would it cast over the devotees of Ashtaroth while celebrating her unholy mysteries! What a blow to the worshippers of Baal, when, at the word of Elijah, there was neither dew nor rain for more than three years, when the four hundred and fifty priests of Baal had so little influence over the powers of nature that they could not bring down one drop of rain, nor one particle of dew, to moisten the parched earth, or to revive the perishing plants and trees. Baal worship is very powerful just now. We are told, not only by sceptics and scientists, but by Christian ministers and writers, that since the world is governed by law, to pray for rain is to imitate the ancient pagans and the modern heathen in their blind superstition. Is this true? Are we to give up praying on account of the fixedness of physical law? I. PRAYER IS NATURAL TO MAN. Here is a mother whose child is dangerously ill, apparently suspended between life and death. What is the use of telling that mother that the life of her child depends on fixed laws, and that, therefore, it is sheer ignorance to pray? In her inmost heart she knows that the life of her child is in the hands of God, and that her hope is only in Him. Here, again, is a farmer, the greater part of whose land is under water, and unless the floods dry up ruin will stare him in the face. If this man believe at all in God, how can he help praying? But the same God who made the earth and the whole universe also made the man, and wrought into the very texture of his being that belief in the efficacy of prayer. Is it not likely, then, that the Creator knew something about the structure of His own universe when He put that spiritual instinct into the man's soul? Is there not, therefore, at least a strong presumption that He will answer prayer in relation to the weather? II. IT IS INCREDIBLE THAT THE MAKER OF THE UNIVERSE SHOULD NOT BE ABLE TO REGULATE THE ACTION OF HIS OWN LAWS. The assertion of Professor Tyndall that God, without working a stupendous miracle, "cannot deflect towards us a single beam of the sun," is simply a gratuitous assumption. This is, indeed, "science, falsely so-called," for it rests upon no adequate basis of facts. As an infinite Spirit, God is present in every part of the universe, He is near to every atom of matter throughout infinite space, and He is therefore able to interfere effectively at any given point, or throughout any given region. And this, too, not by changing the laws which He Himself has ordained, but by working through those laws. Have not all the marvels of modern science been wrought upon this principle? Cannot any ordinary mortal deflect a beam of the sun without a miracle? and surely the same feat is possible to Omnipotence! Man cannot "make the clouds his chariot, or walk upon the winds of the wind"; but he can make the winds and the lightning his submissive servants. Nay, more. By cutting down forests and by draining low lands and marshes man has actually changed the climate of large tracts of country. Man controls Nature while acting in harmony with her laws; why, then, may not the omnipotent Creator do the same? III. GOOD MEN, IN ALL AGES, HAVE BELIEVED THAT GOD ACTS UPON NATURE IN ANSWER TO PRAYER. Read the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple, and you can have no doubt as to his opinion upon the subject (1 Kings viii. 35, 36). Take, again, the case of Elijah. When he prayed, first of all, that "it might not rain," and then afterwards, when the people repented, that rain might be sent, could he give a stronger proof of his belief in the power of prayer with regard to the phenomena of nature? Both these men, too, evidently believed that God has reserved to Himself the right of turning nature to moral uses. Further, does not the Bible give many instances in which God used famine as a rod to chastise His people when they rebelled against Him, and sent plenty when they repented? IV. BOTH IN ANCIENT AND MODERN TIMES GOD HAS REPEATEDLY ANSWERED PRAYER FOR RAIN. If we believe the history of Elijah, there is an end to the whole controversy; for if God on only one occasion sent rain in answer to prayer, there can be no reason why He should not do so any number of times. Our Lord, at any rate, believed this history, for He took its truthfulness for granted when preaching in the synagogue at Nazareth. Coming down to modern times, it is hard to read the story of the Spanish Armada without believing its destruction to have been the result of direct Divine interference. One of the medals struck to commemorate the event bore the inscription, "Afflavit Deus, et dissipantur"—"God blew, and they were scattered." Many since that time have prayed for favourable weather, and have believed that God heard them. (*Jas. Davis.*) *Prayer for change of weather*:—This passage supplies us with Biblical authority for prayers for changes of weather and the like, for the conduct of Elijah is evidently put before us for our imitation. St. James carefully guards against the objection that Elijah was a man gifted with miraculous powers, and therefore no guide for ordinary people, by asserting

that he was a man of like nature with ourselves. This kind of prayer seems to require special consideration. "Is it, then, according to the Divine will that when we are individually suffering from the regularity of the course of nature—suffering, for instance, from the want of rain, or the superabundance of it—we should ask God to interfere with that regularity? Let us try to realise what would follow if we offered such prayer and prevailed. In a world-wide Church each believer would constitute himself a judge of what was best for himself and his neighbour, and thus the order of the world would be at the mercy everywhere of individual caprice and ignorance. Irregularity would accordingly take the place of invariableness. No man could possibly foretell what would be on the morrow. The scientist would find all his researches for rule and law baffled; the agriculturist would find all his calculations upset; nature, again, as in the days of ignorance, would become the master of man; like an eagle transfixed by an arrow winged by one of its own feathers, man would have shackled himself with the chains of his ancient servitude by the licentious employment of his own freedom, and would have reduced the cosmos of which God made him the master to a chaos which overwhelmed him by its unexpected blows" (the Bishop of Manchester, September 4, 1887, in Manchester Cathedral, during a meeting of the British Association). The objection to prayers for rain, or for the cessation of rain, and the like, is based on the supposition that we thereby "ask God to interfere with the regularity of the course of nature." Yet it is admitted that to "pray for submission to the Divine will, and for such wisdom as shall lead to compliance with it in the future, is a matter of course, and results inevitably from the relation between the spiritual Father and the spiritual child." But is there no regularity about the things thus admitted to be fit objects of prayer? Are human character and human intellect not subject to law? When we pray for a submissive spirit and for wisdom, are we not asking God to "interfere with that regularity" which governs the development of character and of intelligence? Either the prayer is to obtain more submission and more wisdom than we should otherwise get, or it is not. If it is to obtain it, then the regularity which would otherwise have prevailed is interrupted. If our prayer is not to obtain for us more submission and more wisdom than we should have obtained if we had not prayed, then the prayer is futile. The objection is sometimes stated in a slightly different form. God has arranged the material universe according to His infinite wisdom; it is presumptuous to pray that He will make any change in it. The answer to which is, that if that argument is valid against praying for rain, it is valid against all prayer whatever. God knows without our asking what weather is best for us; and He knows equally without our asking what spiritual graces are best for us. Does not the parallel difficulty point to a parallel solution? What right have we to assume that in either case effectual prayer interferes with the regularity which seems to characterise Divine action? May it not be God's will that the prayer of faith should be a force that can influence other forces, whether material or spiritual, and that its influence should be according to law (whether natural or supernatural) quite as much as the influence of other forces? A man who puts up a lightning-conductor brings down the electric current when it might otherwise have remained above, and brings it down in one place rather than another; yet no one would say that he interferes with the regularity of the course of nature. Is there anything in religion or science to forbid us from thinking of prayer as working in an analogous manner—according to a law too subtle for us to comprehend and analyse, but according to a law none the less? (*A. Plummer, D.D.*) *Prayer for rain:*—An interesting coincidence in connection with this reference to Elijah's history presents itself in the narrative given in Josephus of the troubles caused by Caligula's insane attempt to set up his statue in the temple at Jerusalem. Petronius, the then Governor of Judæa, was moved by the passionate entreaties of the people, and supported the efforts made by Agrippa I., who remained at Rome, to turn the Emperor from his purpose. It was one of the years of drought that brought about the great famine foretold by Agabus. No rain had fallen for many weeks, and the people—Christians as well as Jews, though Josephus, of course, makes no mention of the former—were "instant in prayer," calling upon the Lord God of Israel to send rain upon the earth. Suddenly rain fell in a plenteous shower from an almost cloudless sky. The earth was refreshed, and the pressing danger averted. Petronius, Josephus relates, was much moved by this manifestation, this Epiphany of the Divine power, and looked upon it partly as an answer to the prayers of the people, partly as the reward of the equity which he had shown in dealing with them. (*Dean Plumptre.*)

Vers. 19, 20. **If any of you do err from the truth.**—*Heresy: an exposition and an appeal:*—Men may think falsely, and live virtuously; or they may live immorally, and think correctly. The one class are intellectual sinners: the other moral transgressors. They are to be judged by different standards, and so classified as not to be swept away in one common anathema. If error proceeds from sheer intellectual inability to see as the majority see, charity should be exercised in all its power and tenderness; but if error proceeds from a putrid heart—if it is cherished because truth is too regardful of the conduct, and too restraining for the wildness of passion—their indignation may be excited, and consequences allowed to discharge their retributive fires. I. THE POSSIBILITY OF A TRUTH-POSSESSOR BECOMING A TRUTH-LOSER. 1. Through a daring, speculative turn of thought. We are not of those who would close the inquiring eye and bind the exploring wing; yet our duty is to warn the student that there are dangerous latitudes in every sea, and that many a gallant vessel has been shivered on the hidden rock. 2. Through want of sympathy in their intellectual difficulties. Woe unto the Church when honest thought and honest speech are repressed! When intellect is stagnant, its putrid effluvium may corrupt the heart's holiest feelings. 3. Through intellectual pride. Some men are ever in minorities through a love of singularity. They confound impertinence with candour, and mistake rudeness for originality. II. THE PRINCIPLE OF MUTUAL OVERSIGHT IN SPIRITUAL LIFE IS RECOGNISED. Go to the erring one with a brother's gentleness, and you may win his soul from destruction. The nearer he is to the edge of the precipice, the more caution is required on the part of those who have his interest at heart. III. THE SALVATION OF THE SOUL IS THE SUBLIMEST OF MORAL TRIUMPHS. 1. Christ deemed it worthy of His incarnation and sacrifice. 2. The mission of God's Spirit is thus fulfilled. 3. The sum of moral goodness is augmented. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Wandering from the truth:*—Truth is the purest, the most powerful, and the most enduring thing in the universe. Truth makes God to be God, and when God came in the flesh, the brightest crown He could place upon His own head, the noblest name He could give to His personality was "The Truth." All the wrongs in the universe begin by a wandering from the truth. This is so in every department of human thought, emotion, and action. It is because the sin begins in some slight departure, in the man, from that which is true, leading to a departure of the affections, which produces a departure in the outward life, that men should be strenuously anxious to know the truth, especially the truth as to their highest things, their highest connections; the truth as to God, their own nature, their relations to God, and their own character. When men talk of the valuelessness of doctrine, and say it does not matter what a man believes so that his life is right, they show their absolute ignorance of the whole subject. It is as if one should say, it is no matter what disease a man has so long as he has health. The outward life of a man is the product of his character, and his character is the product of his creed. If there be one rule without an exception this must be the rule. It certainly is the counterpart in the spiritual world of the fact in physics that no stream ever rises above its source. Now, the source of the outer life is the creed. Nay, it is something still stronger than that. A man is just what he believes, no more, no less. Neither God nor the devil can make him any more or any less. To make any change in him the good or the bad need not strive to mould his outer life, or by any other process attempt to change his character except by efforts to make a change in his creed. If he have believed error, to make him a good man he must be brought to faith in the truth; if he have such faith, to make him a bad man all that is necessary is to break the hold of his faith on the truth. "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." Now the phrase, "thinks in his heart," is equivalent to "creed," creed being compounded of two words, signifying that form of belief to which I give my heart. If any one shall object to this that there are so many who profess a good creed and lead a bad life, the reply is ready. In such a case the creed is only professed, not held. Indeed, a creed is not that which a man holds at all; it is that which holds him. When a man once comes into vital connection with the creed, he is never its master; it is always his. (*C. F. Deems, D.D.*) *The erring to be reclaimed:*—Another practical precept to conclude with: abrupt, as regards the verses immediately preceding, but embodying that thought of the duty of *brotherhood* which runs like a golden thread through the tissue of the Epistle. It has been treated negatively, "Do the brethren no ill; repay no injuries" (vers. 9 ff.); then positively, "Minister to them, and pray with them for bodily and spiritual healing" (vers. 14 ff.); and now, lastly, "Seek them out; reclaim for Christ His lost sheep." This is the climax of love; more than brotherly,

Christlike! In connection with the exhortation to prayer, this may be looked on as *praying with the hands*, working as God's ministers towards the fulfilment of that has been uttered by the lips. (*Dean Scott.*) **He which converteth the sinner.**—*Converting sinners a Christian duty:*—I. Inquire into THE TRUE IDEA OF A SINNER. 1. A sinner is, essentially, a moral agent. He must be the responsible author of his own acts, in such a sense that he is not compelled irresistibly to act one way or another, otherwise than according to his own free choice. He must also have intellect, so that he can understand his own relations and apprehend his moral responsibilities. He must also have sensibility, so that he can be moved to action—so that there can be inducement to voluntary activity, and also a capacity to appropriate the motives for right of wrong action. 2. He is a selfish moral agent devoted to his own interests, making himself his own supreme end of action. 3. We have here the true idea of sin. It is, in an important sense, error. It is not a mere mistake, for mistakes are made through ignorance or incapacity. Nor is it a mere defect of constitution, attributable to its author. But it is an "error in his ways." It is missing the mark in his voluntary course of conduct. It is a voluntary divergence from the line of duty. II. WHAT IS CONVERSION? What is it to "convert the sinner from the error of his ways"? It is changing the great moral end of action. It supplants selfishness and substitutes benevolence in its stead. III. IN WHAT SENSE DOES MAN CONVERT A SINNER? Our text reads—"If any of you do err from the truth and one convert him"—implying that man may convert a sinner. But in what sense can this be said and done? I answer, the change must of necessity be a voluntary one—not a change in the essence of the soul, nor in the essence of the body—not any change in the created constitutional faculties; but a change which the mind itself, acting under various influences, makes as to its own voluntary end of action. It is an intelligent change—the mind, acting intelligently and freely, changes its moral course, and does it for perceived reasons. Even God cannot convert a sinner without his own consent. He cannot, for the simple reason that the thing involves a contradiction. The being converted implies his own consent—else it is no conversion at all. God converts men, therefore, only as He persuades them to turn from the error of their selfish ways to the rightness of benevolent ways. So, also, man can convert a sinner only in the sense of presenting the reasons that induce the voluntary change and thus persuading him to repent. If he can do this, then he converts a sinner from the error of his ways. But the Bible informs us that man alone never does or can convert a sinner. It holds, however, that when man acts humbly, depending on God, God works with him and by him. Men are "labourers together with God." They present reasons and God enforces those reasons on the mind. IV. WE MUST NEXT INQUIRE INTO THE KIND OF DEATH OF WHICH THE TEXT SPEAKS. "Shall save a soul from death." 1. By the death of the soul is sometimes meant spiritual death—a state in which the mind is not influenced by truth as it should be. The man is under the dominion of sin and repels the influence of truth. 2. Or the death of the soul may be eternal death—the utter loss of the soul and its final ruin. To be always a sinner is awful enough—is a death of fearful horror; but how terribly augmented is even this when you conceive of it as heightened by everlasting punishment, far away "from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power!" V. We can now consider THE IMPORTANCE OF SAVING A SOUL FROM DEATH. Our text says, he who converts a sinner saves a soul from death. Consequently he saves him from all the misery he else must have endured. So much misery is saved. And this amount is greater in the case of each sinner saved than all that has been experienced in our entire world up to this hour. Yet farther. The amount of suffering thus saved is greater not only than all that ever has been, but than all that ever will be endured in this world. Nay, more, the amount thus saved is greater than the created universe ever can endure in any finite duration. Aye, it is even greater, myriads of times greater, than all finite minds can ever conceive. But let us look at still another view of the case. He who converts a sinner not only saves more misery, but confers more happiness than all the world has yet enjoyed, or even all the created universe. You have converted a sinner, have you? Indeed! Then think what has been gained! Does any one ask, What then? Let the facts of the case give the answer. The time will come when he will say, In my experience of God and Divine things, I have enjoyed more than all the created universe had done up to the general judgment—more than the aggregate happiness of all creatures, during the whole duration of our world; and yet my happiness is only just begun! Onward, still onward—onward for ever rolls the deep tide of my blessedness, and evermore

increasing! If these things be true, then—1. Converting sinners is the work of the Christian life. It is the great work to which we, as Christians, are especially appointed. Who can doubt this? 2. It is the great work of life because its importance demands that it should be. It is so much beyond any other work in importance that it cannot be rationally regarded as anything other or less than the great work of life. 3. It can be made the great work of life, because Jesus Christ has made provision for it. His atonement covers the human race and lays the foundation so broad that whosoever will may come. The promise of His Spirit to aid each Christian in this work is equally broad, and was designed to open the way for each one to become a labourer together with God in this work of saving souls. 4. Benevolence can never stop short of it. Where so much good can be done and so much misery can be prevented, how is it possible that benevolence can fail to do its utmost? 5. Living to save others is the condition of saving ourselves. No man is truly converted who does not live to save others. Every truly converted man turns from selfishness to benevolence, and benevolence surely leads him to do all he can to save the souls of his fellow-man. This is the changeless law of benevolent action. 6. The self-deceived are always to be distinguished by this peculiarity—they live to save themselves. This is the chief end of all their religion. All their religious efforts and activities tend toward this sole object. If they can secure their own conversion so as to be pretty sure of it, they are satisfied. Sometimes the ties of natural sympathy embrace those who are especially near to them; but selfishness goes commonly no further, except as a good name may prompt them on. 7. Some persons take no pains to convert sinners, but act as if this were a matter of no consequence whatever. They do not labour to persuade men to be reconciled to God. (*C. G. Finney.*) *Converting a soul:*—I. A SOUL LOST BY ERROR. 1. A safe antecedent state. What is it to be in conformity with the truth? (1) Our conceptions in harmony with its spirit. (2) Our life in harmony with its spirit. 2. A fearful possibility. It is implied that a soul can fall from that state, can err from that truth, can bound away from that orbit. (1) This man can do because he is moral. (2) This man has done. II. A SOUL SAVED BY MAN. 1. It is possible for man to convert a soul. 2. The man who converts a soul accomplishes immense good. 3. The immense good he accomplishes should be well considered by him. "Let him know" it—to cheer him amidst the discouragements of his labours, and to inspire him with persevering zeal. (*D. Thomas.*) *Conversion of the erring a Christian duty:*—I. THE CASE SUPPOSED. How few fulfil their first promise. Where are all the baptized? Demas still forsakes the truth for the love of the present world. There are many still like the Galatians (Gal. iii. 1–4), and the Philippians (Phil. iii. 18, 19), and the backsliders of Sardis and Laodicea. What, then, are we to fold our hands? Are we to excuse ourselves on the ground that we are not to blame; that it is no business of ours; that though sorry we cannot help? No, there is a better way. If we saw a man nearing a precipice would we not warn him? If we found a child lost in the wilds would we not speak kindly to him and lead him home? II. THE REMEDY PRESCRIBED. Whom have you converted? Is there one upon earth that blesses you, as having, under God, turned him from the error of his way? Is there one in heaven who will welcome you to the everlasting habitations as the Christian friend who helped him in the hour of need, and saved his soul from death? III. THE GLORIOUS ISSUE. 1. Great loss averted. 2. Great good secured. 3. Great joy. Lessons: 1. The preciousness of the soul. 2. The liability of good men to err. 3. The necessity of conversion to safety and forgiveness. 4. The obligation upon every Christian to seek the conversion of such as have gone astray. (*Wm. Forsyth.*) *On restoring backsliders:*—1. The text does not apply to—(1) the unconverted; (2) the hypocrite; (3) those who are intellectually wrong. 2. But to one who has been truly converted to Jesus, and yet has gone back into the world again. I. IT IS POSSIBLE TO BACKSLIDE. Some of the causes—1. A false estimate of the requirements of discipleship. 2. A false estimate of one's own strength. 3. Intellectual pride. 4. Neglect of the means of grace. II. THE CHRISTIAN DUTY OF MUTUAL OVERSIGHT. III. THE RESTORATION OF THE BACKSLIDER IS ONE OF THE GRANDEST AND NOBLEST OF ALL CHRISTIAN WORKS. (*A. F. Barfield.*) *Human agency in the sinner's conversion to God:*—I. THE GREAT OBJECT OF CHRISTIAN ZEAL. 1. The conversion of the sinner, *i.e.*, a change in the—(1) understanding; (2) affections; (3) will; (4) life. 2. The importance of conversion is seen when we remember that—(1) Unconverted, the man's influence is evil; (2) unconverted, he cannot enter heaven. II. THE MEANS BY WHICH WE MAY ACCOMPLISH THIS. 1. The force of exhortation. 2. The management of your influence.

3. The power of example. 4. The importunity of prayer. III. THE MOTIVES FOR ENGAGING IN THIS GREAT WORK. 1. Much evil shall be removed. 2. Much good shall be conferred. 3. Much joy shall be imparted. (*Hugh McGatrie.*) *Conversion of others:*—1. A man may convert his fellow—(1) By planting in him some saving truth. (2) By showing the truth embodied in a rounded and radiant life. 2. Christians ought to strive to convert those who err. (1) It saves a soul from death. (2) It hides a multitude of sins (Psa. li. 9, xxxii. 1; Prov. x. 12; 1 Pet. iv. 8). (3) It is the grandest work. (4) It is an enduring work. (5) It is the most certain work. "Know." Other work may disappoint. In the early Christian Church one sold himself as a slave to a heathen family to gain access. They were converted, and freed him. Then he sold himself to the Governor of Sparta, with like result. If all Christians had that spirit! (*C. F. Deems, D.D.*) *The conversion of sinners, the supreme object of Christian benevolence:*—I. THE PROPENSITY OF MANKIND TO ERR FROM THE TRUTH so obviously assumed in the text. 1. Some do err from the truth after being taught it by their parents and ministers; after knowing something of its beauty and excellence; after enrolling their names among its friends, and giving some hopeful proofs of its vital and transforming power. Gradually seduced by temptations, evil companions, &c., they become at first indifferent, then reject one point after another, and at last abandon all its claims, and join the ranks of its enemies. 2. Others do err from the truth through habitual inattention to its claims, or a secret aversion to its spirit and authority, felt in youth and confirmed afterwards by indulgence in sin, and the corrupting associations of the world. 3. More still err from the truth, through a total destitution of the means of knowledge, and the influence of some system of error and delusion, instilled into the mind in youth, and identified with all their interests and associations. II. THE IMPORTANT CHANGE NECESSARY TO SALVATION; the conversion of a sinner from the error of his way. It is a change from ignorance of Divine things to spiritual discernment; from serious errors to the reception of saving truth; from unbelief to a cordial faith in the Son of God; from feelings and habits of impiety to the love and adoration of his Maker; from a course of vanity and sin to a life of integrity and virtue; from the mere morality of worldly prudence to all the graces of Christian piety; and from the inordinate cares and pursuits of time to a sincere and immediate preparation for eternity. III. THE MEANS AND AGENCY BY WHICH THIS CHANGE MAY BE EFFECTED: "If one convert him." God might doubtless produce this change in a sinner by an immediate operation on the soul, without any sensible agency, or visible means whatever. But the apostle supposes, in the text, that one is converted by the instrumentality of another, and that the use of fit means for that purpose was the common concern of all who constituted the first Christian Churches. For, as in nature God effects all His purposes by second causes, and makes the elements of the physical system the means of all its changes and productions; so it has pleased Him, in the moral and spiritual world, to effect His purposes of grace by the instrumentality of His servants. The Spirit of God enlightens and improves the human spirit by reasonable means; by intelligent and self-conscious means; by means suited to its powers and responsibilities; by means which do not suspend its freedom, but lead the mind, of its own choice, to a new and efficient use of its faculties. IV. THE MOTIVES AND CONSIDERATIONS WHICH SHOULD INDUCE AND SUSTAIN THE ATTEMPT. 1. The magnitude of its immediate results. 2. The accordance of these means with the spirit and commands of the gospel, and the express purpose of God in the economy of redemption. 3. The promise of Divine influence in connection with human instrumentality, and the good already accomplished as a pledge of future success. 4. The subservience of the conversion of sinners to the glory of God, promoting as it does, in every instance, the manifestation of His perfections, and the triumphs of His grace, in restoring fallen man to His image and favour for ever. 5. The holy satisfaction to be found in this good work, and the gracious reward which awaits the faithful, in the blessed results of their exertions, and the grateful recollections of eternity. (*T. Finch.*) *Motives to Christian zeal:*—I. CONVERSION TO GOD IS OF INDISPENSABLE NECESSITY. II. IT IS EFFECTED BY HUMAN INSTRUMENTALITY. 1. The pious education of the young. 2. The circulation of the Scriptures. 3. The preaching of the gospel. III. IT IS THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS TO SEEK THE CONVERSION OF SINNERS. (*Essex Remembrancer.*) *Jewel gatherers for the Redeemer's crown:*—These are the last words of the Epistle. From the abrupt nature of its conclusion, and from the absence of the ordinary salutation and doxology, some have supposed that the original intention was to write at greater length, but at this part of the Epistle the apostle was surprised by

the tumultuous Jews, and suddenly hurried off to martyrdom. If this supposition be true, how solemnly the words stand as the last of a wise and generous spirit! With what worthier words than these parting counsels would any one wish to die? In any case, whether this supposition is true or not, there is very much instruction and encouragement couched in them which will repay our careful study. I. THERE IS INDIVIDUAL DANGER; THE POSSIBILITY OF ERRING FROM THE TRUTH. This danger may be either intellectual or moral; either the darkening of the understanding, or the corruption of the heart. The allusion, evidently, is to one who, having known the truth, had departed from its safe and pleasant paths, and had come under the entanglements, either of erroneous notions, or of vicious life. And this twofold danger is in existence still. 1. There is nowadays, I need not remind you, a danger of intellectual error. If, when the apostle wrote—in the very childhood, so to speak, of Christianity—the tares sown by the enemy were so rank in their luxuriant growth that there were some who denied the divinity of Jesus, and some who allied impurity to devotion, and some who dreamed that they had had a release from the obligations to personal obedience—surely the danger of intellectual error is not the less imminent now, when every man deems himself inspired, and has some form or theory of his own. And, when we consider the almost inevitable connection between faith and practice, we cannot join in the sentiments of those who deem it a matter of indifference as to what may be the peculiarities of creed. We cannot forget that because of his opinion the Moslem enters upon fierce wars of extermination, and that because of his opinion the Hindoo, personally merciful, defends infanticide, and mourns that widows are no longer burned nor captives immolated, as over some lost privilege. We cannot forget that in the Japanese, who, amid barbarous rites, hold festival to uproot the cross; and the Thugs, who strangle from principle, and whose great merit is in the multiplication of murders, the opinions prompt the deed. There are some among the teachers of religion who denounce creeds and denominations almost as vehemently as they denounce infidelity and sin, and whose special mission appears to be to advocate the extinction, not only of the middle walls of partition, but of those old and venerable landmarks which guard the poor man's heritage. It is a dangerous thing, believe me, to loose off from safe anchorage on matters of Christian belief, or of Christian communion, or of Divine fellowship. Search the Scriptures for yourselves, only take care that you come to the investigation stripped of pride, prejudice, and preconceived hostility—with your spirits softened into a docile trust, with your hearts humbled to the obedience of the truth, and, above all, with fervency of prayer for the guidance of the good Spirit from on high, and that Spirit shall be given to the man that shall inquire, and you shall know of the truth or doctrine whether it be of God. 2. There is danger, not only of intellectual, but of moral error. This is, I need not remind you, more imminent and more disastrous than the other. It is quite possible to hold erroneous opinions in connection with a large charity. Wood, hay, and stubble are sometimes built of as clumsy materials on the true foundation; but where the danger is not intellectual, but moral, there is, of necessity, present alienation from God, and the prospect of perpetual exile from the glory of His power. Heresy is not a trifling thing; it is to be resisted and deplored; but the deadliest heresy is sin. II. I turn now from the platform of individual danger to that of INDIVIDUAL EFFORT. "If any of you err from the truth, and one convert him." "If *one* convert him." There is here a distinct recognition of the influence of mind over mind, that principle of dependence and of oversight which is involved in our mutual relationship as members of one family. The minister over his flock, the parent over his children, the master over his scholars, the scholars reflecting again upon the master, the servant upon the employer, and the employer upon the servant—all are exerting an influence. They cannot help it, and they cannot cease from it; it is the absolute and irrevocable law of their being. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth and one convert him"—that is, one among themselves, not separated to the holy ministry, but one of his companions; one who is engaged in the same avocations; one who does not preach in the pulpit, but who preaches in the life. It is the persuasiveness of Christian influence that is meant, rather than a public appeal; it is the duty of the individual believer, rather than the duty of the public minister of the truth. There is not a single member of a single Church in the world that is exempt from this service. All are summoned to the labour, and all—oh, infinite condescension!—may be co-workers together with God. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and *one* convert him." Oh, look at that! "If *one* convert him." Not the associated force; not the single army; not the phalanx;

not even the regiment; but one solitary soldier—if one convert him. See the mighty results of single-handed labour! Some one has said they are minorities of ones that do all the great works of mankind; and it is amazing how large a result will follow from one man's simple, earnest, unostentatious, prayerful labour. Your sphere is narrow, you say; your influence is small; you feel as if you can do nothing for Christ. Don't now, don't any one of you begin to undervalue your own powers. One acorn is a very insignificant thing; but that majestic oak is its development of strength. One little rippling wavelet makes no account, but it is carried to the spring-tide, and the spring-tide were not perfect without it. One rain-drop is hardly noticed as it falls, but it is enough for one rose-bud's life to make it blow. There is not one of you, however small and scanty and narrow your influence, who may not, by patient and prayerful toil, become wise winners of souls. Brethren, I charge you examine yourselves in this matter. Have you done your duty? Let there now be born in the heart of each of you a purpose for God. (*W. M. Punshon, D.D.*) *Conversion*:—I. Here is a great principle involved—a very important one—that of INSTRUMENTALITY. 1. Instrumentality is not necessary with God. God can if He pleases cast the instrument aside. The mighty Maker of the world who used no angels to beat out the great mass of nature and fashion it into a round globe, He who without hammer or anvil fashioned this glorious world, can if He pleases speak, and it is done, command and it shall stand fast. He needs not instruments, though He uses them. 2. Instrumentality is very honourable to God, and not dishonourable. Suppose a workman has power and skill with his hands alone to fashion a certain article; but you put into his hands the worst of tools you can find; you know he can do it well with his hands, but these tools are so badly made that they will be the greatest impediment that you could lay in his way. Well now, I say, if a man with these bad instruments, or these poor tools—things without edges—that are broken, that are weak and frail, is able to make some beauteous fabric, he has more credit from the use of those tools than he would have had if he had done it simply with his hands, because the tools, so far from being an advantage were a disadvantage to him; so far from being a help, are on my supposition, even a detriment to him in his work. So God uses instruments to set forth His own glory, and to exalt Himself. 3. Usually God does employ instruments. I have heard of some—I remember them now—who were called like Saul, at once from heaven. We can remember the history of the brother who in the darkness of the night was called to know the Saviour by what he believed to be a vision from heaven, or some effect on his imagination. On one side he saw a black tablet of his guilt, and his soul was delighted to see Christ cast a white tablet over it; and he thought he heard a voice that said, "I am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." There was a man converted almost without instrumentality; but you do not meet with such a case often. Most persons have been convinced by the pious conversation of sisters, by the holy example of mothers, by the minister, by the Sabbath-school, or by the reading of tracts or perusing Scripture. 4. If God sees fit to make use of any of us for the conversion of others, we must not therefore be too sure that we are converted ourselves. It is a most solemn thought that God makes use of ungodly men as instruments for the conversion of sinners. Grace is not spoiled by the rotten wooden spouts it runs through. God did once speak by an ass to Balaam, but that did not spoil His words. So He speaks, not simply by an ass, which He often does, but by something worse than that. He can fill the mouth of ravens with food for an Elijah, and yet the raven is a raven still. 5. If God in His mercy does not make us useful to the conversion of sinners, we are not therefore to say we are sure we are not the children of God. If I testify to them the truth of God and they reject His gospel; if I faithfully preach His truth, and they scorn it, my ministry is not therefore void. It has not returned to God void, for even in the punishment of those rebels He will be glorified, even in their destruction He will get Himself honour, and if He cannot get praise from their songs, He will at last get honour from their condemnation. 6. God, by using us as instruments, confers upon us the highest honour which men can receive. II. THE GENERAL FACT. The choicest happiness which mortal breast can know is the happiness of benevolence—of doing good to our fellow-creatures. To save a body from death is that which gives us almost heaven on earth. Those monks on Mount St. Bernard, surely, must feel happiness when they rescue men from death. The dog comes to the door, and they know what it means: he has discovered some poor weary traveller who has lain him down to sleep in the snow, and is dying from cold and exhaustion. Up rise the

monks from their cheerful fire, intent to act the good Samaritan to the lost one. At last they see him; they speak to him; but he answers not. They try to discover if there is breath in his body, and they think he is dead. They take him up, give him remedies; and hastening to their hostel, they lay him by the fire, and warm and chafe him, looking into his face with kindly anxiety, as much as to say, Poor creature! art thou dead? When, at last, they perceive some heavings of the lungs, what joy in the breasts of those brethren, as they say, "His life is not extinct!" Methinks if there could be happiness on earth, it would be the privilege to help to chafe one hand of that poor, almost dying man, and be the means of bringing him to life again. Or suppose another case. A house is in flames, and in it is a woman with her children, who cannot by any means escape. In vain she attempts to come downstairs; the flames prevent her. She has lost all presence of mind and knows not how to act. The strong man comes, and says, "Make way! make way! I must save that woman!" And, cooled by the genial streams of benevolence, he marches through the fire. Though scorched and almost stifled, he gropes his way. He ascends one staircase, then another; and though the stairs totter, he places the woman beneath his arm, takes the child on his shoulder, and down he comes, twice a giant, having more might than he ever possessed before. He has jeopardised his life, and perhaps an arm may be disabled, or a limb taken away, or a sense lost, or an injury irretrievably done to his body; yet he claps his hands, and says, "I have saved lives from death!" The crowd in the street hail him as a man who has been the deliverer of his fellow-creatures, honouring him more than the monarch who has stormed a city, sacked a town, and murdered myriads. But, ah! the body which was saved from death to-day may die to-morrow. Not so the soul that is saved from death: it is saved everlastingly. It is saved beyond the fear of destruction. And if there be joy in the breast of a benevolent man when he saves a body from death, how much more blessed must he be when he is made the means in the hand of God of saving "a soul from death, and hiding a multitude of sins." A single word spoken may be more the means of conversion than a whole sermon. God often blesses a short, pithy expression from a friend, more than a long discourse by a minister. There was once in a village, where there had been a revival in religion, a man who was a confirmed infidel. Notwithstanding all the efforts of the minister and many Christian people, he had resisted all attempts, and appeared to be more and more confirmed in his sin. At length the people held a prayer-meeting, specially to intercede for his soul. Afterwards God put it into the heart of one of the elders of the church to spend a night in prayer in behalf of the poor infidel. In the morning the elder rose from his knees, saddled his horse, and rode down to the man's smithy. He meant to say a great deal to him, but he simply went up to him, took him by the hand, and all he could say was, "Oh, sir! I am deeply concerned for your salvation. I am deeply concerned for your salvation. I have been wrestling with my God all this night for your salvation." He could say no more, his heart was too full. He then mounted on his horse and rode away again. Down went the blacksmith's hammer, and he went immediately to see his wife. She said, "What is the matter with you?" "Matter enough," said the man, "I have been attacked with a new argument this time. There is Elder B. has been here this morning; and he said, 'I am concerned about your salvation.' Why, now if he is concerned about my salvation, it is a strange thing that I am not concerned about it." The man's heart was clean captured by that kind word from the elder; he took his own horse and rode to the elder's house. When he arrived there the elder was in his parlour, still in prayer; and they kneeled down together. God gave him a contrite spirit and a broken heart, and brought that poor sinner to the feet of the Saviour. There was "a soul saved from death, and a multitude of sins covered." 2. Again, you may be the means of conversion by a letter you may write. There is your brother. He is careless and hardened. Sister, sit down and write a letter to him: when he receives it, he will perhaps smile, but he will say, "Ah, well! it is Betsy's letter after all!" And that will have some power. I knew a gentleman whose dear sister used often to write to him concerning his soul. "I used," said he, "to stand with my back up against a lamp-post, with a cigar in my mouth, perhaps at two o'clock in the morning, to read her letter. I always read them; and I have," said he, "wept floods of tears after reading my sister's letters. Though I still kept on in the error of my ways, they always checked me; they always seemed a hand pulling me away from sin; a voice crying out, 'Come back! Come back!'" And at last a letter from her, in conjunction with a solemn providence, was the means of breaking his

heart, and he sought salvation through a Saviour. 3. Again. How many have been converted by the example of true Christians. An infidel will use arguments to disprove the Bible, if you set it before him; but, if you do to others as you would that they should do to you, if you give of your bread to the poor and dispense to the needy, living like Christ, speaking words of kindness and love, and living honestly and uprightly in the world, he will say, "Well, I thought the Bible was all hypocrisy; but I cannot think so now, because there is Mr. So-and-so—see how he lives. I could believe my infidelity if it were not for him. The Bible certainly has an effect upon his life, and, therefore, I must believe it." 4. And then, how many souls may be converted by what some men are privileged to write and print. I value books for the good they may do to men's souls. Much as I respect the genius of Pope, or Dryden, or Burns, give me the simple lines of Cowper, that God has owned in bringings souls to Him. Oh! to think that we may write and print books which shall reach poor sinners' hearts. 5. But, after all, preaching is the ordained means for the salvation of sinners, and by this ten times as many are brought to the Saviour as by any other. Ah! my friends, to have been the means of saving souls from death by preaching—what an honour! "Oh! men and women, how can ye better spend your time and wealth than in the cause of the Redeemer? What holier enterprise can ye engage in than this sacred one of saving souls from death, and hiding a multitude of sins. This is a wealth that ye can take with you—the wealth that has been acquired under God, by having saved souls from death, and covered a multitude of sins. III. THE APPLICATION. It is this: that he who is the means of the conversion of a sinner does, under God, "save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins"; but particular attention ought to be paid to backsliders; for in bringing backsliders into the Church there is as much honour to God as in bringing in sinners. "Brethren, if any one of you do err from the truth, and one convert him." Alas! the poor backslider is often the most forgotten. A member of the Church has disgraced his profession; the Church excommunicated him, and he was accounted "a heathen man and a publican." I know of men of good standing in the gospel ministry, who ten years ago fell into sin; and that is thrown in our teeth to this very day. Do you speak of them you are at once informed, "Why, ten years ago they did so-and-so." Christian men ought to be ashamed of themselves for taking notice of such things so long afterwards. True, we may use more caution in our dealings: but to reproach a fallen brother for what he did so long ago is contrary to the spirit of John, who went after Peter, three days after he had denied his Master with oaths and curses. Recollect you would have been a backslider too if it were not for the grace of God. I advise you, whenever you see professors living in sin to be very shy of them; but if after a time you see any sign of repentance, or if you do not, go and seek out the lost sheep of the house of Israel; for remember, that if one of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him remember that "he who converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." "Backsliders, who your misery feel," I will come after you one moment. Poor backslider, thou wast once a Christian. Dost thou hope thou wast? "No," sayest thou, "I believe I deceived myself and others; I was no child of God." Well, if thou didst, let me tell thee, that if thou wilt acknowledge that, God will forgive thee. Come thou, then, to His feet; cast thyself on His mercy; and though thou didst once enter His camp as a spy, He will not hang thee up for it, but will be glad to get thee anyhow as a trophy of mercy. But if thou wast a child of God, and canst say, honestly, "I know I did love Him, and He loved me," I tell thee He loves thee still. If thou hast gone ever so far astray, thou art as much His child as ever. Though thou hast run away from thy Father, come back, come back, He is thy Father still. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The greatness of being instrumental to another's conversion:*—St. James was speaking to those who were the true and faithful disciples of Christ; not to hirelings, who would think only of what was personal to themselves, or who could view their own interests separately from those of His Church. The true Christian is one who burns with zeal for the glory of God, and who loves his fellow-men, as children of the same Father, and redeemed by the same blood. Show him, then, what he can do to promote God's glory, or to benefit his fellow-men, and you show him what he will eagerly seize on, as meeting his desires and deserving of his energies. He has so much of conformity to Christ, that as the blessed Redeemer "pleased not Himself," but "poured out His soul unto death," that He might save sinners from eternal destruction, so he thinks not of what may minister to his individual happiness, but seeks his own good in that of strangers,

and even enemies. Is it nothing, then, to him, that he may be instrumental to the "saving a soul from death"—to the "hiding a multitude of sins"? The soul is that of which we are taught assuredly that it shall *not* die; that God hath endowed it with immortality. The death of the soul is life—eternal life—but life under the frown of the Almighty: the life of anguish; the life of remorse; the life of despair; life with all the darkness of death, but with none of its repose; the grave, but the grave for a home, with all its noisomeness felt, all its terrible chillness clasping the heart, all its unseen, its unimagined fearfulness telling on acute and ever wakeful sensibilities. Thus, when you speak of a man's losing his soul, you do not mean that the soul is taken from him; that he parts with the soul, as is ordinarily meant in speaking of anything that is lost. This were no loss; this were gain—immeasurable, unspeakable gain—to the wicked. But the soul is lost when it clings tenaciously to the body, and yet would give worlds, if it had them to give, to dissolve the union; when all its powers are lost, but the power of being wretched, or rather are all sunk in that one tremendous and ever-growing capacity. And is it nothing, then, to "save a soul from death"? Oh! the true Christian thrills at the mention of such a deed. No matter whose soul it is—it is the soul of a fellow-creature, the soul of one formed in the same image with himself; a soul too, for which the Lord Jesus died, and which, therefore, need not die; the multitude of whose sins may be hidden—hidden from the avenger of blood, because blotted out through the expiation made on Calvary. There is motive, then, enough, in the mere prospect of "saving a soul from death." Not, however, that he who is instrumental to the conversion of a sinner has no more immediate, personal interest in the event, than would seem indicated by these remarks. We cannot doubt—Scripture will not suffer us to doubt—that he who converts another thereby forms for himself a new spring of happiness through eternity. What says St. Paul to the Thessalonians? "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?" Now we attach peculiar worth to our text, on account of its dealing with single cases of conversion. It is not one of those passages which take a large sweep, and which, therefore, the private Christian, who is not placed in any wide sphere of duty, may consider as scarcely applying to himself. It is but *one* wanderer who is here spoken of as reclaimed; and it is but a single individual who is instrumental to his conversion. If the text related to conversion on a great scale, as when multitudes are acted on through the preaching of the gospel, it might have been said, that if there were encouragement in the text, it was encouragement for those only unto whom is committed "the work of an evangelist." But as it is, there is not one of you who may not consider himself as the party addressed by St. James; for there is not one of you, however contracted the sphere in which he may move, unto whom there is not afforded opportunity of acting on some fellow-creature, who is living in estrangement of God, and of endeavouring to prevail on him to "return to the Shepherd and Bishop of his soul." (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

The conversion of a sinner:—These words are so plain and pointed that we can turn to them without any explanation or introduction. One fact, however, is worthy of notice. They were written by James, the direct teacher of daily duty and of Christian practice. It is a mistake to suppose that a sense of morality loosens a man's hold upon the essential doctrines of Christianity. No one will charge James with being unpractical. This letter is full of stinging, ringing sentences, in which he brands the faith that is "without works" as an accursed thing. Yet it is he who here sets before us the absolute necessity of repentance and conversion as the sum and substance of the whole matter. I. "THE ERROR OF THE SINNER'S WAY." There is no doubt about whom James means by "the sinner." He had in view men and women who, although nominally Church members, paid no real regard to the gospel or to the commands of God. Of such people James says that their way of thought, and of feeling, and of life is an error. Now, this is not the light in which such a man regards his own way. If it were, he would change at once, and cease to be a sinner. On the contrary, it usually seems to him that he would be losing something if he changed, and that his present plan is natural, judicious, and successful. It does not occur to him that he is wandering, erring, going on the wrong road. His error lies in this, that he is not walking in the road in which God intended him to walk, and on which God's blessing rests. To refuse to lead the life which our Maker intends us to lead is a foolish blunder, because that is the life for which we are best suited. With God, it has not been a matter of mere intention, but of action, of creation, and of endowment. If you saw a man using bank-notes to light a fire, you

would be sure that he was committing an error. He might tell you that the bank-notes were his own, and that he chose to use them in that way; but he would not persuade you that he was acting prudently. There is a definite value in the notes; and his error would be none the less glaring because he chose to forget their value. There was an Eastern queen, in olden times, who loved extravagance. She took costly pearls, had them ground to powder, and mixed the powder in the wine she drank. No one could interfere; but that fact did not lessen her folly. It is the same with the sinner. He turns to base uses a nature which is fitted for the highest purposes. Capable of true thoughts and pure feelings, and charitable, honourable actions, he wastes his capacity. And, just as in these cases, his choice, his wish, does not make his error less. But there is another and deeper sense in which the ways of a sinner are one great error. He is going in the wrong direction—downwards instead of upwards, towards the dark land of death instead of towards the bright world of love. In truth, if men were cautious, if they were prudent, if they were wise—there would be no such thing as sin. It is only because we are foolish, and imprudent, and rash, that we choose the way of sin—only because we are slow to learn where our true interest and our safety lie. And yet, thank God, that constantly, every week and every day, sinners are discovering the error of their ways—discovering that they have been blundering, and growing eager to return to God. How marvellous is this steady, unseen work, this descent of the wise Spirit into our hearts—when the young and heedless become serious and earnest; when worldly men and women start, and turn, and live; when hardened sinners, whose blunders seemed to be beyond recall, grow weary of their sins, and see their folly, and stretch out desperate hands for help. It is strange that we should err so grossly; but it is stranger still that, when we confess our error, God is always ready to forgive. II. JAMES SPEAKS TO US HERE OF THE DEATH OF THE SINNER'S SOUL—"He shall save a soul from death." Even in this world there is a deadness that comes upon the soul which has long been a slave of sin. Torpor, dulness, and indifference creep over the godless heart till it becomes almost impenetrable. But the form of the words which James uses proves that he is thinking not of the soul's ruin in this world, but of the Judgment Day, when sinners receive the wages of sin, which is death. It is not only from the Bible that we learn that sin will be punished beyond the grave. This is what we call a truth of natural religion—a truth which men reach by conscience and by reason, apart from revelation. Many of the most fearful descriptions of future punishment have been written by poets and philosophers who knew nothing of our Scriptures, and never heard the name of Jesus. When we turn to the Bible, two glimpses are given us of the future state of the sinner—or rather, two sets of glimpses, two kinds of view. On the one hand, we are told that it will be a time of incessant suffering and of miserable torment. It is set before us under most appalling images—as a fire that is never quenched, and a worm that never dies. If we had only these passages to guide us, we should be forced to conclude that the soul will suffer in some such way to all eternity. But in other passages of the Bible we learn that the sinful soul will be destroyed—that it will be lost, that it will die—as if only good men were immortal. There are some strange expressions which do not disclose their meaning at the first. For example, we read of "everlasting destruction"; that is a common Bible phrase. What does it mean? Does it simply mean that the sinner will be destroyed, never to live again? Or does it imply that the act of destruction will go on always—that the sinner will always be being-destroyed? It is hard to answer, hard to say whether the New Testament, as a whole, affirms the one of these doctrines or the other. Therefore we rather take those two views—the one that the soul suffers continually, and the other that the soul is destroyed—and, when we fail to reconcile them, we must conclude that this is a subject upon which God has not thought fit to disclose the truth to us explicitly. He has left us to the law of conscience, and to that belief in the eternal laws of righteousness and recompense which the revelation of redemption has entwined with our belief in the unity and eternity of God. He has left us to a "certain fearful looking-for of judgment," and the assurance that we shall receive according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be evil. But beyond this He has given us a truth which underlies those divergent views, and is included in them both. At death the unrepentant sinner is separated from God, banished from His presence, cast away from His gracious sustaining power, and left alone in the vast wilderness of eternity. III. HE WILL HIDE A MULTITUDE OF SINS. Here we see that the word "sinner" is not a term invented to suit a system of theology, not a fancy figure of some heated pulpiteer, but a real description of lives

that men and women actually live. It gives us a definition of a sinner; he is a man who has committed "a multitude of sins." It implies not one transgression only, nor one offence, but a multitude that cannot be counted, rising, as Isaiah says, like a thick cloud between man and God. It is this infinite unmeasured character of human sin that makes it so hard to persuade men of its reality. If a man steals, or drinks, or ill-treats his wife and children, we can argue with him about his sin, we can expose him publicly or privately, we can try to convince him of his special guilt and special danger. But to go deep down into the heart and point to its pollution, to go away back with you into your past, and lay a finger upon every sin you have committed, to follow you into the watches of the night and the privacy of your homes, and then to present you with a full list of your sins, and say to you, "There, you have done all these things, all that multitude"—that is not the work of man; the multitude of a single soul's offences baffles knowledge. It is wonderful how God teaches this lesson—there is a mystery about it—how a man begins to feel that it does not matter much what his neighbours think about him, and that there is a reckoning which he must make with the eternal justice. Sometimes slowly, but sometimes in a moment, it dawns upon him that every page and every line of the book of his life must be read aloud. And then, dear friends, when that truth gets hold of us, when we see what a shabby, shameful, damning story it would be, how we should be stung with shame and filled with remorse as one secret sin after another was disclosed, how absolutely helpless we should be to justify ourselves—then we feel how blessed a thing it is to have all "hidden," all that multitude hidden through God's great mercy and the merits of our Saviour. Fellow Christians, before we close, notice the beginning of this verse. Read it: "If one converteth." Read it again. We sinners may convert other sinners from the error of their way; we may save souls from death; we may hide a multitude of sins. God knows it is not easy; but if we are earnest and loving and persistent, He will help us. Remember there are sinners around us, at home, in church, and in the world, and there is no joy so deep, no reward so great as to lead one sinner on the road to God. (*A. R. McEwen, D.D.*)

Caring for the salvation of others:—1. Brethren may err from the truth. There is no saint recorded in the Word of God, but his failings and errors are recorded. Junius before conversion was an atheist. 2. We are not only to take care of our salvation, but the salvation of others. As God hath set conscience to watch over the inward man, so for the conversation He hath set Christians to watch over one another. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you," &c. (Heb. iii. 12), not only in yourselves, but in any of you. So Heb. xii. 15, 16. Members must be careful one of another; this is the communion between saints. (1) It reproveth our neglect of this duty. Straying would have been much prevented if we had been watchful, or did we, in a Christian manner, reason together with each other; what comfort and establishment might we receive from one another's faith and gifts! (2) It showeth what a heinous sin it is in them that watch over each's hurt; as the dragon for the man child (Rev. xii. 4), or as angry Herod sought to destroy the babes of Bethlemen, or a nipping March wind the early blossoms of the spring, so they nip and discourage the infancy and first buddings of grace by censure, reproach, carnal suggestions, and put stumbling-blocks in the way of young converts, and so destroy Christianity in the birth. 3. From that "if any do err." If but one, there is none so base and contemptible in the Church but the care of their safety belongeth to all. One root of bitterness defileth many; both in point of infection and scandal we are all concerned; one spark may occasion a great burning. 4. From that "and one convert him." The expression is indefinite, not as limiting it to the officers of the Church, though it be chiefly their work. Besides the public exhortations of ministers, private Christians should mutually confer for comfort and edification. 5. From that "convert him"; that is, reduce him from his error. We must not only exhort, but reclaim. Though it be an unthankful office, yet it must not be declined; usually carnal respects sway us, and we are loath to do that which is displeasant. Well, then, if it be our duty to admonish, it is your duty to "suffer the words of exhortation," to bear a reproof patiently, otherwise you oppose your own salvation. 6. Again from that "convert him." He doth not say destroy him; the work of Christians is not presently to accuse and condemn, but to counsel and convert an erroneous person. Before any rigorous course be taken, we must use all due means of information; the worst cause always is the most bloody. 7. From that "let him know." To quicken ourselves in a good work, it is good we should actually consider the dignity and benefits of it. 8. From that "he which

converteth a sinner from the error of his way." Before it was expressed by "erring from the truth," and now by the "error of his way." You may note that errors in doctrine usually end in sins of life and practice (Jude 8). We often see that impurity of religion is joined with uncleanness of body, and spiritual fornication punished with corporal (Hosea iv. 12, 13). In error there is a sinful confederacy between the rational and sensual part, and so carnal affections are gratified with carnal doctrines. 9. From that "shall save." Man under God hath this honour to be a saviour. We are "workers together with God" (2 Cor. vi. 1). He is pleased to take us into a fellowship of His own work, and to cast the glory of His grace upon our endeavours. It is a high honour which the Lord doth us; we should learn to turn it back again to God, to whom alone it is due (1 Cor. xv. 10). 10. From that "soul." Salvation is principally of the soul; the body hath its share (Phil. iii. 21). But the soul is first possessed of glory, and is the chief receptacle of it, as it is of grace for the present (see 1 Peter i. 9). Well, then, it teacheth us not to look for a carnal heaven, a Turkish paradise, or a place of ease and sensitive pleasure. This is the heaven of heaven, that the soul shall be filled up with God, shall understand God, love God, and be satisfied with His presence. 11. From that "from death." Errors are mortal and deadly to the spirit. The wages of every sin is death, especially of sin countenanced by error, for then there is a conspiracy of the whole soul against God. 12. From that "and shall hide." Justification consisteth in the covering of our sins. It is removed out of God's sight, and the sight of our own consciences, chiefly out of God's sight. God cannot choose but see it as omniscient, hate it as holy, but He will not punish it as just, having received satisfaction in Christ: sins are so hidden that they shall not be brought into judgment, nor hurt us when they do not please us. 13. From that "a multitude of sins." Many sins do not hinder our pardon or conversion. God's "free gift is of many offences unto justification" (Rom. v. 16); and it is said, "He will multiply to pardon" (Isa. lv. 7). For these six thousand years God hath been multiplying pardons, and yet free grace is not tired and grown weary. The creatures owe a great debt to justice, but we have an able surety; there is no want of mercy in the creditor, nor of sufficiency in the surety. It is a folly to think that an emperor's revenue will not pay a beggar's debt. Free grace can show you large accounts and a long bill, cancelled by the blood of Christ. The Lord interest you in this abundant mercy, through the blood of Christ and the sanctification of the Spirit! (*T. Manton.*) *To Sabbath-school teachers and other soul-winners:*—James is pre-eminently practical. If he were, indeed, the James who was called "The Just," I can understand how he earned the title, for that distinguishing trait in his character shows itself in his Epistle; and if he were "the Lord's brother," he did well to show so close a resemblance to his great relative and Master, who commenced His ministry with the practical Sermon on the Mount. The text before me is perhaps the most practical utterance of the whole Epistle. The whole Epistle burns, but this ascends in flames to heaven: it is the culmination as it is the conclusion of the letter. There is not a word to spare in it. It is like a naked sword, stripped of its jewelled scabbard, and presented to us with nothing to note but its keen edge. I. A SPECIAL CASE DEALT WITH. It was that of a backslider from the visible Church of God. This man had been professedly orthodox, but he turned aside from the truth on an essential point. Now, in those days the saints did not say, as the sham saints do now, "We must be largely charitable, and leave this brother to his own opinion; he sees truth from a different standpoint, and has a rather different way of putting it, but his opinions are as good as our own, and we must not say that he is in error." They did not prescribe large-hearted charity towards falsehood, or hold up the errorist as a man of deep thought, whose views were "refreshingly original"; far less did they utter some wicked nonsense about the probability of there being more faith in honest doubt than in half the creeds. They did not believe in justification by doubting as our neologians do; they set about the conversion of the erring brother; they treated him as a person who needed conversion; and viewed him as a man who, if he were not converted, would suffer the death of his soul, and be covered with a multitude of sins. O God, deliver us from this deceitful infidelity, which while it does damage to the erring man, and often prevents his being reclaimed, does yet more mischief to our own hearts by teaching us that truth is unimportant, and falsehood a trifle, and so destroys our allegiance to the God of truth, and makes us traitors instead of loyal subjects to the King of kings. It appears from our text that this man, having erred from the truth, followed the natural logical conse-

quence of doctrinal error, and erred in his life as well. His way went wrong after his thought had gone wrong. You cannot deviate from truth without ere long, in some measure, at any rate, deviating from practical righteousness. This man had erred from right acting because he had erred from right believing. Every error has its own outgrowth, as all decay has its appropriate fungus. When truth is dominant morality and holiness are abundant; but when error comes to the front godly living retreats in shame. The point aimed at with regard to this sinner in thought and deed was his conversion—the turning of him round, the bringing him to right thinking and to right acting. Alas! I fear many professed Christians do not look upon backsliders in this light, neither do they regard them as hopeful subjects for conversion. I have known a person who has erred hunted down like a wolf. The object of some professors seems to be to amputate the limb rather than to heal it. Justice has reigned instead of mercy. In the days of James, if any erred from the truth and from holiness, there were brethren found who sought their recovery, and whose joy it was thus to save a soul from death, and to hide a multitude of sins. There is something very significant in that expression, "Brethren, if any *of you* do err from the truth." It is akin to that other word, "Considering thyself also, lest thou also be tempted," and that other exhortation, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." The text gives us clear indications as to the persons who are to aim at the conversion of erring brethren. It says, "If any of you do err from the truth, and *one* convert him." It is the business, not of certain officers appointed by the vote of the Church thereunto, but of every member of the body of Jesus Christ, to seek the good of all the other members. Still there are certain members upon whom in any one case this may be more imperative. For instance, in the case of a young believer, his father and his mother, if they be believers, are called upon by a sevenfold obligation to seek the conversion of their backsliding child. In the case of a husband, none should be so earnest for his restoration as his wife, and the same rule holds good with regard to the wife. So also if the connection be that of friendship, he with whom you have had the most acquaintance should lie nearest to your heart, and when you perceive that he has gone aside, you should, above all others, act the shepherd towards him with kindly zeal. You are bound to do this to all your fellow Christians, but doubly bound to do it to those over whom you possess an influence, which has been gained by former intimacy, by relationship, or by any other means. Ye see your duty; do not neglect it. Brethren, it ought to cheer us to know that the attempt to convert a man who has erred from the truth is a hopeful one, it is one in which success may be looked for, and when the success comes it will be of the most joyful character. To bring in a stranger and an alien, and to adopt him as a son, suggests a festival; but the most joyous feasting and the loudest music are for the son who was always a son, but had played the prodigal, and yet after being lost was found, and after being dead was made alive again. Here I would say to any backsliders who are present, let this text cheer you if you have a desire to turn to God. Return, ye backsliding children, for the Lord has bidden His people seek you. II. A GENERAL FACT. This general fact is important, and we are bound to give it special attention, since it is prefaced with the words, "Let him know." If any one of you has been the means of bringing back a backslider, it is said, "Let him know." That is, let him think of it, be sure of it, be comforted by it, be inspirited by it. "Let him know" it, and never doubt it. What is it that you are to know? To know that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death. This is something worth knowing, is it not? If you have saved a soul from death you have introduced it into eternal life; by God's good grace there will be another chorister amongst the white-robed host to sing Jehovah's praise; another hand to smite eternally the harp-strings of adoring gratitude; another sinner saved to reward the Redeemer for His passion. Oh, the happiness of having saved a soul from death! And it is added, that in such case you will have "covered a multitude of sins." Now, remember your Saviour came to this world with two objects: He came to destroy death and to put away sin. If you convert a sinner from the error of his ways you are made like to Him in both these works: after your manner in the power of the Spirit of God you overcome death, by snatching a soul from the second death, and you also put away sin from the sight of God by hiding a multitude of sins beneath the propitiation of the Lord Jesus. Do observe here that the apostle offers no other inducement for soul-winners: He does not say if you convert a sinner from the error of his ways you will have honour. True philanthropy scorns such

a motive. He does not say if you convert a sinner from the error of his ways you will have the respect of the Church and the love of the individual. Such will be the case, but we are moved by far nobler motives. The joy of doing good is found in the good itself: the reward of a deed of love is found in its own result. And let us recollect that the saving of souls from death honours Jesus, for there is no saving souls except through His blood. As for you and for me, what can we do in saving a soul from death? Of ourselves nothing, any more than that pen which lies upon the table could write "Pilgrim's Progress"; yet let a Bunyan grasp the pen, and the matchless work is written. So you and I can do nothing to convert souls till God's eternal Spirit takes us in hand; but then He can do wonders by us, and get to Himself glory by us, while it shall be joy enough to us to know that Jesus is honoured, and the Spirit magnified. Now I want you to notice particularly that all that is said by the apostle here is about the conversion of one person. "If any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he who converteth the sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death." Have you never wished you were a Whitfield? Have you never felt, young man, in your inmost soul, great aspirations to be another McCheyne, or Brainerd, or Moffat? Cultivate the aspiration, but at the same time be happy to bring one sinner to Jesus Christ, for he who converts one is bidden to know that no mean thing is done; he has saved a soul from death, and covered a multitude of sins. III. And, now, A PARTICULAR APPLICATION of this whole subject to the conversion of children. Children need to be saved; children may be saved; children are to be saved by instrumentality. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The preciousness of the soul*:—We cannot but be struck with the contrast between what God honours and that which man deems most honourable. God honours those that save. Man too oft, indeed generally, gives his highest honour to the man that destroys. Thus the warrior has ever been a favourite with society; and yet how terrible is his work! Another man the world honours, less highly, though he is more worthy—the statesman of far-reaching genius, who devises those measures that shall increase general intelligence and happiness, advance the public interest, and make his country's name to be honoured and feared among the nations of the earth. Society recognises as worthy of some measure of esteem another character, more worthy than either we have named, yet less honoured. We refer to the man of benevolence, who goes forth to improve the condition of society, to raise the fallen, to give new hope to the despairing. Such a man was Howard, who sought to solve the problem, What is the greatest amount of effort a man may make in the cause of humanity? Still higher in merit than the characters named is the man whom God especially honours. He toils not only to improve man's physical, moral, and intellectual condition, but deems it his great work to save man from sin, from the pollution and corruption of his nature, from those consequences partially manifest in this life, that shall have their consummation in the life to come. He goes forth with burning, self-sacrificing zeal, to save the souls of men. How little does the world honour this class of men! But the honour and greatness of this work of saving men is indicated by the greatness of the change wrought in conversion, through which all who have sinned must pass in order to be saved. How wondrous the change in a soul converted! He was dead in trespasses and sins, lost in error, and in bondage to sin and Satan. Now, renewed in heart and life—changed in opinions, in prospects, in hopes, and associations—he is free, and becomes a child of God, a brother of Christ. How marked is this change, they who have experienced it well know, and they also understand it who have witnessed the wondrous transformation in character and conduct of many they have known as sinners and as converted men. Now the evidence of the reality of this work of conversion to any candid seeker of truth is clear and strong. The evidence to the individual renewed is manifestly and necessarily, from its nature, in his own consciousness. You may go to any community and bring forth the persons that say they have experienced this change of heart. They will tell you they have known what it is to be under the bondage of sin, in fear of the wrath to come, and in their trouble and anguish of soul they submitted to the directions of God's Word and yielded themselves to Christ. They will affirm that in so doing they found peace; their sense of condemnation was removed, and peace and joy filled their souls. They will tell you that they have the assurance of God's forgiveness, and the witness of the Holy Spirit that they are His children. This personal testimony will have confirmation in the change in their enjoyments, tastes, and the new rules of conduct to which they have submitted in consequence

of conversion. But in this work of saving men the most important point remains for consideration. On whom rests the responsibility of this work of converting men? It is not enough to wish for this work, to feebly pray for it, to think of the obligation of the Church at large, but every single Christian must labour as he has opportunity, and use all his means of influence to secure the salvation of others. The great object of the Church, and of union with it, is not the personal happiness of believers. Happiness is the result of obedience to laws, and misery is the consequence of disobedience. We shall be happy ourselves when we strive in self-forgetfulness to make others happy. While the Church is designed to furnish instruction, assistance, and comfort to its members, it is God's great instrumentality for the diffusion of the word of life, for proclaiming the gospel unto unregenerate men. It is sinful and absurd for any one to say, "I have not the power to do anything; I cannot speak to any one on the subject of religion." What other subject is there on which men cannot speak? Will any man acknowledge himself so feeble and humble that he can never speak on business, so modest that he can never say a word on trade? Our excuse that we have not the requisite power to engage in this work is a dishonour to ourselves, and in urging it we dishonour God. When men thus speak, they talk vainly. It is on this account the Church languishes and souls perish. In conversion the human will must yield in order that the Holy Spirit may renew the heart and forgive sins. To secure this yielding of the will of the sinner to Divine grace, family, friendly, and moral influences may avail. God requires that they be sanctified to this use. Have not some of us sad thoughts as we think of those with whom we have been associated, and of our unfaithfulness? Do not scenes rise before us that cause sorrow and anguish? Has no one of our friends or families passed away relative to whose future there is a terrible doubt, nay, perhaps a fearful certainty, if we could entertain the thought? A mother wept for the death of a beloved child. Friends came to comfort her. They offered the usual sources of consolation, such as affectionate hearts yearn to give. But the mother rejected it all. "Ah!" said she, "it is not this. It is not this. I could give up my child. I could bow with resignation over her death. But, alas! I fear she is not saved. It was a foolish diffidence that kept me from talking with her as I oft felt it my duty to do. And when she was stricken with disease, I thought the opportunity would come and I would then improve it. But, alas! delirium came. I bowed by my child. I prayed God, not so much for her life as for one hour of reason, that I might do my duty to my child. But she never recognised me, and I fear she is lost." Oh! mothers, mothers, do you love your children, and you are living with them in view of certain death, and have you done your duty to seek the conversion of their souls? But there is joy, also, in the thought of being instrumental in saving souls. A missionary sat by the dying bed of his first convert. The dying man said to him, "Brother, I hear you preached a sermon about heaven last evening; I could not go to hear you preach, but I am going to heaven itself, and when I get there I shall go first to the Lord Jesus Christ and thank Him that He ever sent you to tell me of His love; and then, brother, I shall come back to the gate and sit there until you come; and when you come, I will lead you to the Saviour and say, 'Here, Lord, is the man that told me of Thy love.'" Oh! Christians, are you willing to walk the streets of heaven and have no one greet you there? Would you be willing to go yourselves inside the gates and never have a soul to greet you and say, "I thank God for the kind words of sympathy and love you spoke on earth?" But while this work of saving souls thus concerns the Church, shall the unconverted be indifferent to their own salvation? Remember, if Christians are unfaithful you are not excused. You know your duty, and, living amid so many privileges, your guilt for the rejection of Christ will be the greater. (*Joseph Cummings, D.D.*) *One soul worth a great effort*:—He who is privileged to lead a single soul to Christ does a work compared with which the gathering of crowds and addressing of multitudes is of small account. Let us not despise the day of small things. "You have preached twenty years, and have only made one convert," was the taunt with which a man assailed a servant of the Lord. "Have I converted one?" asked the minister. "Yes, there is such an one, who is really converted under your ministry." "Then here is twenty years more for another," said the man of God, and all eternity would endorse the wisdom of the utterance. *Be slow to despair*:—It is said of the late Lord Lyndhurst that his saving enlightenment came in his ninetieth year. Not till then did he really bow the knee to Jesus and pass from death to life. Those, therefore, who would be eminently successful in soul-winning must be slow

to despair. This is the testimony of one who recently died in the faith of the gospel: "Under God, I owe my conversion to you; not through anything special that you said, but because you never would give up hope of me." Even if inquirers should turn wholly away from us, we may reach them "by the way of the throne." *Successful endeavour*:—The Rev. Edward Judson, of the Berean Baptist Church, New York, prints the following note at the end of a list of the services of his church:—"A Christian man, deeply devoted, and wise to win souls, made it a rule to speak to some one unconverted person every day on the subject of his soul's salvation. One night, as he was about retiring to rest, he bethought himself that he had not fulfilled his vow that day. He immediately put on his attire, and prepared to go in quest of a soul. But where should he go? was the question. He concluded to make a visit to a grocer with whom he was in the habit of trading. He found him engaged in closing up his store. When the errand of his customer was made known he was surprised. He said all sorts of Christians traded with him—Methodists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Baptists, &c.—but no one had ever spoken to him about his soul. The night visit of his customer and his earnest pleadings made such an impression upon his mind that it led to his speedy conversion. (*Sword and Trowel.*) *Difficulty of the work*:—In the Middle Ages a priest and a general were studying, during war-time, the map of a hostile country which was about to be invaded. The reverend father put his finger on sundry places dotted on the map, and remarked, "This fortified town must be taken, and then this, and this." The soldier broke in, "I may be allowed to remind you, Father Joseph, that fortified towns are not taken with the tip of the finger." To capture a soul for heaven is a feat upon which we must not calculate unless we are prepared to expend care and pains. (*Edward Smith.*) *Converting a sinner*:—At a time of religious awakening at Yale College the students who were decided for Christ agreed that each should visit one of their unconverted class-mates in his own room. One of the results of this action was the thorough decision of David Stoddard, afterwards the honoured missionary of the Nestorians. (*Dr. J. P. Thompson.*) *The mission of a tract*:—Some fifteen years ago a young man, a Spaniard by birth, visited Leamington from New York, and received a tract in the Pump-room, which was given to him casually by a lady. It was one of Canon Ryle's tracts, and was the means of his conversion. On returning to America, where his parents had taken up their residence, he entered one of the universities, and having been ordained by Bishop Potter, was appointed missionary to the Spanish-speaking people in New York. From thence he went to Mexico some ten years ago, and was presented by the Emperor, Maximilian's successor, with one of the principal churches in the capital. He translated the whole of Canon Ryle's tracts into Spanish, and the result was that there are now 160 Protestant congregations in Mexico, whereas nine years ago there was but one, and 63,000 persons have seceded from the Church of Rome. This was the result of one tract casually given to a visitor in the Pump-rooms at Leamington. The title of the tract is "Are you Forgiven?" (*The Fireside.*) *Saved alone*:—A telegram was sent back from England by a lady to her husband. She had left New York with all her children, and she landed, shipwrecked, in England, and sent back to him this brief telegram: "Saved—alone." Ah! that last word seemed as if it took all the sweetness out of the first one. "Saved—alone." May that never be what we shall have to say as we enter heaven. *How to do it*:—I have been told that Mr. Moody's great career as a soul-winner dates from a somewhat exhaustive study of the word "grace." He had been shut up in his room for days studying this word, until his soul was so full of it that he could contain no longer; so he started out of the house and stopped the first man he met in the street and asked him if he knew anything about "grace." "What do you mean?" said the man. "I mean," replied Moody, "the grace of God that bringeth salvation, and which hath appeared unto all men." And right then and there he began and poured into that stranger's ear this story of God's grace, until the man himself was overwhelmed with the greatness of love and yielded himself to God. (*G. F. Pentecost, D.D.*) *The wide blessedness of love*:—The phrase is one of those which St. James has in common with St. Peter (1 Pet. iv. 8). It occurs also in the LXX. of Psa. lxxxv. 2, and in a nearly identical form in Psa. xxxii. 1. The Hebrew and English version of Prov. x. 12 present a still closer parallel, but the LXX. seems to have followed a different text, and gives "Friendship covers all those that are not contentious." The context leaves hardly any room for doubt that the "sins" which are thought of as covered are primarily those of the man converted, and not those of the converter. There is, however, a studied

generality in the form of the teaching which seems to emphasise the wide blessedness of love. In the very act of seeking to convert one for whom we care we must turn to God ourselves, and in covering the past sins of another our own also are covered. In such an act love reaches its highest point, and that love includes the faith in God which is the condition of forgiveness. (*Dean Plumptre.*) *The conversion of sinners*:—John Bunyan used to say of those places where God had greatly blessed his ministry in the conversion of sinners that he counted as if he had "goodly buildings and lordships" there, and that his heart was so wrapped up in the glory of this excellent work that he counted himself more blessed and honoured of God by them as his spiritual children than if God had made him emperor of the Christian world, or the lord of all the glory of the earth, without it; adding, "Oh! the power of those words in James v. 19, 20!" (*J. Caughey*). *Tholuck's personal effort for individual souls*:—The German Tholuck, a household name in the world's Christian homes, standing on the borders of the grave and looking back on the fifty fruitful years of preaching, teaching, and writing, exclaimed, "I value it all less than the love that seeks and follows," by which he had been inspired from the year of his conversion. Personal effort for individual souls! "This is a work of which the world knows little, but of which the Lord knows much." Not only seeking, but following! Here is a single illustration: A student at Halle was brought near to his heart by a godly mother. He fell into sin and vice. He was ofttimes visited by his loving teacher, late at night or in the early morning, after a night's debauch—sometimes in prison. Good promises were repeatedly made, and as repeatedly broken. Another sacred promise; the following day, late at night, came a card from him: "Tholuck sighs; Tholuck prays; but we will have our drink out." Relying upon the co-working Spirit, still the saintly Tholuck followed. And the giddy youth became pastor of a well-known church in Berlin. *The joy of converting a soul*:—Archbishop Williams once said to a friend of his, "I have passed through many places of honour and trust, both in Church and State, more than any of my order in England these seventy years before; yet were I but assured that by my preaching I had converted but one soul to God I should take therein more spiritual joy and comfort than in all the honours and offices which have been bestowed upon me." *The Lord's converts and man's*:—On one occasion an Irish evangelist was brought up for creating a disturbance. "How many did you convert?" said the magistrate. "Just two," was the reply. "Were these all?" "Yes, sir, all I converted, and they were soon as wicked as ever; but the Lord, He converted many more." Possibly such easy conversions, unattended with much or any conviction of sin, and resting on the acceptance of a mere formula, may have not a little to do with the shallow, easy-going Christianity which is more or less common in these days. *Soul-saving*:—A teacher had among her pupils a young man of wicked habits. At last, when she heard that he was fast going down to ruin, she sought grace and courage from the Lord to speak to him about Jesus. The young fellow was much affected by her earnest, loving appeal, moved, as he knew she was, by love for his soul; and when he had mastered his emotion, he said to her in a tremulous voice, "Had any one ever spoken to me before as you have to-night, I might have been a child of God long ago! But no one has thought me worth saving." Bishop Wilson says, "We deceive ourselves if we fancy we have done our duty when we have given our people a sermon one day in seven. We must try always to gain a precious soul for Christ." May His matchless grace help us. *Sin hidden*:—A Welsh minister, speaking of the burial of Moses, said: "In that burial not only was the body buried, but also the grave and graveyard. This is an illustration of the way in which God's mercy buries sins. No one is at the funeral but Mercy, and if any should meet her on returning from the burial, and ask her, "Mercy, where didst thou bury our sins?" her answer would be, "I do not remember." *Abrupt ending*:—The absence of any formal close to the Epistle is in many ways remarkable. In this respect it stands absolutely alone in the New Testament, the nearest approach to it being found in 1 John v. 21. It is a possible explanation of this peculiarity that we have lost the conclusion of the Epistle. It is, however, more probable that the abruptness is that of emphasis. The writer had given utterance to a truth which he desired above all things to impress on the minds of his readers, and he could not do this more effectually than by making it the last word he wrote to them. (*Dean Plumptre.*)

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