

THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR.

JUDE.

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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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JUDE.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE EPISTLE OF ST. JUDE.

THE WRITER OF THE EPISTLE.—In ver. 1 he describes himself as the brother of James. If James, then, was the first of the four persons mentioned as the brethren of the Lord in Matt. xiii. 55, this Judas was the last of these four, and the Son of a Mary (not the Virgin) who stood by the Cross. In this case he would not have been one of the original apostles, but was (along with James) converted by the Resurrection of the Lord. Some, however, suppose that he was the son of Alphæus by a sister of the Virgin, but in that case the fact of the Nazarenes associating him with themselves, rather than with the Lord, would have to be accounted for. The Epistle is quoted as an inspired and canonical work in some of the early fathers. Some words in it seem to be cited in a fragment of Irenæus, published by Pfaff in the last century—"the most holy faith delivered unto us." Tertullian quotes it by name in his tract on "Female Dress," chap. iii.: "To these considerations is added the fact that Enoch possesses a testimony in the Apostle Jude," &c. Clement of Alexandria also quotes it by name ("Miscellanies," b. iii., chap. ii): "Concerning these and the like heresies, I think that Jude has spoken prophetically in his Epistle, 'Likewise those dreamers,'" &c. Also in Misc., vi. 8: "And some pluck from the fire," &c. Also in the "Pædagogus," iii. 8: "'For I would have you know,' says Jude, 'that God, having once saved,'" &c. The Muratorian fragment also includes it in the Canon. (*M. F. Sadler, M.A.*)

THE EPISTLE OF ST. JUDE.—I. The example of St. Jude in this Epistle may suggest to us that "the servant of Jesus Christ" IS JUSTIFIABLE IN USING THE PLAINEST LANGUAGE OF WARNING AND REPROOF, WHEN CIRCUMSTANCES DEMAND IT—nay, that he is bound to do so. Instruction and consolation are not the only duties of the pulpit. There is still such a province in religious discourse, as the province of warning and rebuke; and ministerial fidelity, undoubtedly, consists in not overlooking this. To be plain, it is not necessary that our language should be coarse. To be bold in declaring the truth, we may stand at the widest distance from arrogance and presumption. We may be fully earnest and vehement, without using invective. II. Besides, we may infer the necessity of what is now stated from observing, THAT ST. JUDE HAS HERE PRESSED THE LANGUAGE OF REPROOF AND WARNING UPON THE MINDS EVEN OF THOSE WHO WERE GREATLY ADVANCED IN CHRISTIAN PERFECTION. They were those, he says, who were "sanctified by God the Father." Even these, though far advanced, stood in need of a faithful rehearsal, both of their danger and of the motives to perseverance. High as their acquirements were, they were not beyond the reach of that sinful infection, which would shade, or tarnish, or destroy their purity. He who perseveres to the end is not the man who imagines he is secure of never falling away. III. While everything that relates to the human condition and character requires the faithfulness which I now speak of, I am led to infer the justification of it, from observing, THAT ST. JUDE HAS

UNITED HIS LANGUAGE OF WARNING AND REPROOF WITH THE WISH FOR "MERCY, AND PEACE, AND LOVE," so that, instead of its being indicative of the morose and bitter dispositions, it is coincident with kindness, and is the very sign of benevolence. We never apprehend that our fellow-traveller will be enraged at us, because we shake him out of the lethargy which we perceive is stealing upon him, amid the cold and snows of his journey, and is about to seal his eyes in death. Why is it, therefore, that the attempt to save from evils of a moral kind is not met with grateful acknowledgments, but because these evils are not seen to exist, or because they are deemed trifling in their origin and equally immaterial in their effects. (*H. Muir, D.D.*)

RELATION BETWEEN II. PETER AND JUDE.—The second chapter of the Second Epistle of Peter constitutes a remarkable peculiarity in that Epistle. Were it not for the indisputable evidence in favour of the integrity of the Epistle, we might regard this chapter as a later insertion, as it could be omitted without any injury being done to the train of thought. It differs in style from the other portions, and it is here that the chief linguistic differences between the First and Second Epistles of Peter are found. But what especially strikes one as remarkable is the close resemblance between this chapter and the Epistle of Jude, a resemblance which is not confined to a mere similarity of thought, but extends to a sameness of words and phrases, to the illustrations and references employed, and to the sequence of ideas; so that it is now almost universally conceded that there must be an intimate connection between these writings, amounting either to a dependence of the one upon the other, or to both being derived from the same source. And yet, on the other hand, this dependence is by no means slavish, each contracts or expands the ideas of the other, and in both there is a freshness of expression and a vigour of thought. The passages in the Epistles related to each other are 2 Peter ii. 1, iii. 3; and Jude 4–18. The subject treated of in these passages is the same—the character of the false teachers who at that period infested the Christian Church. And although there is some difference, as Peter dwells chiefly on the heretical teachers themselves, and Jude describes the licentiousness of their followers; yet it is evident that the same class of men is alluded to. Their character, their maxims, their vices, their destiny are the same; they are painted with the same colours and described by the same qualities. I. Some suppose that Peter and Jude wrote independently. Both, it is asserted, wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and were guided in their thoughts. They wrote on the same subject, were well versed in the Old Testament, were directed by the same Spirit, and hence the reason of the remarkable resemblance in their writings. Such a hypothesis is unsatisfactory. The sacred Scriptures, though inspired, were yet written by men, each writer using his own style and language; and these human elements are to be judged by the ordinary rules of criticism. The words and phrases in 2 Peter ii. and Jude are so similar that it must follow either that the one borrowed from the other, or that both derived their materials from a common source. II. A more plausible supposition is that both Peter and Jude borrowed from the same document; that both were translations from or adaptations of some Aramaic writing. The supposition was first stated by Bishop Sherlock, with singular ingenuity. He supposes the original document to have been some ancient Jewish writing, in which the prophecies of Enoch and Noah, relating to the flood, were recorded, so that it is easy to account for the reference to Noah by Peter and to Enoch by Jude. Still, however, the Bishop feels that this hypothesis is not sufficient to account for all the points of similarity, as, for example, the prediction of these mockers by the Apostles, and therefore he further supposes that Jude had along with this Jewish book the Epistle of Peter. Now, such a supposition does, to a certain extent, account for the resemblances and differences in the writings of Peter and Jude; it also accounts for the difference in style between the second chapter and other portions of this Second Epistle of Peter, and obviates, in a great measure, the objection drawn from the difference in style between Peter's First and Second Epistles. But, on the other hand, it appears to be derogatory to the sacred writers, and contrary to our idea of inspiration, to suppose that both should copy from a writing which must be considered as apocryphal, and very improbable that both should fix on the same document. III. A third supposition is that Jude borrowed from Peter. 1. Reasons assigned for the priority of the Epistle of Peter. (1) In the Epistle of Peter the false teachers and scoffers are the subjects of prediction; they had not as yet arisen in the Church; whereas in the Epistle of Jude they had

already arisen. (2) There is in the Epistle of Jude a reference to predictions concerning the coming of scoffers (vers. 17, 18). Now it is affirmed that this prediction of the Apostles is found most fully and most plainly in the Second Epistle of Peter. Paul, indeed, frequently foretold that in the last days perilous times would come, that many would depart from the faith, and that even among Christians, false teachers would arise, seeking to draw away disciples after them. But the very words employed by Jude are used in Peter's prediction. (3) In Jude's Epistle corruption appears in a more advanced state. Jude is far more vehement in his expressions and denunciations than Peter; if Jude wrote first, Peter has toned down and moderated his expressions. (4) It is asserted that Jude has in many instances expanded the expressions of Peter; added to them and adapted them to the purpose of his writing. Certainly such instances of expansion may be adduced; but little can be made of this argument, as it is counterbalanced by similar instances in the Epistle of Peter. It is supposed that Jude, about to write the Epistle concerning the common salvation, was diverted from his purpose by seeing the extreme wickedness which was corrupting the Christian Church; and, therefore, he felt that it was needful for him to write at once, and to exhort Christians to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. And finding a remarkable resemblance between the licentiousness of wicked Christians and the description of the scoffers who were to arise in the Christian Church given in the Epistle of Peter, he felt that he could best accomplish his design by borrowing from that Epistle, and freely using the sentiments it contained; and this he does in an Epistle full of vigour.

2. Objections against this hypothesis. (1) Dean Plumptre remarks, "It was more likely that Peter should incorporate the contents of a short Epistle like that of Jude in the longer one which he was writing, than that Jude, with the whole of Peter's Second Epistle before him, should have confined himself to one section of it only." To this, however, it is answered that the section to which Jude confined himself was the one appropriate for his purpose. It must, however, be admitted that the comparative brevity of Jude's Epistle, and the terse and sententious expression of its thoughts, are in favour of its originality. (2) It is affirmed that some portions of the Epistle of Peter can only be understood by a reference to the Epistle of Jude. Thus the language of Peter concerning the forbearance of the angels, taken by itself, is unintelligible. As Hug puts it: "With Jude this is the case; he states the matter distinctly, and expressly names the dispute of Michael with the devil respecting the body of Moses. But Peter rests so much in generals, and explains himself respecting it so indefinitely, that we could not at all have guessed what he had in view in this passage, if we were not in possession of Jude." IV. The only other possible supposition is that Peter borrowed from Jude. 1. This is the opinion in the present day most generally favoured. (1) The phraseology of Jude is simpler than that of Peter, which is more artificial, rhetorical, and paraphrastic. (2) Some of the expressions in Jude's Epistle are distorted, and altered in a singular manner. (3) Passages in Peter's Epistle are obscure and can only be explained from the parallel expressions in Jude's Epistle. (4) The course of thought in Jude is firm and distinct, whilst in Peter it is unsteady like that of an imitator (Jude 4 compared with 2 Pet. ii. 1 and i. 19-21; Jude 5-8 compared with 2 Peter ii. 4-11, where the interruption in 7-9 and the change of case in ver. 10 are to be noticed). (5) The opponents described and denounced in Jude are distinctly portrayed, whereas in Second Peter the position is quite indefinite. 2. Those who adopt the opinion that Peter borrowed from the Epistle of Jude, suppose that when Peter wrote his Second Epistle, the Epistle of Jude came under his notice, and he was deeply impressed with its vigour, earnestness, inspiration; he felt that it contained the words of the Holy Ghost, and that it was most applicable to the state of the Churches to which he was writing. He therefore uses it in enforcing his own injunctions; he incorporates its sentiments in his Epistle; but he does so in no slavish manner; he makes the thoughts and words of Jude his own. Hence he omits and adds as occasion serves. The readers of the two Epistles were in some respects different. Both write to Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles; but Jude's Epistle is chiefly addressed to Jewish Christians, and Peter's to Gentile Christians. Hence several references employed by Jude are omitted by Peter, because he adapts his writing to Gentile Christians. 3. This view of the priority of the Epistle of Jude is exposed to several weighty objections. Especially it is considered to be opposed to the authenticity of Peter's Epistle. It can hardly be imagined that Peter, one of the three pillars of the Church, so ready in speech and action, would borrow from one

who was not an Apostle, and who was unknown in the Christian Church. "Those who, like ourselves," observes Fronmüller, "are profoundly impressed with the authenticity of the Second Epistle of Peter, deem it, *a priori*, highly improbable that Peter, the prince of the Apostles, that illumined and highly gifted man, who proves his originality in the First Epistle, as well as in chaps. i. and iii. of the Second Epistle, should have borrowed, in a part of his Epistle, the language, figures, and examples of a man evidently less gifted than himself. Especially remarkable, moreover, would be his silence concerning Jude, seeing that he made mention of Paul and his Epistles." Hence it is that Schott argues against the priority of Jude on the ground of the authenticity of Second Peter. 4. Upon the whole, then, although we consider that 2 Peter ii. 1-iii. 1-3 and Jude are so dependent upon each other that either Peter must have seen the Epistle of Jude or Jude must have seen the Epistle of Peter, yet the arguments in favour of the priority of each are so nearly balanced, that it is impossible to come to a definite conclusion. The admission of the fact that one sacred writer borrowed from another is no argument against the inspiration or the genuineness of one of the writings. There are several instances in Scripture where writers have copied from one another, or from a common source. Not to mention in this point of view several passages in the synoptical Gospels, the repetitions in the Pentateuch, and the same historical accounts in the books of Samuel, the Kings, and Chronicles; the following passages are coincident in words; compare 2 Sam. xxii. with Psa. xviii.; Psa. xiv. with Psa. liii.; Psa. cxv. 4-11 with Psa. cxxxv. 16-21; 2 Kings xviii. 13-19. with Isa. xxxvi.-xxxix.; 2 Kings xxv. 23, 24 with Jer. xl. 7-9; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 22, 23 with Ezra i. 1-3; Ezra ii. with Neh. vii.; Isa. ii. 2-4 with Micah iv. 1-3, &c. In all these passages the resemblance is far more complete and exact than that found between the Epistles of Second Peter and Jude. (P. J. Gloag, D.D.)

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VERS. 1, 2. Jude . . . to them that are sanctified.—*The apostolic benediction* :—

I. THE APOSTOLIC BENEDICTION. St. Jude has given the blessing in a fuller form than any of his brethren, superadding the benefits of Christian "love" to the other subjects of the holy wish. Observe that in this benediction the apostles follow the same order as in the text—I mean that "mercy" or "grace" is always first. And we may well perceive the absolute necessity of this. "Mercy" must form to us the beginning of every blessing. "Mercy" therefore is the first object of our concern; mercy to forgive; to rescue from perishing; to raise to favour; and to render us at last, by its purifying influence, worthy of the friendship of that gracious Being who freely bestows it. It is here we find the only source of "peace," which begins in our being reconciled to God; and the wisdom of its commencing there appears from the fact that the mind, with its many fears and hopes, has no ground whereon to rest but in union with God. Peace under the remembrance of sin, for sin is pardoned; under the visitations of adversity, for the paternal favour turns them all to present improvement and endless good; under the solemn views of the future world, for the judgment is to be an acquittal and eternity of blessedness to the children of God. The man who has this Divine tranquillity reigning in his soul will be eager to preserve the unity of kind affection with his brethren. He is in the best state for cultivating the fruits of Christian "love." He cannot hold fellowship with "the things above" without drawing down "the wisdom" that is as "peaceable and gentle" as it is "pure." II. THE LIMITATIONS within which the benediction is here pronounced. The persons on whom exclusively it is pronounced are described by decided traits of character. Every one that hears the gospel is "called." But it is not upon every one that the "call" produces its effect. As giving an abridged view of what is required in the way of evidence on this subject, the next qualification mentioned may safely be taken. For to be "preserved in Christ Jesus" denotes perseverance in every excellence. It describes at once constancy of religious profession and devotedness of religious obedience, trust in the author of our salvation, and endeavour to resemble Him. Now, consider for what use these views of character are here detailed. They are of use for determining on whom the apostolical benediction was pronounced. Freely as the blessings of the gospel are offered, never is the offer of them to conceal the great distinctions of moral truth and duty. Benedictions are to descend on ground fitted to receive them; otherwise there will spring up no real good. Let no man, therefore, soothe himself with the promises of "mercy" who is conscious that, instead of being "sanctified" under the influence of the gospel, he is living in the wilful practice of sin. (*W. Muir, D.D.*) *The salutation* :—I. CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE BELIEVERS. These are three, and they include all which pertain to godliness. 1. A Divine act in the soul. The idea of consecration is here intended. 2. Divine guardianship over the soul. We are preserved in the matter of possession—what God has given us, and in the matter of condition—what God has made us. 3. Divine leadership before the soul. This is the call to service, activity, and suffering. II. THE BLESSINGS OF TRUE BELIEVERS. 1. God's mercy to maintain their purity. The very idea of weakness and imperfection is here implied. By the constant supply of grace the saints are kept from falling. 2. God's peace to main-

tain their preservation. Commotion, strife, perturbation of soul, invariably lead to loss and disaster. 3. God's love to inspire their life. (*T. Davies, M.A.*) *A servant of Christ*:—1. They who undertake any public employment for Christ must receive a call from Him to be His servants, if with comfort to themselves or benefit to others they will go about His work. 2. Alliance in faith, spiritual relation to Christ, is much dearer and nearer than alliance in flesh. 3. There is a peculiar excellency and worth in the title of servant. (1) Christ much honours us. (2) He will assist us in our works. (3) He will preserve us. (4) He will provide for us. (5) He will reward us. 4. We owe to God the duty and demeanour of servants. To serve Him—(1) Solely. (2) Obediently. (3) Heartily. (4) Cheerfully. (5) Perpetually. 5. They who expect to persuade others to serve Christ must be servants themselves. (*W. Jenkyn, M.A.*) *Grace and sanctification*:—1. Grace whereby we are changed, much excels grace whereby we are only curbed. 2. This sanctification changes not the substance and faculties of soul and body, but only the corruption, disorder, and sinfulness thereof. 3. The people of God even in this life are saints. 4. Holiness cannot be hid. 5. How great the change that is wrought upon a person when God comes with sanctifying grace! 6. The holiness of a sanctified person is not purely negative. We are not content with half happiness, why should we be with half holiness? 7. Sanctification admits no coalition between the new and the old man. 8. As a sanctified person allows no mixtures with grace, so he puts no limits to grace. 9. Outside, superstitious mortification is but a shadow of the true. 10. The Lord estimates His people by the better part, their bent and strain, not their defects. 11. How causelessly the world complains of those who are truly sanctified! (*Ibid.*) *Sanctification and preservation of the saints*:—All former blessings without this is to small purpose, in that God not only calleth us, but sanctifieth us, and not only so, but also reserveth us in Christ Jesus. This maketh up the measure of our joy till the bushel run over. So Paul told the Corinthians (1 Cor. i. 8). This is the anchor of our hope, that God preserveth us for ever. Our life is like a ship in the sea, beaten with wind, tossed with waves, and were it not that Christ is in this ship, we were like to sink. (*S. Otes.*)

Ver. 2. Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied.—*Mercy, peace, and love multiplied*:—I. **MERCY.** 1. Pardoning mercy. 2. Sustaining mercy. 3. Preserving mercy. 4. Restraining mercy. 5. Supplying mercy. 6. Restoring and sanctifying mercy. 7. Glorifying mercy. II. **PEACE.** 1. Internal peace—a holy, tranquil calm. 2. External peace. Christ is the King of peace. Our lives must be peace, our lips will breathe peace. III. **LOVE.** 1. The love of God towards us. 2. The love of ourselves to God. Surely this needs to abound! How cold it is, how poor and deficient! 3. Love to one another. This is the evidence of our love to Him. (*Homilist.*) *Spiritual blessings best*:—1. Spiritual blessings are the best blessings we can wish to ourselves and others. It is true, nature is allowed to speak in prayer, but grace must be heard first. 2. Observe the aptness of the requests to the persons for whom he prayeth. "Those that are sanctified and called" have still need of "mercy, peace, and love." They need mercy, because we merit nothing of God, neither before grace received nor afterward. Our obligation to free grace never ceaseth. We need also more peace. There are degrees in assurance as well as faith. There is a temperate confidence, and there are ravishing delights, so that peace needs to be multiplied also. And then love, that being a grace in us, it is always in progress. In heaven only it is complete. Take it for love to God; there we cleave to Him without distraction and weariness or satiety. God in communion is always fresh and new to the blessed spirits. And take it for love to the saints; it is only perfect in heaven, where there is no ignorance, pride, partialities, and factions. 3. Observe the aptness of these requests to the times wherein He prayed, when religion was scandalised by loose Christians, and carnal doctrines were obtruded upon the Church. In times of defection from God, and wrong to the truth, there is great need of mercy, peace, and love. Of mercy, that we may be kept from the snares of Satan. And we need peace and inward consolations, that we may the better digest the misery of the times; and love, that we may be of one mind, and stand together in the defence of the truth. 4. Note the aptness of the blessings to the persons to whom He prayeth. Here are three blessings that do more eminently suit with every person of the Trinity; and I do the rather note it, because I find the apostle elsewhere distinguishing these blessings by their proper fountains, as Rom. i. 7. So

here is mercy from God the Father, who is called "the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort" (2 Cor. i. 3), and peace from the Son, for "He is our peace" (Eph. ii. 14), and love from the Spirit (Rom. v. 5), "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given to us." Thus you see every person concurrerth to our happiness with His distinct blessing. 5. How aptly these blessings are suited among themselves: first mercy, then peace, and then love. (*T. Manton.*) *Holy arithmetic*:—A trinity of blessings is often to be met with in God's Word. It is God's happiness to crown all His people with goodness. May this trio of blessings be given to each one of us, and be multiplied. God's gifts always come in company. He is God, and gives as a God. Man, indeed, has limited means, and so must be limited in his gifts. I. We have a SUM IN ADDITION. As Christians we must never be content with the measure of our grace. Do not be satisfied to remain dwarf trees, but seek to be growing higher and higher, and at the same time sending your roots deeper and deeper. 1. The first figure in this sum is "mercy," and it is a very high number indeed. It stands foremost, for it is the chief of God's dealings with us, whereby He pities us in our helplessness. We have already received much, but we are to add to it: for "He hath not dealt with us after our sins," but favour has been shown to the undeserving, mercy to those who are full of sin. He has shown not only clemency in bestowing pardon, but His bountiful mercy whereby He supplies sufficiently our wants. So that whatever we need let us seek the stream bearing on its tide blessings for our souls to-day. 2. Then add to mercy "peace." What a glorious numeral is this! Now are we reconciled to God through the death of His dear Son. The enmity of our hearts has been slain, and it is our delight to be in His company. We want to have more of this peace; how shall we gain it? Only by seeking to hold more communion with our God. If this fair flower is to grow within our hearts the dew of heaven must fall upon it during the hours of calm fellowship with God. We must dwell in Him and He in us. 3. Yet again, there is another figure to add, and it is "love." Many have got a little of this treasure; would to God all had more. Love lies smouldering in our hearts. O breath Divine, blow these sparks into burning fires! Grace changes all within us, for while we receive such mercy and enjoy such peace from the hands of our loving Lord we feel we must love in return. II. Now we come to our SUM IN MULTIPLICATION. If I want to increase rapidly let me have the multiplication table, and let it be by compound multiplication too. Mercy, and peace, and love, multiplied by mercy, and peace, and love, which have been multiplied. Is this a hard sum? God can help us to do it if we also help ourselves. 1. The first thing that affords aid is memory. Think of the mercies of yesterday, put them down, then multiply them by the mercies of to-day, and so on and on, meditating upon the favours of years past, and you will find by this mental exercise that the mercy you now enjoy will be multiplied. And memory will refresh you concerning peace too. Recollect the morning of bright joy which followed the nights of sadness. Love, too, must be remembered if it is to be multiplied. Review all the tokens received in the past, all the choice souvenirs. 2. Another help we may have is mutual intercourse. As a boy at school runs to another older and wiser than himself when a sum is hard, and he needs help in doing it, so should Christians endeavour to find counsel and support from intercourse with their fellow-saints. 3. But the very best way is to go to the Master. If the sum is difficult, it may be well to take down the exercise-book and see the examples already worked out. He is plenteous in mercy. Here, then, shall you find a way out of your difficulty. If you cannot multiply, He will do it for you; He is the Prince of Peace, submit yourself to His gentle reign, and peace shall be yours. Dwell in the atmosphere of His love and this grace shall be more and more in you. III. Now, a SUM IN PRACTICE, and a very short one too. Unto you who have been called, sanctified, and preserved, are these words of exhortation sent. Be merciful, for "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Be peaceful, for "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." Be loving, for "love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **Mercy**:—1. Mercy can be attributed to God. (1) As it signifies a promptitude of the will to succour the miserable. (2) As it signifies God's actual helping and relieving us in our distresses. 2. God is merciful—(1) With a preventing mercy. (2) With a forgiving mercy. (3) With accepting mercy, taking in good part the desires of the soul when it finds not to perform. (4) With re-accepting mercy; looking upon a returning prodigal as a son; pitying as a father, not punishing as a judge.

(5) With providing mercy (Psa. xxiii.). (6) With directing mercy in our doubts (Psa. lxxiii. 24). (7) With sustaining mercy (Psa. xciv. 18). (8) With quickening, enlivening mercy to any holy duty (Phil. iv. 13). (9) With restoring mercy; and that not only from sin and miseries, but even by them. (10) With crowning mercy when He brings us to heaven. 3. The properties of God's mercy. (1) Full. (2) Free. Lessons: 1. How unbecoming a sin is pride in any that live upon mercy! 2. The duty of contentment in our greatest wants or smallest receipts. 3. The impiety and folly of those that abuse mercy. 4. Great is the heinousness of sin, that can provoke a God of much mercy, to express much severity. 5. It should be our care to obtain the best and choicest of mercies. 6. How little should any that have this God of mercy for theirs, be dismayed with any misery! 7. It is our duty and dignity to imitate God in showing mercy. (W. Jenkyn, M.A.)

Ver. 3. **Beloved.**—*Ministerial courtesy and love*:—1. Piety is no enemy to courtesy. 2. The work and labour of a minister should proceed from love to his people. 3. People should study to be fit for the love of their pastor. 4. The love of a minister must not be slack and remiss, but vehement and ardent. 5. Loving a minister's person has a great influence upon loving his doctrine. 6. The aim of a minister in being beloved of his people should be to benefit their souls. 7. The love of a minister to his people should procure love again from his people. (*Ibid.*) **I gave all diligence.**—*Diligence*:—1. Greatest diligence is always to be used about the best things, about matters of greatest concernment. It is madness to make as great a fire for the roasting of an egg as for the roasting of an ox; to follow the world with as much fervency as we do holiness; and about trifles to be employed with vast endeavours. It is impossible to be too diligent for heaven, and difficult not to be over-diligent for the earth. 2. All that ministers, even the best of them, can do, is but to be diligent, to take pains and endeavour (1 Cor. iii. 6). One thing to preach, another to persuade. 3. Diligence in duty is the commendation of ministers. The light of knowledge without the heat of love, speaks him not excellent. He is not made for sight, but for service. 4. People who partake of the minister's diligence, must take heed of negligence. (*Ibid.*) **To write unto you.**—*Writing*:—Writing is a great help to promote the common salvation. By this means we speak to the absent and to posterity; and by this means are the oracles of God preserved in public records, which otherwise were in danger of being corrupted, if left to the uncertainty of verbal tradition. Apostolical doctrine being committed to writing, remaineth as a constant rule of faith and manners. Finally, by writing, the streams of salvation are conveyed into every family, that in the defect of public preaching good supply may be had in this kind (Judg. v. 14). Again, in controversies there is great use of writing, controversies not being so easily determined by the judgment of the ear as the eye. In the clamour of disputations and violent discourse, usually there is such a dust raised, that we cannot so soon discern the truth as upon a calm debate, and mature consideration of what is delivered in writing. (*T. Manton.*) **Of the common salvation.**—*The common salvation*:—I. **INVITE ATTENTION TO THE THEME.** "The common salvation." 1. Salvation is adapted to all. It meets the case of man, as it provides—(1) An atonement for sin. (2) A justifying righteousness. (3) The Holy spirit, to renew and sanctify. 2. The salvation of the gospel is sufficient for all. As well exhaust the Godhead as exhaust it. If you were bid betake yourself to that mighty ocean, would you say there was not water enough for me to bathe in? 3. The salvation of the gospel offers itself freely to all. II. **EXHORT THE URGENCY OF PERSONAL APPROPRIATION OF THE COMMON SALVATION.** It suggests mournful considerations. Is what lies within the reach of all, what comes as a boon to be forfeited. Ah, what a dismal consummation from such preliminaries! It is no dubious problem, that, in order to any benefit, the salvation must be appropriated; otherwise it is worse than of no avail. For that dishonoured salvation must throw a dismal complexion on your eternity. It must add intensity to all its retributions. (*Adam Forman.*) *The common salvation*:—I. **THE ESSENTIAL TRUTHS IT EMBRACES.** 1. The full admission of man's entire depravity and ruin. 2. The necessity of an entire and sole dependence on the finished work of Christ. 3. The necessity of the influences of the Holy Spirit, for the regeneration and sanctification of the soul. II. **THE WONDERFUL SCENES IT DISCLOSES.** 1. Look back to the counsels of eternal love. 2. Observe the scenes of the Redeemer's advent. 3. Look to the scenes of purity and bliss above. III. **THE DISTINGUISHING BLESSINGS IT CONFERS.** 1. Pardon and peace. 2. Adoption and dignity. 3. Comfort and preservation. 4. Present

pleasure and joyful anticipation. IV. THE PERSONAL ATTENTION IT DEMANDS. (*W. Spencer.*) The common salvation (with Titus i. 4):—Jude was probably one of Christ's brothers, and a man of position and influence in the Church. He is writing to the whole early Christian community, numbering men widely separated from each other by nationality, race, culture, and general outlook on life; and he beautifully and humbly unites himself with them all as recipients of a "common salvation." Paul is writing to Titus, the veteran leader to a raw recruit; and yet Paul beautifully and humbly associates himself with his pupil, as exercising a "common faith." But you will notice that they take up the same thought at two different stages, as it were. The one declares that there is but one remedy for all the world's woes; the other declares that there is but one way by which that remedy can be applied. All who possess "the common salvation" are so blessed because they exercise "the common faith." I. THE UNDERLYING CONCEPTION OF A UNIVERSAL DEEPEST NEED. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." The tap root of all human miseries lies in the solemn fact of human transgression. That is a universal fact. Wide differences part us, but there is one thing that we have all in common: a conscience and a will that lifts itself against disliked good. Beneath all surface differences of garb there lies the same fact, the common sickness of sin. Now, do not let us lose ourselves in generalities. Whatever you may want, be sure of this: that your deepest needs will not be met until the fact of your individual sinfulness and the consequences of that fact are somehow or other dealt with, staunched, and swept away. II. THE COMMON REMEDY. "The common salvation." There is one remedy for the sickness. There is one safety against the danger. There is only one, because it is the remedy for all men, and it is the remedy for all men because it is the remedy for each. Jesus Christ deals, as no one else has ever pretended to deal, with this outstanding fact of my transgression and yours. He, by His death, as I believe, has saved the world from the danger because He has set right the world's relations to God. On the Cross, Jesus Christ the Son of God bore the weight of the world's sin, yours and mine and every man's. Further, Jesus Christ imparts a life that cures the sickness of sin. Christ deals with men in the depths of their being. He will give you, if you will, a new life and new tastes, directions, inclinations, impulses, perceptions, hopes, and capacities, and the evil will pass away, and you will be whole. Jesus Christ heals society by healing the individual. There is no other way of doing it. If the units are corrupt the community cannot be pure. III. THE COMMON MEANS OF POSSESSING THE COMMON HEALING. My second text tells us what that is—"The common faith." If it is true that salvation is a gift from God, then it is quite plain that the only thing that we require is an outstretched hand. It is no arbitrary appointment. The only possible way of possessing "the common salvation" is by the exercise of "the common faith." (*A. MacLaren, D.D.*) The common salvation:—I. IT IS COMMON BECAUSE IT COMES TO ALL MEN FROM A COMMON SOURCE. II. BECAUSE IT CONCERNS ALL CLASSES. III. BECAUSE IT SATISFIES A COMMON NEED. IV. BECAUSE IT IS ADAPTED TO MEN OF ALL RACES AND EVERY CLIME. V. BECAUSE IT IS THE THEME OF ALL THE WRITERS OF SCRIPTURE. Learn—1. To accept this salvation. 2. To publish it. 3. To defend it. (*James Hoyle.*) The common salvation:—I. IT LIES OPEN TO ALL. II. CHRIST IS OFFERED FREELY TO ALL, IN ORDER TO BE RECEIVED ALTOGETHER AS HE IS EXHIBITED IN THE GOSPEL. 1. In His complex character as God-man. 2. In all His offices as Mediator, Prophet, Priest, and King. (*F. Frew.*) The general character of the gospel scheme:—I. The gospel, which is characterised by its spiritual or experimental effect, is here called "THE SALVATION." It is the instrumental medium through which this comprehensive blessing is conveyed to the soul. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. II. The gospel is not only called "the salvation," but "THE COMMON SALVATION." This may be intended to intimate—1. That the salvation which the gospel reveals flows to believers from one common source—Christ. 2. That it is the same salvation that is enjoyed by all the children of God. 3. That the salvation of the gospel is common to every age, and class, and clime. 4. That all true believers have a common interest in this salvation—that they are all alike bound to maintain its doctrines, to vindicate its principles, and to promote its practical designs. III. The gospel is also here described as "THE FAITH ONCE DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS." IV. THE MANNER AND SPIRIT IN WHICH WE ARE TO "CONTENT FOR THE FAITH." V. THE REASONS WHICH RENDER THIS CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH NECESSARY. 1. Because men are by nature hostile to the truth, and therefore disposed to pervert it. 2. Because the glory of God is peculiarly connected with the preservation of His truth. 3. Because

the uncorrupted truth is essential to the salvation of man. 4. Because we are bound in this matter to follow the example of our Lord and His apostles. (W. McClellan, D.D.) *The common salvation*:—1. God is most free of His best blessings. He affords salvation in common to all His people. 2. Christ and heaven are full and satisfactory; they are enough for all. 3. None should be willing to be saved alone. Heaven was made for a common good. 4. They who teach others the way to salvation, should be in a state of salvation themselves. He who has sailed into foreign coasts, discourses more thoroughly and satisfactorily than he who has only map knowledge. 5. The commonness of salvation to all believers should be a great inducement to every one to labour particularly for salvation, and that they may not miss of it themselves. 6. There is but one way to heaven. There are many nations, more men, only one faith. 7. The partakers of this "common salvation," who here agree in one way to heaven, and who expect to be hereafter in one heaven, should be of one heart. (W. Jenkyn, M.A.) *The common salvation*:—And note that he calleth it common salvation, not proper to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Peter, &c., but common to all. First, he calleth it common salvation. First, to admonish all men to lay hold of it. So saith Paul to Timothy, "Lay hold of eternal life." And also to admonish ministers to neglect no sheep of God, not the very least. Secondly, he calleth it common salvation because it is not prepared for some few, as the Ark was for the deluge. Salvation is of the Jews, but the doctrine of the gospel is offered unto all. Thirdly, he calleth it common salvation because we are all saved by one common means, that is, by Christ. In this sense, as salvation is called common, so the Church is called common or catholic in three respects. First, it is not tied to any time, as the time of the law, but it endureth for ever. Secondly, it is not tied to any place, but to the whole world. Thirdly, it is not tied to any persons, as to the seed of Abraham, but to all that believe. In these respects salvation is called catholic, or common, and so is the Church. (S. Otes.) *The common salvation*:—I. BECAUSE IT PROVIDES THAT WHICH MANKIND EVERYWHERE REQUIRE. It may be rightfully said, I think, that mankind are addicted to religion; by which I mean that the propensity to engage in worship, and to seek for help and succour from powers which are external to ourselves—that that propensity is characteristic to man as man. Man is religious because he cannot help it; he is religious from necessity; he wants that which naturally he does not possess, and without which he believes it cannot be well with him, either now or hereafter. Why else will you find men going upon pilgrimages, offering sacrifices, and enduring the heaviest self-denial? Well, look here, in the glorious gospel of the blessed God you have just the common benefaction which humanity require. This, and not something else; not this or something else, but this exclusively, and this alone. II. BECAUSE YOU CAN COMMUNICATE IT TO MANKIND EVERYWHERE. I have spoken of various forms of religious service, and various modes of religious action; now of many of them it may be said that they arose out of the necessities of some given district, and that they relate exclusively to the peculiarities of that district. But you cannot tell me of any region of earth where Christianity cannot be instituted; the man does not live to whom it may not be preached, and by whom it may not be forthwith enjoyed. The nation cannot be found under heaven to which it may not be sent. The government does not exist under which it will not survive. Peculiarities, geographical, local or national, cannot be found whereby it would be set at nought. III. BECAUSE IT IS ADAPTED TO MANKIND EVERYWHERE. It is not only required by them in the general, but it is adapted to them severally, wherever they may be found. There are great peculiarities—personal peculiarities amongst the human family. 1. What peculiarities there are, for example, in respect to constitutional temperament! One man is cheerful, so much so that some would say of him, that he is volatile and gay. Another man, on the contrary, is taciturn. It would be said of him that he is gloomy or morose. Others partake of each of these peculiarities in a manner which, perhaps, may be said to constitute the temperament we most admire. The gospel when brought to bear on these peculiarities, ministers impulse where it is required—it ministers equanimity where that is required, and strength where strength is required. It preserves cheerfulness from degenerating into levity, and seriousness from degenerating into gloom. 2. Again, what peculiarities there exist with respect to age! The young man needs to be reminded that the world is a great delusion, and to be kept under a constant, powerful, yet cheerful check, lest he put darkness for light, and light for darkness. The man of business needs to be reminded that this is not his rest. The man of threescore years and ten needs to be succoured, comforted, and cheered

by the consolations of the gospel. It takes the young man and the maiden, and administers counsel and instruction to them. It takes the man of business, and is like a monitor at his very elbow on the exchange, bidding him not to forget the things which are unseen and eternal. It goes to the old man's chamber, and makes all his bed in his sickness. 3. Yet again, there are peculiarities with respect to intellectual power. There are some men who are profoundly intellectual, and there are other men who are not profoundly intellectual. There is a very great variety of gradation between those two extremes; but mark! The proverbs, the parables, the doctrines, the invitations in this Book were made as much for the sage as they were for the rustic; and, engaged as men of the most opposite intellectual power may be upon the examination of it, I would defy anybody to tell whether the philosopher or the peasant were most at home. 4. Then there is another peculiarity with regard to the degree of each person's criminality. It is adapted to the profligate, the blasphemer, the dishonourable—to adopt the language of the Apostle Paul, it is adapted to the disobedient, the lawless, the ungodly. IV. BECAUSE IT MAY BE OFFERED TO ALL MANKIND, EVERYWHERE. So explicit are its declarations, so unrestricted are its invitations. "Believe thou on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!" The light of heaven is unrestricted, and the light of the gospel is equally so. (*W. Brock.*) **Earnestly contend for the faith once delivered.** *Contending for the faith:*—The revelation of God in Christ—whose contents are the object of Christian faith and are therefore described as the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints—does not consist merely in additional knowledge concerning God. Christ is the Saviour as well as the teacher of men. A large part, perhaps the larger part, of the revelation of God which has come to the race through Christ consists in the actual redemption of men from sin and eternal death. Those who receive the Christian gospel are not only brought under the power of great and pathetic and animating truths concerning God—they enter into the actual possession of a redemption which God has achieved for the race. To them the faith was once for all delivered. That is, the revelation of God in Christ, the Christian gospel, which is the object of the faith of all Christians, and which is here described as "the faith," is committed to the trust of all who have been actually redeemed and restored to God by Christ. They are responsible for its purity and integrity. There are other provisions for perpetuating it, and for renewing it, when it has been corrupted or wholly lost. The written story of the earthly life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the authoritative teaching of the apostles. But even those sacred books were written by elect saints in discharge of the same trust which has been inherited by ourselves. They stand apart. They have an exceptional authority. But they illustrate the fidelity which is required of the saints of all succeeding generations; and in our age, as in all past ages, the effective defence of the faith lies, under God, with living men and women who through Christ have received the remission of sins, and the supernatural life, and the grace and light of the Holy Ghost. To the saints was the faith delivered once for all. The saints of every age are responsible for defending it in times of peril and asserting its power. For they, and they alone, have an independent, personal, and immediate knowledge of the Divine objects of faith. Some kinship with a poet's genius is necessary for a true understanding of his verse; and spiritual kinship with the writers of the Old Testament and the New is necessary to catch their real thought. Who can tell what is meant by being "in Christ" except the man who is conscious that he himself is "in Christ"? Who can have any clear perception of the great truth—the paradox of the Christian gospel—that we are justified, not by our own righteousness, but in Christ, except the man who, out of the fulness of his own happy experience, can join in the exulting triumph of saints and say, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," &c. The theologian, therefore, must first of all be a saint. It is not enough that he has mastered the theories of conflicting theologies concerning the Christian atonement, the forgiveness of sins, justification, the new life which is given to the race in Christ, judgment to come. He must know for himself the greatness of the Christian redemption. He must be vividly conscious that in the power of a new life he has passed into a new world, if he is to be able to give any true account of that Divine regenerative act in which the new life is given. His science is the science of God. He must have a large and varied knowledge of God—not merely of the speculations of other men about God. His faith in Christ as the Eternal Word who has become flesh must rest, not on proof texts, but on a direct vision of Christ's glory, and his faith in the Holy Spirit on his own

consciousness that that august and gracious Presence dwells in him as in a temple. For his thought to move with any certainty in the great mysteries which surround the being of the Eternal, he must be able to say with other saintly souls, "Through Christ we have access in one Spirit unto the Father." To all Christian men the great objects of faith are revealed by the Spirit of God. No man can really say that Jesus is the Lord but in the Holy Spirit. The theologian who is called of God to be the teacher of the Church must receive in larger measure than his brethren "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation" in the knowledge of God. It is not given indeed to man to know in this direct way all the wonders of the Divine kingdom; and the theologian, like the discoverers in other sciences, must sometimes rely on the observations and experience of other men. The great things he should know for himself. Where his own vision is defective, and his own experience at fault, he will try to learn what other men have seen and what other men have experienced. He will distinguish between their speculations and the facts which they have verified and which have been verified by ordinary Christian men in different ages and under different conditions. He will remember that to the meek God teaches His way. He has to give an intellectual account of the faith once for all delivered to the saints. He will therefore attribute supreme value to that central substance of Christian truth which has been the life and strength of Christian men in all generations. The spirit of intellectual adventure will not be uncontrolled. He will not imagine that after nineteen centuries of Christian history the saints have yet to learn what are "the first principles of Christ." Believing that the light of God has come to himself he will also believe that it came to devout men of past generations. We claim for the intellect the largest freedom. It can render no worthy service to the Church or to truth if it be fettered. We claim for it in religion a freedom as large as is conceded to it in science. In science it cannot change the facts; its function is to ascertain and to interpret them. In faith it cannot change the facts; its function is to ascertain and to interpret them. In both departments the facts are supreme. Wherever facts are known the speculative intellect is under limitations and restraints; it is absolutely free only where it is absolutely ignorant. The methods of the intellect in the investigation of religious truth differ from its methods in the investigation of scientific truth, as the methods of the historian differ from the methods of the chemist. But the claim for intellectual freedom in theology needs no other qualification than that which is imposed upon it in every other province of intellectual activity—facts, through whatever channel the certain knowledge of them may come, and by whatever methods they are discovered or verified—facts are its only limitation. It is our duty to keep an open mind to the discoveries of theologians and scholars; but this does not mean that we should consent to regard all the articles of the Christian faith as open questions. On the great subjects our mind is made up. The facts we know, and under God we have to transmit the knowledge of them to coming generations. We are willing, if necessary, to revise definitions, but can accept no definition which obscures the Divine glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Son of Man, Creator, Brother, Lord, Redeemer of the human race. We are prepared to discuss theories of the Atonement, but can accept no theory which would dislodge our hearts from their sure confidence in Christ, in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the remission of sins according to the riches of God's grace. We confess that the mystery of the eternal life of God transcends our science; that the terms of the creeds must be inexact; that they point towards august truths, but do not reach them; and yet, with reverence and awe we worship Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—one God, blessed for evermore; and in the knowledge of God we have eternal life. The substance of the faith delivered once for all to the saints of the first age has been verified in the experience of the saints of every succeeding generation, and has, in these last days, been verified in our own. Theologians have not to create new heavens and a new earth, but to give a more exact account of that spiritual universe whose mysteries and glories have environed the saints from the beginning. (R. W. Dale, D.D.)

*Contend for the faith :—*I. THE GREAT CAUSE for the maintenance of which the apostle exhorts Christians to contend. 1. For the purity of the faith. 2. For the influence of the faith. 3. For the propagation of the faith. II. THE GROUNDS which justified the apostle in making this duty so imperative. 1. The importance of the faith in itself. 2. The proneness of men to deteriorate or pervert the faith. 3. The violent opposition of avowed enemies, and the seduction of secret foes. 4. The Divine origin of the revelation. III. THE SPIRIT AND

TEMPER in which, as Christians, we should discharge the duty. 1. Our methods must be spiritual, not carnal. 2. Our efforts should be enlightened and scriptural. 3. We should contend for the faith with great earnestness. 4. We should combine with firmness a charitable spirit. 5. While active in the propagation of the gospel among our fellow men, there should be a consistent exemplification of religion in our own lives. 6. We should give ourselves to prayer, accompanying all our exertions with ardent supplications for the outpourings of the Holy Spirit. (*C. Barry.*) *The defence of the faith*:—I. THE CAUSE TO BE DEFENDED. "The faith." 1. Christians are not called upon to contend for—(1) Mere forms and ceremonies. (2) Mere speculative opinions, though those opinions may refer to some points of Christian doctrine. 2. We are to contend for—(1) The great facts of the gospel. The incarnation, miracles, sufferings, death, resurrection, &c., of Christ. (2) The essential doctrines of the faith. The fall of man. Divinity and atonement of Christ. Influence of Holy Spirit. Salvation by faith. (3) The experimental power and influence of the faith. Practical holiness. II. THE NATURE OF THIS DUTY. "Earnestly contend." 1. Not with bigoted zeal. 2. Not with secular, carnal weapons. 3. In a Christian spirit. 4. Judiciously. 5. Practically. By example, as well as precept or rebuke. III. THE NECESSITY OF DISCHARGING THIS DUTY. 1. It is enjoined by Divine authority. 2. By contending for the faith you will yourself become more established in it. (*Josiah Hill.*) *The faith once delivered to the saints*:—I. WHAT IS IT? 1. The word faith here must be understood as meaning the objects of faith—all the great doctrines of the gospel which we must cordially believe, and all its holy precepts which we must diligently practise. 2. This faith was once delivered to the saints. It was communicated first to the evangelists and apostles by the teaching of Jesus Christ and by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and was by them spread abroad in the world. II. HOW ARE WE TO CONTEND FOR IT? 1. We must strenuously contend for this faith, as a prize of inestimable value. 2. We must also contend for this faith with great diligence. It should be our daily study and prayer that this faith may be firmly rooted in our own hearts, and in the hearts of all who are placed under our care or under our influence. 3. We must contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, with much anxiety. We must be "sober and vigilant," as knowing that we are exposed to many enemies, who would rob us of our faith. 4. We must further contend for this faith with constant perseverance. Surely you would not wish merely to fight some battles well in contending for your Christian faith, and then give up all for lost. Conclusion: 1. If any additional motives are necessary to persuade you thus to "contend for the faith once delivered to the saints," consider—(1) How much your present peace and eternal welfare depend upon this contest. (2) Consider how strongly you are urged by a principle of gratitude to hand down to others the pure faith of the gospel which you have received from your fathers. (3) There is another motive which should strongly urge you in this arduous contest: This is the love of Christ and of your brethren. (*John Bull, M.A.*) *Contending for the faith*:—I. We are called to contend EARNESTLY. But to contend earnestly does not mean that we are to contend bitterly, fiercely, unkindly. It merely means, that we view the question as we ought to view it; that we are serious where we should be serious; firm where we should be firm; and that, as we know the value of truth, we should be as decided in maintaining it as we have been diligent in seeking it. II. THE OBJECT FOR WHICH WE ARE DIRECTED TO CONTEND. We are to contend earnestly; but it is "for the faith once delivered to the saints." In other words, we are to contend, not for any notions of our own, not for any private views, personal feelings, imaginary distinctions, but for that which God has revealed. It is not easy to say how much the character of contention is affected by that, which is regarded as its object. If the object is personal, the contention becomes personal. Self-love, in that case, mixes itself with the feelings of the moment; and pride and vanity, and a hundred other evil tempers, are enlisted in the cause, and add bitterness and warmth to the dispute. On the other hand, he who wishes to defend nothing but "the faith once delivered to the saints," can contend, and earnestly too, without allowing his earnestness to exceed its proper limits, or become violent and intemperate. The cause in which he is engaged sanctifies the spirit with which it is advocated. The consciousness that he has truth on his side makes him calm. The assurance of God's word gives certainty and steadiness to his reasoning. (*H. Raikes, M.A.*) *The permanence of the Christian faith*:—What are our primary, positive reasons—

such as spring from the broad facts which meet us on the forefront of history and human nature—for believing in the permanence of our Christian creed? 1. First, surely we may gather reassurance from the past history of Christianity. Human nature is one and the same beneath all distinctions of race and class. Christianity has already in the past shown a marvellous power so to get down to the permanent roots of human life and to pass in substance unchanged through the greatest possible crisis and most radical epochs of change in human history. 2. Should we not find reassurance in the fact that the panics with which the faith of our own generation has been assailed are storms which the ship of Christian faith is already showing signs that she can weather? For example, it cannot be denied that the horror with which, not wisely perhaps, but certainly not unnaturally, new conceptions of evolution in nature were at first regarded by theologians and Christian teachers is passing away, and they at least are declaring on all sides and in all good faith that they do not find their frankest acceptance at all inconsistent with a Christian belief. 3. Again, if we are tempted to take an over-ideal view of development as the law of the world, and to fear that Christianity by the very fact that it claims finality proves its falsity, is there anything more reassuring than to consider carefully the broad fact that Christian morality has as a matter of history vindicated its claim in this respect. A morality—an ideal of human life, individual and social—promulgated in Syria 1800 years ago, proclaimed in its completeness by a few mostly uneducated men of Jewish birth and training, within the limit of a few years—this ideal has remained through the ages, and almost nobody seriously claims to find it deficient. At any rate those who do, appeal very little to our consciences and better reason. But, then, what a vast admission is here! It means that morality has, under circumstances when such a fact was not at all to be expected, vindicated its finality; each successive generation has but to go back and drink its fill afresh from that inexhaustible source of a moral ideal which is Catholic. 4. And if we are convinced of this, if we are convinced that in this moral and spiritual sphere of human life an ideal promulgated 1800 years ago in an Eastern country has shown every sign of being universal and final, if we are convinced that the law of evolution has here something which in actual experience limits its application, then it seems no great step to ask a person to admit that this finality shall be attributed not to the life merely in ideal and effect, but to what St. Paul calls the “mould” of Christian teaching which fashions the life. For just as surely as in the lapse of years we identify the Mahomedan character with the Mahomedan creed, and in the creed recognise the condition of the character, just so surely we must recognise the whole organism of the historic Christian system as the condition of the Christian morality. Is there any consideration in the world which can call itself scientific which would justify us in supposing that a life consciously and confessedly moulded by a body of truths can go on existing without those truths? Is it not contradicting all principles of science to imagine that a changed environment of truth will not produce a changed product? The prayerful temper must excite our admiration, but is it not inconceivable that the prayerful temper can be developed except on the basis of a belief in a personal God to whom we can have personal and open access? The temper of penitence we know to be one of the most absolute essentials of spiritual progress. But the temper of penitence is the simple product of a belief at once in the personal holiness and personal love of God, a belief which can become conviction only in the revelation of Christ. (*Canon Gore.*) *Contending for the faith given to the saints*:—Here note three things: 1. That faith is a gift. 2. That it is once given. 3. That it is given unto the saints. I. And first, THAT FAITH IS A GIFT, it is evident by the apostle's own words where he calleth Christ the Author and Finisher of our faith, as the Athenians were called the inventors and perfectors of all good learning. But the Church hath all her learning, religion, and faith from God; He gave it at the first, and He confirmed it at the last. This doctrine serveth to humble us; to let us see that it is not in our power, that faith is not hereditary: God beginneth it, and increaseth it, and finisheth it. II. But to proceed to the next point: THIS FAITH WAS ONCE GIVEN, once for all, once for ever; which commendeth unto us the constancy of God, with whom is no variableness nor shadow of change; He speaketh, and it is done. There is such mutability in men, that they change like the moon, they alter like the cameleon; but God alters not, but giveth His gifts to His Church once for ever. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance. Note this word “once” so often repeated—once God gave the law, once He gave the gospel. III. Thirdly, THIS FAITH IS GIVEN TO THE SAINTS. By saints he meaneth the children of God. First, in respect of

separation, for they are elected and gathered out of this world. Secondly, in respect of vocation, they were saints by calling. Thirdly, in respect of regeneration. And lastly, in respect of justification or imputation, because the holiness and sanctity of Christ is imputed unto them. In that this faith is given unto the saints we learn that holy things are not to be given to dogs. The songs of nightingales are not for the ears of asses. (*S. Otes.*) *The faith once for all*:—Among the testimonies which the sons of genius, in their deep disappointment and bitter want, have given to the solitary superiority of the Christian faith, I know none more impressive than that of Sir Humphrey Davy. His brilliant genius, his practical inventiveness, his great talents, his discovery of four metals, his fortunate surroundings and his pre-eminent distinction conspire to make the entry in his later diary very mournful—namely, the two words “very miserable,” and to give profound emphasis to his estimate of the Christian faith. He says, “I envy no quality of mind or intellect in others—not genius, power, wit, or fancy; but if I could choose what would be most delightful, and I believe most useful to me, I should prefer a firm religious belief to every other blessing; for it makes life a discipline of goodness, creates new hopes when all earthly hopes vanish, and throws over the decay, the destruction of existence, the most gorgeous of all lights; calling in the most delightful visions where the sensualist and the sceptic view only gloom, decay, and annihilation.”

I. Our first endeavour must be to ASCERTAIN AND VERIFY “THE FAITH ONCE FOR ALL DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS.” 1. The treasure. What is it? “The faith,” that is the phrase. It is a record of certain specific facts about the Lord Jesus Christ—if you please, a creed. To be sure there are creeds and creeds. Men have built around the great citadel of revelation certain out-works of theology which may be mere rubbish and worse than rubbish; and it is well for the citadel itself that the enemies of Christianity should destroy these. 2. The casket, what is it? It is that which contains the treasure. 3. The custodian is the church, the everlasting succession of Christ's true, living, human witnesses, who first received this truth from God. The truth was delivered, not invented by man, not reasoned out by man's intellect; delivered, handed by God to man; delivered once for all. II. It remains to state and unfold THE DUTY OF CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH once for all delivered to the saints. 1. It is sure to be contended against. Christ is the “Prince of Peace,” but He is also a “man of war.” He “came not to bring peace on earth but a sword.” Christ's own track to His throne lay through thorns and blood. The truth is sure to be contended against. Heretics were Divinely predicted; therefore they are credentials of the faith. 2. It is worth contending for. It destroyed the old polytheistic civilisation. It changed the face of the world. It brought in a new and better era for the race of man. It emancipated the mind. Look back eighteen hundred years to what the world was. Gibbon writes of “a sinking world.” I use his phrase. There was no promise of a noble future for the race. The home, as we conceive it, was not. The marriage tie had no sacredness. Man as man had no rights, and the individual was sunk in the state. Power, power was the one idea of ancient Rome. A modern French painter has caught the idea and represented it with wonderful fidelity. I mean Gérôme; whose canvas shows us the Coliseum with its eighty thousand spectators hungering for the sight of cruelty. The gladiatorial combat has proceeded, until the wretched victim has fallen at the feet of his more brawny or fortunate conqueror. He is weak, let him die. So said the vestal virgins, and so said ancient Rome. It was not far from that very time that a plain, homely man wrote a letter to some people in Rome and said, “I am ready so much as in me lies to preach the gospel to you which are at Rome also; for it is power.” Here is power against power. It is the power of God against the power of man. It is “the power of God unto salvation” as against man's power of destruction. 3. It is worth our while to contend for it. God's great way of making His truth mighty is by putting that truth into living men. His way of getting for His truth currency in the world is by putting it into the mouths and lives of men with hot hearts, making their hot hearts hotter by means of it, and so thrusting it before the unbelieving multitude. It is wonderful how any truth once lodged in a human soul will enlarge and ennoble that soul. Many a scientific thought without any moral aspect has lifted up a man into nobler thinking, and more earnest working, and a higher grade of living. Thoughts essentially moral and religious have still higher developing power. (*C. D. Foss, D.D.*) *The faith once delivered to the saints*:—I. CHRISTIANITY HAS A CREED. There is a body of dogmatic teaching which can be called “the faith,” the thing to be believed. Indifference to religious truth is sheer folly, to say the least. Do we allow that it

makes no difference what a man thinks on the subject of geology provided he is devoted to his favourite science? Do we say that a man's opinion on a point of law is of no consequence so long as he is sincere in advocating it? Far from it. The question we ask in all these cases is, whether the opinions are correct. We know that truth may be one thing, and what a man thinks to be truth a very different thing. Why, then, should men adopt the opinion that on the subject of religion it is a small matter what a man thinks? II. THIS BODY OF TRUTH IS REVEALED. It was "delivered"—divinely, as we know from other statements of God's Word. It is not a matter of intuition. Intuitions cannot be pleaded in behalf of the common practices of morality even, far less for a complete system of religious faith. It is not a matter of philosophical speculation. It is final, and it is authoritative. It is of great moment to find out exactly what the truth is which has been revealed, for once found we may have a faith which is sure and which binds. III. IT IS A COMPLETE BODY OF TRUTH. It was delivered "once," not once upon a time, but once for all. Nineteenth century sinners are like the sinners of all the preceding centuries, and nineteenth century salvation is the same salvation which Paul preached. IV. IT WAS "DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS." And so has it come down the line of evangelical succession ever since. The Church and the family have been God's appointed agencies for perpetuating and spreading far and wide His truth. Do we despise knowledge which comes to us through the channel of tradition? Is the boy's belief in the earth's figure less real because, instead of a scientific proof of it, he has been told only that it is round like an orange and not flat like a plate? Then why should we undervalue the religious beliefs which multitudes hold because they were taught to hold them, and it has never occurred to them to call them in question or even to verify them. We may trust the Church to act as trustee of the Bible without allowing it to make the Bible, or without accepting doctrines which it teaches outside of the Bible, just as we may trust a servant to go to the druggist to bring some medicine, when we would not allow him to put up the prescription. If, then, the Church is in possession of a definite body of truth—if, moreover, this truth is contained in the Bible—it would seem to follow that any objection to a formulated expression of it is very weak. For the Bible is practically of no use to us unless we are able to impose a meaning on what it says. We have entered into an inheritance of truth because of a pious parentage and a faithful ministry, and we are under solemn obligation to transmit that truth to the coming generation. (*The Study.*) *Defenders of the faith:—*I. WHAT ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND BY THE FAITH which was once delivered to the saints? 1. The faith is Divine in its origin. 2. The faith is adapted to man's moral needs. Three truths force themselves upon our notice when we study man in his moral relations. (1) The sense of guilt and moral weakness. (2) The liability to temptation and trouble. (3) The certainty of death and a future state. These exist in all men everywhere. The faith responds to the sense of guilt and moral weakness. 3. The faith is complete in its contents—"once delivered," i.e., complete. To it nothing can be added. Astronomy may discover worlds of light in the heavens, but it does not add to the universe. Every star was there before astronomers lifted their telescopes skyward. Astronomy may enlarge our knowledge of the heavens and thrill us with new views of heavenly beauty, but it cannot create a new star. Music cannot add a new tone to the scale. The octave is the final measure of possible tones. So with the faith. Theology cannot add to it. The Bible will gain in interpretation, but no new principles can be added to its contents. II. TO WHOM WAS THE FAITH DELIVERED? "To the saints." 1. Saints are the depositaries of the faith. 2. Saints are the disseminators of the faith. III. WHAT IS OUR DUTY IN REFERENCE TO THE FAITH? "Contend earnestly," &c. 1. We must hold to it experimentally and consistently. Not to the theory, but to the practice; not to doctrine merely, but to salvation as a blessed reality. 2. We must hold it with courage and resolution. 3. We must contend for it with simplicity and sincerity. (*W. Hansom, D.D.*) *Contending for the faith:—*I. WHAT WE MUST CONTEND FOR. For every truth of God, according to its moment and weight. The dust of gold is precious, and it is dangerous to be careless in the lesser truths (Matt. v. 19). There is nothing superfluous in the canon. Better heaven and earth should be blended together in confusion, saith Luther, than one dust of God's truth should perish. If the Lord call us out to the defence of them, whatever cometh of it we must be faithful. A man may make shipwreck of a good conscience in small matters. Harken to Satan, and this will be a little one, and that shall be a little one, till we have littled away all the principles of faith. All this is not spoken to justify undue

rigours, such as are without any temper of Christian moderation, or those frivolous controversies about trifles, such as have no foundation in the Word. Nor to justify the breaking of Church fellowship and communion, and making rents in the body of Christ, because of difference of opinion in smaller matters, when we agree in the more weighty things. We are to "walk together as far as we are agreed" (Phil. iii. 16); and externals wherein we differ, lying far from the heart of religion, are nothing to faith and the new creature wherein we agree (Gal. v. 6, vi. 15). The most weight should be pitched upon the fundamentals and essentials of religion, and when there is an agreement there private differences in smaller matters should not make us break off from one another.

II. WHO MUST STRIVE, AND IN WHAT MANNER? I answer, All in their place, and in that way that is proper to them.

1. Private Christians must have a share in this holy contention; their duty is partly—(1) To search out the truth that they may not fight blindfold, or by an unhappy mistake lavish out their zeal upon fancies which they affect, or ordinances and doctrines of men. (2) To own the profession of the truth, whatever it cost them. (3) To honour the truth by their conversations. There are heretical manners as well as heretical doctrines; and there are many that are otherwise of an orthodox belief, yet make others sectaries and disciples of their vices. Therefore Christians are called to "hold forth the word of life" in their conversations (Phil. ii. 16), and to "make the doctrine of God the Saviour comely" (Titus ii. 10), by glorifying God in that course of life to which they are disposed. (4) To comprise all in a few words, whatever maketh for the truth, either with God or men, all that must the people do.

2. There is something that the magistrate may do: "He is the minister of God for good" (Rom. xiii. 4). I cannot see how they can be true to civil interest unless they be careful for the suppression of error. Besides that error is masterly and loveth to give law, therefore, ere it be too late, they should look to the civil peace, for if men be quiet God will not when His honour and truth and worship is neglected.

3. Ministers are to contend for the truth, for by their office and station in the Church they are captains of the people in this war against Satan and his adherents (Titus i. 9). Ministers must contend, partly by preaching, warning the people of the wolves that are abroad (Acts xx. 29); partly by disputing (Acts xv. 2, xviii. 28), that by the knocking of flints light may fly out. (*T. Manton.*)

*Contending for the faith:—*I. CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH ONCE DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS IMPLIES—1. That, in opposition to infidels, we exhibit the evidence of the authenticity of the Scriptures. 2. The next step, in defending the faith delivered to the saints, is to maintain the ground that the Bible is not only an authentic record, but that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God"; that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." There can be no firmer ground on which to rest our religious belief and our hopes of salvation. 3. We are to contend for those principles of interpretation which will lay open to our view the true meaning of the Scriptures, and not bring to them a meaning derived from our own preconceived opinions. 4. We are to contend for the very system of truth which was delivered to the saints; to maintain it in its simplicity and purity, unadulterated with additions from the speculations of men. 5. Contending for the primitive Christian faith implies a defence, not merely of what is expressly stated in the Scriptures, but also of what may be clearly inferred from the truths revealed.

II. Our subject may be further illustrated by considering SOME MODES OF THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSION, WHICH ARE NOT NECESSARILY IMPLIED IN CONTENDING FOR THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN FAITH. 1. A defence of Scriptural doctrines do not necessarily imply that we prove them to be true by a course of argument independent of revelation. The evidence on which they rest is this, that God, who cannot err, and will not deceive, has caused them to be revealed to us as true. But we have to deal with those who do not admit the authority of the Bible. Is it not necessary on their account to resort to a course of reasoning, to establish religious principles? If you can prove all the truths of Scripture by a course of reasoning independent of Divine testimony, what need is there of inspiration? 2. Contending for the faith delivered to the saints does not necessarily imply that we contend for any particular form of words, different from those of Scripture, in which we or others have thought proper to express this faith. 3. Defending the truths of revelation does not imply, of course, a defence of the philosophical theories or hypotheses which have been proposed to explain the grounds, and reasons, and causes of what is revealed. 4. Contending for the faith delivered to the saints does not imply that we undertake to free it from all the difficulties which may be connected with the truths revealed.

5. Defending the primitive faith does not necessarily imply that we earnestly contend for every point which may be connected even with fundamental doctrines. 6. Contending for the Christian faith does not imply a defence of all the additions which have been made to this faith, with a view to supplying supposed deficiencies in the Scriptures. (*Jeremiah Day, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. For there are certain men crept in unawares.—*Secret enemies in the Church*:—1. The apostle saith there are certain men crept in, which some think to note the uncertainty of their persons, as who should say there are certain wicked and ungodly persons in the Church, but who they be we cannot tell very well. And surely the uncertainty of their persons, which are wicked, will stir up those which are wise, and have care of their salvation to greater diligence, and more circumspectly to observe and mark all men, lest at any time or by any means they be deceived. But howbeit the number be indefinite in that they are certain, yet it may seem that he giveth us to understand that the enemies of the Church were divers, and therefore the saints have greater cause to contend against them. 2. As they are certain, so are they within the bosom of the Church already, therefore both the danger is the greater and the contention must be the sharper. The enemies of the Church are not without the walls, where the better they might be dealt withal, but entered in already, and walk in the midst thereof, the greater peril is like to follow, and the greater courage must be showed in this contending. 3. And as they are already within, so are they crept in craftily, and therein their subtle dealing is noted, whereby the danger is also increased. There is no greater danger than that intended by a subtle enemy, whose person as it is most hardly discerned, so the danger by him is least perceived and rarely avoided, but that peril is the lesser when the enemy is known and the matter suspected. Wherefore the cunning of the wicked must sharpen and whet our care to contend against them. (*R. Turnbull.*) *The character of the heretics*:—I. **NAMELESS MEN.** He may have been induced to advert to them merely as "certain men." 1. With the view of avoiding those irritating personalities by which religious controversies are so apt to be characterised. 2. With the view of marking the holy disdain with which he regarded them, as if he considered them unworthy of being more particularly mentioned. 3. For the purpose of not adding to the notoriety which they very probably courted. II. **DECEIVERS.** "They crept in unawares." This may mean either that the parties in question assumed the office of spiritual teachers without the knowledge or consent of the brethren, or that they contrived by false professions to induce the rulers of the Church to admit them to that office. The latter is probably the real meaning of the words (2 Pet. ii. 1). III. **REPROBATES.** "Of old ordained to this condemnation." (*W. McGilvray, D.D.*) *Enemies within the Church*:—The adversaries impugn the faith, therefore the saints must stand for it. The Church hath many adversaries, like moles in the sun. As there is a contrary in all, day and night, cold and heat, sickness and health, life and death, so in religion. The godly, the faithful are as lambs amongst wolves, as lilies amongst thorns, as doves amongst ravens. Many oppugn the faith, therefore we must be ready to defend it, yea, strive for it unto death; as Joab fought for God, so let us speak for God and write for God. But to come to the description of these adversaries, they are here described two ways. 1. They are described by their life, and they are said first to creep into the Church. They have butter in their mouths, but swords in their hearts. A dog that barketh may be prevented before he bite, and the serpent that hisseth before he sting, and the fire that smoketh before it burn; so may a known enemy, but a secret enemy, a creeper, is hard to prevent. 2. They are here described by their impiety. He saith that they were *ἀθεοί*, without God, without faith, without religion; they deny God the only Lord and our Lord Jesus Christ, so Paul said (Eph. ii. 12; Phil. iii. 17, 18). The world is full of such atheists, they swarm like bees, they abound like lice in Egypt. 3. The wicked are here described by their carnality and liberty; they turn grace into wantonness, for ungodliness hath two branches, iniquity in life and manners and impurity in religion. Of the first he saith, They turn grace into wantonness; of the second it is said that they denied God and Christ Jesus. They are like *Æsop's* snake, that lay still in the frost, but stung him that warmed her in his bosom; so long as God keepeth us sick and lame and poor we are in some order, our ears are full of sermons, our lips full of prayers, our hands full of alms, our hearts full of holy meditations; but if we come to health and wealth and strength we rage like giants, we are like bad ground, which the more sweet dews it receiveth the more weeds it

bringeth out. (*S. Oles.*) *False teachers foretold*:—I. THE INSIDIOUSNESS WITH WHICH FALSE TEACHERS EFFECT AN ENTRANCE INTO THE CHURCH. They “creep in unawares.” Now craft, you will observe, is the assumed Scriptural characteristic of all heresy (*Matt. vii. 15; Eph. iv. 14; 2 Cor. xi. 13.*). The word which the apostle uses to describe this method of entrance is one which supposes that they had recourse to certain surreptitious and fraudulent means. It literally means the getting into a house under ground, or by means of some clandestine and unsuspected entrance. Let us note some of the byways by which false teachers get an entrance for their erroneous teaching. 1. One way is they keep back the full scope and tendency of their doctrines. Things that are to be really believed are only partially discovered, the rest being wrapped up in skilful ambiguities, only to be elicited when some superior disputant will press their doctrines to their legitimate consequences. 2. Another of the byways by which false teaching creeps into a Church is by a skilful mixing up with it a good deal of sound and wholesome doctrine, which is always paraded with a great show of orthodoxy. The apostle therefore in the text exhorts us to see that we look to a man’s teaching as a whole. He may teach truth in regard of all the attributes of the Divine nature, and yet if he obscure or distort or keep back other truths, if he tamper with the great doctrine of our justification by faith in the atonement, we are to denounce him as a deceiver and an antichrist.

II. THE REASON WHY THESE FALSE TEACHERS ARE PERMITTED TO HAVE A CERTAIN MEASURE OF SUCCESS. They have “crept in,” being “before of old ordained to this condemnation.” 1. First, you will observe, the apostle meets the supposed objections advanced on the general score of the Divine predestination—on that fixed immutability of purpose which, however contrary things may appear to us, will cause that God shall “work all things according to the counsel of His own will.” There can be no counsel against the Lord; there can be no unforeseen obstacle to the spread of His gospel. He ordains the chosen vessel to preach, and He ordains the means by which this preaching may for a time be thwarted. 2. “To this condemnation.” What does the apostle mean by this word? Does he mean that they are ordained to the irrevocable judgments of an angered God? to the future penalties denounced against the disobedient? I think not. A deluded teacher may bring in false doctrine, may even for a time draw after him many unstable souls, and yet he may, through the enlightening and recovering grace of the Spirit, be brought to see the error of his ways, and afterwards become valiant for the truth of God. It is said with regard to these false teachers, that the longer they continue to deal out poisoned food to their people, the more likely it is that they should be given over to a judicial blindness, which must, unless the grace of God should take it away, issue in the final perdition of their souls.

III. THE GREAT DOCTRINES which it is the aim of these false teachers to subvert. Men “turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1. And first, as to the expression, “the grace of God.” In its primary import the word means favour, goodness, benefit, something whereby one is spontaneously moved to do an act of kindness for another. Hence the word is used as a comprehensive designation for all the blessings of the gospel. These doctrines of grace these false teachers were seeking to abuse, to turn to the hateful account of their own licentiousness and sin. 2. “Turning the grace of God into lasciviousness”; that is, not necessarily into any particular form of deadly sin, but that they turned “the grace of God,” the free mercy of God vouchsafed to us in Jesus Christ, into a pretext for any and all forms of self-indulgence and self-pleasing which might minister to the gratification of the carnal mind. Examine any system of error, and you will find that more or less it resolves itself into some form of experiment on the Divine mercy, a calculation upon God’s willingness to do that which He has said He never will do—a presumptuous expectation that we may make as wide as we will that gate which God has declared to be narrow—a belief that without a changed heart, without anything that could come up to the Scriptural notion of holiness, it would be possible for a man to see the Lord. And thus it is well said by the apostle afterwards, that this turning the mercy of our God to their own worldly and selfish and unrighteous purposes practically amounted to a denial of “the only Lord God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” (*D. Moore, M.A.*)

Nocturnal enemies:—Nocturnal birds of prey fly without making the least noise. They can, therefore, pounce unawares on their victims, seizing them before they have any idea of necessity for escape.

Grace abused:—There are two things that most men desire, and they are, power and liberty; and when they have attained them I may say they are unto men as

they describe waters. They are easily apt to run over in what vessels soever you put them in. The grand exhortation in this Epistle is set down ver. 3, "Contend earnestly for the faith once given unto the saints." It is not enough to strive once, and to assert the truths, but ye must do it again and again, after one another, as often as the truth of God is opposed. And he gives the reason of this exhortation. First, because it is a *depositum* that the Lord hath in mercy delivered unto the saints, which the Lord requires them to keep: you are but stewards of it; it is committed unto you that you should transmit it unto posterity. Secondly, it was but "once given," and therefore you cannot expect that if you part with it the Lord will again bestow it unto you. It is like the fire upon the altar that was at first kindled from heaven, and was there, by the industry of the priests, to be kept alive, and was never to go out. Thirdly, he doth press this from the danger of it, in regard that the enemies lie in wait, there are certain men crept in unawares, &c. First, false teachers: they do not rush in, for then they would be observed, but they creep in secretly. Secondly, the things that they trade in are the truths of God and the souls of men. Therefore contend earnestly for the faith, for when false teachers come it is the faith that they do mainly aim at. And the apostle comes also to a description of the persons with whom your contention was to be. First, they are described by the act of God upon them, what they are in God's predetermination. Secondly, by the act of sin within them, and what they are by their own corruptions. All ungodly men, pretend what they will, they have no fear of God in them, nor any respect unto God. They are men that are strangers unto God, and live without Him in the world—that is their general description. They are ungodly men that have no fear of God in their hearts, and that do whatsoever they do without any respect unto God, though they are many times great pretenders. Secondly, they are more particularly described. First, by their desperate opinions—"they turn the grace of God into wantonness." Secondly, by their devilish conversations—"they deny the Lord God, and the Lord Jesus Christ." It is spoken in respect of their lives and ways (2 Tit. i. 16). First, what is meant by the grace of God? As given unto us grace is taken two ways in Scripture, either for the gospel, the Word of His grace, as it is called (Acts xx. 32), and so it is taken (2 Cor. vi. 1). Secondly, it is put for the impress of this Word upon the heart, for it is the Word writ in the heart. They are the habits of grace in us; it is into this mould we are cast (Rom. vi. 17). It must here be meant of the Word of His grace, the doctrine of the gospel. Secondly, what is meant by wantonness? The word signifies a wanton, vain, licentious, and unruly disposition of heart. Thirdly, what is it to turn the grace of God into wantonness? The word signifies to transpose a thing, and put it out of its place; to turn away a thing or a person and put it out of its former condition. And when men make use of the doctrines of the gospel to serve their own lust, and do grow more loose under them, this is to pervert the gospel of grace unto an end for which it was never appointed. I. THERE IS A WANTONNESS IN CORRUPT TEACHERS; there are both wicked doctrines and wicked practices, for they both go together in the same men. First, this will appear by the descriptions everywhere given of them in the Scripture; they are described and placed in the highest rank of wicked men. Secondly, it must needs be so if we consider from whence doth heresy come. We have the rise of it (Rev. ix. 1, 2). Thirdly, they are in Scripture resembled unto the wickedest men that ever were (2 Pet. ii. 15). Fourthly, no men are so industriously wicked as they are, and they will compass sea and land to make a proselyte, and make him tenfold the child of hell when they have done more than he was before (Rev. ix. 10, 18, 19). Fifthly, the people of God have abhorred them as the wickedest men that ever were in the world, and therefore there is no sort of sinners that the Spirit of God hath so set Himself and the Spirit of His saints so much against as these (Tit. iii. 10). Sixthly, they are such sort of sinners as are most immediately acted by the devil of any men in the world; they have the most immediate influences from hell, and therefore (Rev. xvi. 13, 14). II. MEN TAKE SPECIAL CARE THAT THE WORD OF GOD SHOULD BE BROUGHT IN TO PATRONISE THEIR LUSTS. They will be wanton, but they would also wrest the Word of God and have that countenance it. First, carnal reason is lust's counsellor, and the strongholds of sin lie therein. It is a great pleader for sin. Men sought out inventions (Eccles. vii. 29; 2 Cor. x. 5). There is a great contribution that corrupt reason gives to lust. Secondly, but never so much as when it is from the Word of God, that being the rule of a man's actions. Let lust have something from it to satisfy it and then the man sins securely. Thirdly, the bitterest enemies that ever the Church of God had, have been those

that have owned the same Scriptures with themselves, as the Samaritans and the Jews and the Papists unto us, for hereby wickedness comes under the title of a duty (John xvi. 2). Consider but these four things. First, is this the return you make for all the goodness of God towards you? Consider the evil of it. First, hereby you do dishonour God in that which is highest to Him, and which He has most exalted next to His Son (Psa. cxxxviii. 2). Secondly, hereby you do gratify the devil, for that hath been his great design. Thirdly, no men bring on themselves greater destruction than these men do, who turn the grace of God into wantonness by bringing into the Church damnable heresies (2 Peter ii. 3). Fourthly, this is a dangerous forerunner of destruction to any nation or Church. (*W. Strong.*)

Perversion of the truth:—I. A GREAT CRIME. Why should men want to change the truth of the living God? Look into the text and you have the answer.

(1) Because the fear of God is not in their soul—"ungodly men." When the helm is broken the vessel will drift in every direction. Reverence for God is the first essential of faith in revelation. (2) Because to human appearance sin appears less hideous when committed in the name of religion—"turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness." (3) Because the authority of "our only Master and Lord" is against the license they would afford the flesh. Take Christ out of the gospel and any use might be made of it; but give Him His place in the sphere of Divine truth, and the force against sin is irresistible. II. AN AWFUL DOOM.

(1) It is a defiance of Divine authority: God is contradicted. When this is done moral government is at stake. (2) It is the greatest wrong that can be done to others. If you do not know the way, say so, but to know the way, and direct the man to go in the contrary direction, is to cause him harm. (3) It is an offence against the love of God, who sent His only Son to make us good, and lead us to virtue. (*T. Davies, D.D.*)

Before of old ordained to this condemnation.—*Man responsible for sin*:—Having described the wicked which were before of old ordained to condemnation by their life, he cometh now to describe them by their end. Here they fare well; but they walk upon ice, in the end they fall. Wheat and chaff go together till they come to the flail; gold and dross go together till they come to the furnace, but then the gold is the purer and the dross is molten. God's glory is above the heavens; we may bark at it, as dogs do against the moon, but we cannot pull it down. To speak more fully—God's will is a reason of all reasons; it is the rule of all equity. The judgments of God are oftentimes secret, hid, but never unjust. God ordains no man to be evil, though He hath ordained the evil unto punishment, for should God ordain men unto sin then should God be the author of sin. He ordains indeed the incitements and occasions of sin to try men withal; He also orders sins committed, and does limit them; and in these regards is said as before to work in them and to will them; in which regards also they are in Scripture attributed unto Him sometimes (2 Sam. xii. 11, 12; xv. 16). A man rideth upon a lame horse, and stirs him; the rider is the cause of the motion, but the horse himself of the halting motion. So God is the author of every action, but not of the evil of the action. The like is in the striking of a jarring and untuned harp—the fingering is thine, the jarring or discord is in the harp or instrument. The earth giveth fatness and juice to all kind of plants; some of these plants yield pestilent and noisome fruits. Where is the fault, in the nourishment of the ground or in the nature of the herb, which by the native corruption decocteth the goodness of the ground into venom and poison? The goodness and moisture is from the earth, the venom from the herb; the sounding from the hand, the jarring from the instrument. So the action is from God, the evil in the action from the impure fountain of thy own heart. (*S. Otes.*)

Divine preordination:—1. The object of the Divine decrees are not only men's ways, but men's persons. He doth not only say that their condemnation was preordained, but they also were ordained of old to this condemnation. 2. God hath His books and registers, wherein the persons, behaviours, and eternal estates of all men are recorded (Rev. xx. 12). 3. In all those things which appertain to the judgment of sinners God doth nothing rashly, but proceedeth by foresight and preordination. 4. No man ever perverted the truths of God but to his own loss. We play with opinions, but do not consider that damnation is the end of them; the way of truth is the way of life, but error tendeth to death. 5. Heresies and errors do not fall out by chance, but according to the certain preordination and foreknowledge of God. There are two reasons for it:—Nothing can come to pass without His will, and nothing can come to pass against His will. Briefly, the concurrence of God in and about the errors of men may be conceived in these things:—(1) He denieth

grace and light, which might direct and sanctify. (2) He leaveth difficultly enough in the Word, that men who will not be satisfied may be hardened (Mark iv. 11, 12). (3) God leaveth them to follow the course of their own hearts; He doth not incline and compel their wills, or infuse evil to them (Hosea iv. 17; 1 Kings xxii. 22; Psa. lxxxi. 12); He hindereth not their wickedness—yea, permitteth it, that so His wise counsels may take place. (4) God ordereth it for good, thereby bringing great advantage to His own name (Exod. ix. 16). (5) Once more, God's permission of error conduceth to the just ruin of His enemies (Matt. xviii. 6, 7; 1 Sam. ii. 25). The point may be applied many ways. (1) Here is comfort to those that regard the affairs of Sion; all the confusion and troubles that are in the Church are ordered by a wise God; He will bring some good issue out of them. (2) It checketh fear; it is all in the hands of a good God; as God trieth you to see what you will do, so you must wait upon God to see what He will do: He will bring forth His work in due time. (3) It sheweth their wickedness that take occasion to turn atheists from the multitude of errors. (4) It is a ground of prayer in times of delusion: Lord, this was ordained by Thee in wisdom, let us discern Thy glory in it and by it more and more. (5) It informeth us what a foolish madness it is to think that God seeth not the sin which we secretly commit: surely He seeth it, for He foresaw it before it was committed; yea, from all eternity. (T. Manton.)

Turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness.—*The perversion of grace*.—I. THE GOSPEL AND GRACE OF GOD IN ITSELF IS NOT PLIABLE TO CARNAL PURPOSES, YIELDETH NO CARNAL CONCLUSIONS. They turn it, saith the apostle; there is no such thing gotten out of the gospel till the art of a deceiver hath passed upon it. 1. It yieldeth no leave to sin, but liberty to serve God; this is the great design of it. Freedom from wrath and hell is a privilege, but freedom from duty and obedience is no privilege. In the gospel there is pardon for failings, but not to encourage us in our failings, but our duties. We were never so much obliged to duty as since the gospel, because now we have more help and more advantages, stronger motives and greater encouragements. 2. There are frequent and constant dissuaves from this perverting our liberty in Christ to the service of any fleshly design (Rom. vi. 1; Gal. v. 13; 1 Pet. ii. 6). 3. Because in the gospel itself there are quite contrary inferences from those which flesh and blood would draw from the gospel. The gospel hath been abused to three ends—to looseness, laziness, licentiousness. Now, you shall see the Word carrieth things in a quite contrary way to what carnal men do. To looseness: men have been the more careless, because grace hath abounded in the discoveries of the gospel; but the apostle disdaineth it, as a most abhorrent conclusion from gospel principles (Rom. vi. 1). The gospel teacheth quite contrary (Titus ii. 11, 12); not wantonness, but veaneness, "to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts" (Rom. vi. 16; 2 Cor. vii. 1). A bee gathereth honey thence from whence a spider sucketh poison. Again, to laziness: men are apt to lie down upon the bed of ease, and say Christ must do all, and so exclude all use of means and the endeavour of the creature. This is a foul abuse; for the Scripture inferreth thence the care and work of the creature, because God doth all (Phil. ii. 12, 13). Use 1. It serveth to inform us, in the first place, that carnal men are ill-skilled in consequences; from the very gospel would they draw a liberty to sin, than which from such premises no conclusion can be more strange. Use 2. Again, it serveth for caution; when you meet with such base inferences from evangelical principles, do not blame the gospel or the ministry. (1) Not the gospel, as if it were not clear enough, or faithful enough, or wary enough. They that have a mind to fall shall not want a stone of stumbling; they that will only be feasted with comforts, no wonder if they contract a spiritual sickness, and undo their souls by a misunderstood and misapplied gospel. (2) Do not blame the ministry and dispensation of the gospel, because some abuse free grace, others cannot endure to hear it preached; but children must not be kept from their bread because dogs catch at it. II. THOUGH GRACE ITSELF BE NOT PLIABLE TO SUCH CONCLUSIONS, YET WICKED MEN ARE VERY APT TO ABUSE IT TO THE COUNTERANCING OF THEIR SINS AND LUSTS. 1. Because carnal hearts do assimilate all that they meet with, and turn it into the nourishment of their carnal lusts: as the salt sea turneth the fresh rivers and the sweet showers of heaven into salt waters, so do carnal men pervert the holy principles of the gospel; or as sweet liquors are soon soured in an unclean vessel, so do truths lose their use and efficacy when laid up in a carnal heart, and are quite turned to another purpose. 2. Because they would fain sin securely, with a free dispensation from God, and therefore seek by all means to entitle God to the sin, and the sin to God. They would find a great deal of ease from gripes of conscience if they could

make God the author, or at least the countenancer, of their evil practices; and therefore when they can rub their guilt upon the gospel, and pretend a liberty by Christ, the design is accomplished. 3. Because man is obedient naturally no longer than when under impressions of awe and fear; "the cords of a man" (Hosea xi. 4) work little with us—like beasts we only put forward when we feel the goad. 4. Because we all naturally desire liberty, carnal liberty, to be left to our own sway and bent, and therefore we catch at anything that tendeth that way. We would be as gods, lords of our own actions, and so are very apt to dream of an exemption from all kind of law but our own lusts. (*Ibid.*) *Grace turned into lasciviousness*:—But how can they turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness? Is grace capable of a conversion into lust or sin? Will what was once grace ever become wantonness? It is the doctrine, not the real substance of grace, that is intended. The doctrine of forgiveness is this grace of God, which may be thus abused. From hence do men, who have only a general notion of it, habitually draw secret encouragements to sin and folly. (*J. Owen, D.D.*) *The folly of presuming on redeeming grace*:—Would any man be so simple as to set his house on fire because he has a great river running by his door, from whence he may have water to quench it; or wound himself, because there is an excellent plaster which has cured several? (*S. Charnock.*) *Divine grace abused*:—1. To turn the grace of God into wantonness is to take a pretence and occasion to wax wanton, by the grace of God, whose favour the greater it is towards them the more wicked and wanton they be. Such are the presumptuous sinners, which will therefore sin of purpose because God is merciful. These are they which in the apostle say, Let us do evil that good may come thereof: let us sin that God may be merciful: let us commit iniquity that God's glory may be revealed; yet is their condemnation just. And this grace of God is turned into wantonness of divers and diversely. (1) When we think ourselves exempted from all duties, homage, and service to men, because we are freed by Jesus Christ. (2) They also turn the grace of God into wantonness which outwardly profess the gospel, frequent the Word of God, hear the wholesome doctrine of Jesus Christ: but wrest it to maintain their wanton and filthy desires. (3) They furthermore turn the grace of God into wantonness who profess the gospel, that under colour thereof they may play the wanton more freely and may live thereunder more idly. (*R. Turnbull.*) *Denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ*.—*Denying God*:—Now there be many ways to deny God. Some deny His power, as the proud do; some His providence, as the infidels; some His justice, as the impenitent; some His mercy, as the desperate; some His truth, as liars; some His strength, as the fearful do. But especially we deny God in our lives, in our deeds, thus the Cretians denied Him. They professed they knew God, but by works they did deny Him, and were abominable, disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate. The profession of God is known by the fruits of it, as life is discerned by the motion of man. On the contrary, if a man would persuade us that there is fire whereas there is no heat, or that there were life in a carcase that never moved, we would not believe him; so believe not him that speaketh of God and liveth not in God. Seeing all things are made for man, it cannot be but man is made for another, and that is God only: but the wicked shall find God and feel God when it is too late, though here they do deny Him. God here is called the only God to note the Trinity in Unity; there is one God, one essence of the three persons. The heathen thought it impossible for one God to govern this great world, therefore they made one god for heaven, as Jupiter; another for hell, as Pluto; one for bread, as Ceres; another for wine, as Bacchus; one for the sea, as Neptune; another for the wind, as Æolus; one for learning, as Minerva; another for merchandise, as Mercury. Again, they deny Christ, of which sort there be many. The Jews deny that He is come; the pagans deny that ever He will come; the Turks confess that He is come, but yet as a man, not as a God, inferior to their Mahomet. But to speak orderly, men deny Christ many ways. Some deny His Divinity, as the Arians; some His humanity, as the Ubiquitaries; some His natures, by rending them asunder, as the Nestorians, who make two Christs—one the Son of God, another the son of Mary; some deny them by confounding them, as Eutyches, which said that His humanity was swallowed up of His Divinity; some deny Him by concealing Him in time of persecution, as the Nicodemites do. But chiefly we deny the Lord Jesus two ways: first, by denying the sufficiency of His death, as the Galatians did and as the Jews did. Secondly, we deny the Lord Jesus by denying the efficacy or virtue of His death, not dying unto sin. For as the sun doth not warm all whom

it lighteneth, as the people under the North Pole, who have the sun six months together, and yet freeze, so the Spirit of God doth not cause all to feel the virtue of His death, whom He illuminateth with the knowledge of His death. The profession of Christ standeth not in words, but in deeds; not in tongue, but in heart; not in opinion, but in life. The apostle nameth a true knowledge, for many know not God truly. (*S. Otes.*) *Denying Christ the Lord:*—I. JESUS CHRIST IS MASTER AND LORD (Rev. xv. 3). "Head over all things to the Church" (Eph. i. 22). In the world the attribute manifested is power; in the Church, grace. Lord, let me feel the efficacy of Thy grace rather than the power of Thine anger! II. CHRIST IS LORD AND JESUS; He came to rule and He came to save. III. Again, from the words observe, THE SON OF GOD WAS CHRIST, THAT HE MIGHT BE LORD AND JESUS; ANOINTED OF THE FATHER THAT HE MIGHT ACCOMPLISH OUR SALVATION. This anointing signifieth two things. First, it noteth the nature of His offices. Under the Old Testament three sort of persons were anointed—kings, priests, and prophets, and all these relations doth Christ sustain to the Church. Secondly, it noteth the authority upon which His office is founded; He was anointed thereto by God the Father, who in the work of redemption is represented as the offended party and supreme judge; and so it is a great comfort to us that Christ is a mediator of God's choosing. IV. Once more, observe, that Jesus Christ, the Master of the world and Lord of the Church, is TRUE GOD. For it is said here, denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. That Christ is God appeareth by express Scripture, where He is called "the true God" (1 John v. 20); "the great God" (Titus ii. 13), to show that He is not a God inferior to the Father, but equal in power and glory, and that not by courtesy and grant, but by nature. So He is called "the mighty God, the everlasting Father (Isa. ix. 6), and "God over all" (Rom. ix. 5). Again, God He must needs be, if you consider the work He ought to do. The work of the Mediator could be despatched by no inferior agent. Uses. Well, then, we learn hence—1. That Christ is a proper object for faith. 2. Since He was God by nature, let us observe the love of Christ in becoming man. 3. It is an invitation to press us to come to Christ, and by Christ to God. V. I COME NOW TO THE WORD IMPLYING THEIR GUILT, "denying." Observe, that it is a horrible impiety to deny the Lord Jesus; when He would make these seducers odious, He giveth them this character. Now Christ is many ways denied. I shall refer them to two heads—in opinion and practice. 1. In opinion: so Christ is denied when men deny His natures or offices. 2. Christ is denied in practice; and so—(1) By apostasy and total revolt from Him (Matt. x. 33). (2) By not professing Christ in evil times, for not to profess is to deny (Matt. x. 32, 33; Mark viii. 38). (3) Men deny Christ when they profess Him and walk unworthily and dishonourably to their profession. Actions are the best image of men's thoughts. Now their actions give their profession the lie (Titus i. 16). (*T. Manton.*) *Denying Christ:*—(1) As in profession God the only Lord and our Lord Jesus Christ is denied, so is God and Christ denied in doctrine. (2) God the only Lord and Jesus Christ our Saviour is denied of me in conversation, when in words we give our names to Christ's religion, yet in our deeds will not be obedient. (3) God and our Lord Jesus Christ is denied of men by vainly trusting in worldly things, and not reposing all confidence in God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. (4) God and our Saviour Jesus Christ is denied by revolting, backsliding, and falling away from the religion of God and the profession of our Saviour Jesus Christ. (5) Finally, when we do not deny openly the doctrine of the gospel and the Word of God, yet notwithstanding we will not obey the admonitions of the ministers of Jesus Christ, nor fear the threatenings and punishment sounded out against our sins, we deny the Lord Jesus. (*R. Turnbull.*)

Ver. 5. **I will therefore put you in remembrance.**—*Truth to be remembered:*—1. Great is the sin of those who despise repeated truths. A Christian must not have an itching, but a humble and obedient ear. Every truth, like a lease, brings in revenue the next year as well as this. 2. Christians must not only receive, but retain also the truths of God. Our memories must be heavenly storehouses and treasuries of precious truths; not like hour-glasses, which are no sooner full but they are running out. To help us in remembering heavenly truths, let us—(1) Be reverent and heedful in our attentions, as receiving a message from God. (2) Love every heavenly truth as our treasure; delight helps memory (Psa. cxix. 16), and what we love we keep. (3) Our memories should not be taken up with vanities. The memory which is filled only with earthly concerns, is like a golden cabinet filled

with dung. (4) Let instruction be followed with meditation, prayer, conference, and holy conversation; by all these it is hid in the heart the deeper, and driven home more thoroughly (Deut. vi. 6, 7; Psa. cxix. 97). 3. There is a constant necessity of a conscientious ministry. People know and remember but in part, and till that which is imperfect be done away we cannot spare ministerial remembrances. 4. The forgetfulness of the people must not discourage the minister. A boat is not to be cast up and broken in pieces for every leak. 5. The work of ministers is not to contrive doctrines, but to recall them. (*W. Jenkyn, M.A.*) **Afterward destroyed them that believed not.**—*Unbelief—its pusillanimity, impiety, and ruinous consequences* (with Psa. lxxviii. 40):—Of the Church of God in the world, it is true, as of the world itself, that, with much that may be called variety, there is substantial sameness, in all ages, in its condition. In all ages believers have enjoyed the same privileges. Their trials and dangers have also been similar as to their effects; bearing, at one time, on the growth of their knowledge and their faith; and, at another, on the open profession of their attachment to Jesus. When we thus look on the condition of the Church, in one aspect, as being as unchanged by the lapse of time, and yet, in another, as partaking of all the mutability of man and of the world, we are prepared to find that, with circumstances of unflinching security in its condition, it is, nevertheless, not entirely beyond the reach of danger and loss. The Church, and every member of it, true to Christ the Head, is encompassed with God's favour as with a shield. But unbelief detaches the hold from the Rock of Ages—from an unchangeable Saviour and His unchanging word. In consequence, so far as unbelief prevails in individuals or in Churches, they are exposed to wander, they cannot but fall into sin, and ultimately into ruin. I. Let us endeavour to APPREHEND THE SPIRIT OF OUR TEXT, AND THE CONVICTIONS PRESENT TO THE APOSTLE'S MIND, WHEN HE OCCUPIED THE POINT OF STANDING FROM WHICH HE CONTEMPLATES THE VISIBLE CHURCH. Several things are presupposed in the language of our text. In the salvation of man, memory has its province as well as faith. Knowledge, like the light, must enter the soul, and remove its darkness. But if knowledge be of a vague and indefinite nature, it has no hold on the convictions and no power on the heart. And yet truth, once well known, may fade from the view, and become, although not entirely forgotten, yet practically inoperative in the life. Faded impressions, then, need to be revived, and forgotten truths recalled, so as to be ever present, as a light from heaven, shining on the soul and path of the man, and guiding him in all his purposes and acts, in a world of darkness and sin. The light of God's truth, pre-eminently so called, is the revelation, not of the purity of His law and nature, nor of the unity of His Godhead and the supremacy of His government, but of the reality and fulness of His grace. It is implied, however, in our text, that, notwithstanding all this manifold grace of God, one and another, and many, may ultimately perish, and "that we may receive the grace of God in vain." How many who profess to receive it obviously show that they have never intellectually apprehended its nature, nor felt its influence at all? A sense of grace received has never expanded their hearts in generous love, either to God or man. But our text not only implies the possibility of all this, but assumes it as a fact that grace may be abused to lasciviousness (ver. 4); so that those who have externally received grace, may become eminently more godless and wicked than if they had never known of its existence. But what Christian can say that he never needs the exhortation of the apostle, "to fear lest a promise being left him of entering into rest, he may come short of it through unbelief"? II. LET US CONSIDER THE FACT TO WHICH THE APOSTLE SPECIALLY DIRECTS OUR ATTENTION, viewing the sin in the light of the description of it which the Psalmist gives. "How oft did they provoke Him in the wilderness and grieve Him in the desert!" And often did the Lord destroy some of them. But we shall confine our remarks to that one occasion on which the Lord swears that they should not enter into His rest (Numb. xiv. 12). 1. In order that we may receive the full benefit to be derived from this alarming example, let us notice the stage in their history when they so grievously sinned against God by unbelief. We find that, in a period of little more than a year, the Lord had brought them from out of the house of bondage in Egypt, through the perils of the wilderness, to the very confines of the land of promise. It would be easy to trace, at least, ten instances of provocation; but it is enough to remark, as displaying the grace and forbearance of God with his stiff-necked people, that in almost every march, or at every stage throughout their journey, they tempted God. God had visited them with marks of His anger, but He still carries them forward, continues to be

their God and guide, and the promised land now stretches out to their view. His miracles, which they saw in Egypt and in the wilderness, afforded every confirmation that God was able to fulfil His word; and they had no cause to fear or to be discouraged whatever obstacles might arise. We, like them, are called by God to take possession of blessings guaranteed by the oath of God to Abraham's spiritual seed. The kingdom of Christ, with all its blessings, is brought near to us, affording a rest to the weary and heavy laden traveller of the world. Wherever the gospel comes, every man is called to go up and possess. But this kingdom and its subjects have enemies,—the devil, the world, and the flesh; those who go up to possess the kingdom of God, must engage in conflict with these enemies, and only expect perfect rest in the degree to which the destruction of these enemies is accomplished. The one unrecalled command standing from age to age is, Go into all the world and preach the gospel. Sinners! go up and possess; fear not, neither be discouraged; behold the Lord hath set the land before you.

2. Let us next consider how the people treated this command of God. Did they at once obey God's command? No. Did they positively refuse? Their disobedience did not manifest itself in that manner at first. Moses tells us that the people "came near to him and said, We will send men before us, and they shall search out the land by what way we must go up, and to what cities we shall come" (Deut. i. 22). Some of you may say, Could anything be more reasonable? But you must observe the peculiar circumstances in which the children of Israel were placed. They had the unequivocal command of God to go up. This first hesitation, therefore, to go up, this prudent expedient, was in itself no small sin, and evinced the operation of the evil heart of unbelief. It formed part of the turning back and limiting of the Holy One of Israel of which the Psalmist speaks. But is this conduct of the children of Israel without its parallel among us, in our treatment of the call and the commands of the gospel? Are there no expedients to which we have recourse, by which to modify the authority and uncompromising severity of the Word of God; and by which we are actually, from fear and unbelief, regulating our steps by an ungodly prudence? 3. Let us observe how God deals with those who, by unbelief, had shrunk from the course to which He had called them. Did God instantly visit their transgression with judgment? So far from this, He bore with their abject timidity and dishonouring distrust. He permitted Moses to approve of the proposal of the people to send spies. Accordingly, the twelve "rulers" go forth to explore the land, and find that it surpasses their most sanguine expectations. "Nevertheless," said the spies, "the people be strong, the cities walled, and very great; moreover we saw the children of Anak there." The disheartening effect of this intelligence on the hearts of the people was such that, when commanded to go up, they refused to obey. Persisting in their unbelief of this oath-secured presence of God, the anger of the Lord burned against them. This sin crowned all the past, and was aggravated by every possible enhancement of guilt. It was a rejection of God's guidance, and a limitation of God's grace and power. He swears in His wrath that He would destroy "all from twenty years old and upward which have murmured against Me; and your little ones which ye said should be a prey, them I will bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised." Thus it was, that those whom God saved out of Egypt He destroyed in the wilderness. Hence we learn that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God—the Holy One of Israel. In all ages there are some who do not, and who cannot, enter in, because of unbelief. Are any of us of that class? 1. The first lesson which we learn from the admonition of our text is, that it is with the very same God who destroyed unbelieving Israel that we have to do. The greater or less fullness of revelation which God gives of Himself does not affect His nature any more than the obscurity or brightness of a day affects the brightness or nature of the sun. 2. Mark the grace of God as exhibited at the period when He destroyed them who believed not. He permitted the spies to be sent. He bore with the pusillanimity and unbelief of the people; and so He always does in no small degree. But God, although He thus graciously tolerate much unbelief, does not prosper His people in the expedients which they adopt under its influence. 3. You learn from the fact to which our attention has been turned, that faith is not of efficacy, by any arbitrary appointment of God. As the captain who would lead an army to victory must possess their confidence, and as every teacher, who shall be able to educate his disciples, must possess their respect for his ability to instruct—so must the God and Captain of our Salvation possess the unfeigned and unwavering faith of His people. 4. We

learn also that unbelief is not a trivial but most heinous sin. It operates at the seat of spiritual life in the heart within—it is only suspicion, doubt, questioning, shrinking, and simple inaction. But as the word, the promise, and the command come from God, it treats the Holy One of Israel with as much contumely and distrust as God lays to the charge of Israel, when they turned back, tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. 5. But this passage of Jewish history admits of application to the conduct of communities as well as of individuals. There is ground for apprehension, that the doctrine of God's decrees, instead of forming a source of comfort and strength in arduous duties, is often abused as an apology for inaction, and operates as a sedative on the moral sensibilities and aspirations of the heart. Now, looking at this passage in the history of the Israelites, we find it was God's will, and could have been compatible with God's purposes, that they should have entered into possession of Canaan forty years before the time that the land became theirs. 6. Let sinners, therefore, see that they are, under the gospel, saved to the extent that the children of Israel were, when delivered out of Egypt, and brought to the verge of the promised land. Immanuel's kingdom stretches out before them, in the promises and privileges of the gospel, and God's command to them is, "Go up and possess the land." And if any have been so far awakened by God's Spirit as to understand, in some measure, the better things which God has provided, but are yet halting between two opinions, or turning away sorrowful, from the requirement to yield themselves unreservedly to Christ's revealed will and authority, let them know, that, in thus shrinking through unbelief, and returning to the world, they cannot engage in the pleasures and pursuits of the world as they did before, at least for a time. They will experience a misery which may fitly be represented by being driven into the wilderness to wander and drag out a dreary life, as if with God's oath sounding in their ears, that they shall not enter into His rest. (*John Grant.*)

Ver. 6. And the angels which kept not their first estate.—*The fall of angels a warning to men.*—I. THE LOSS OF AN EXALTED STATE. 1. By whom lost. 2. What they lost. An "estate" of spotless purity, exalted dignity, supreme felicity. 3. How they lost it. By rebellion against God. Probably pride was their special sin (1 Tim. iii. 6). Beware of this sin; it is the first of which we have any knowledge, and I may say the dread parent of every other. Unbelief is a great sin, but the hidden germ of that sin is pride. Old Quarles says, "It hates superiors, it scorns inferiors, its owns no equals; . . . till thou hate it God hates thee." II. THE WITHHOLDING OF SAVING GRACE. Angels sinned and were destroyed, then let men beware. III. THE SEALING OF AN AWFUL DOOM. Notice the contrast—angels yet in chains, under darkness. Beings once of supernal light now dwelling in infernal gloom. 1. Observe that punishment is according to abused privileges. This is not a mere arbitrary law. Privileges create a capacity for suffering. To confine a poor beggar in prison for a year would not be a tenth so irksome as a year's imprisonment to a prince. 2. The punishment of the wicked is not intended to be disciplinary. At least six thousand years have already hovered over these fallen angels since first they fell. But no reformation has been wrought in their characters. Hell is not the place to burn the rebellious spirit out of fallen angels, nor yet of lost men. 3. The punishment of such as rebel against God is not at its worst until the judgment-day. 4. The punishment of apostate angels will be side by side with that of unsaved sinners. They shall be companions in misery. (*W. Williams.*) *Defection from God.*—1. The best of created perfections are of themselves defectible. 2. Nothing is so truly base and vile as sin. 3. In defection from God there is an imitation of Satan. 4. It is difficult to be high and not to be high-minded; to be adorned with any excellencies, and not unduly to reflect upon them. 5. The better the persons are who become wicked, the more obstinate they are in wickedness. When angels fall into sin, they continue in it with pertinacity. (*W. Jenkyn, M.A.*) *The apostasy of the angels irrevocable.*—The sin of angels is notorious, and their punishment is as famous; they are fallen from light to darkness, from heaven to hell, from felicity to misery; Valerian fell from a golden chair to a cage of iron; Dionysius fell from a king to a schoolmaster; Alexander III. fell from being pope to be a gardener in Venice; Nebuchadnezzar fell from a man to a beast; but the celestial spirits fell from angels to devils. For their sin of apostasy was great, it cried to God for vengeance. The Lord Jesus noteth this apostasy in them to show that their sin was not by creation but by wilful corruption. And this is the cause,

saith Augustine, why God hath redeemed men and not angels, for that they sinned from within and of themselves maliciously and rebelliously; man sinned from without and by provocation. Their fall was great, so was their punishment. The higher their state and condition the more grievous their fall. If it was much for Cain to be a vagabond, and Adam to be driven out of Paradise, and Ishmael out of his father Abraham's house, how much more for the angels to be driven out of heaven and not to return, like Noah's dove, to the ark, but to live in darkness for ever? But in that God hath reserved them in chains, it is a thing of singular comfort. Here, therefore, we learn that they cannot pass their bounds, they are under God, they depend on His beck. Well, God hath reserved them in everlasting chains under darkness, they are punished already, but their full punishment is not before the day of judgment. As yet they are but as prisoners in fetters and irons; the great assizes, the day of execution, is yet to come. Lastly, note, that the day wherein the angels shall be judged is called a great day. It is so called in three respects: great in respect of the Judge (Dan. vii. 9, 10); great in respect of the assistants—the angels; great in respect of the prisoners that shall be arraigned. Good Lord! what a great day will this be, when all the saints out of heaven, all the damned out of hell, all the dead bodies out of the earth must appear! Not an angel spared, not a devil respited, not a saint or sinner rescued, but all must be summoned to give their attendance and to make their appearances. But to proceed a little further, this day is called “a day” by an excellency. For never day was like unto it. For if the day of Christ's humiliation was so glorious, what shall be the day of His glorification? (S. Otes.)

Fallen angels.—1. They whose course and trade of life is in sin most resemble Satan. 2. Torments cannot reform devils. Hellish horrors cannot change hellish hearts. 3. Restraint much differs from reformation. Devils may have a chain upon them and yet no change within them. 4. Satan can do nothing but by God's permission. 5. Satan cannot hurt us, unless he gets us within the compass of his chain. 6. God can make an offender his own afflicter, a terror to himself, and constantly to carry his own chains of terror and torment about him. Powder which blows up the house cannot itself escape from burning. 7. There is no liberty to be found in forsaking God's service. A saint loses nothing but his bonds and fetters by becoming holy; nor is holiness a chain to any, but those who know no other freedom than a house of bondage. 8. The pleasures of sin bear no proportion to the horrors thereof. (W. Jenkyn, M.A.)

Restricting influences.—I. IT IS IN THE NATURE OF SIN TO RELINQUISH THAT WHICH IS VIRTUOUS, BEAUTIFUL, AND HAPPY. Dissatisfaction, ambition, or a love of change might have been the cause. (1) It was an interference with the Divine order of things. Eternal wisdom was contemned. Sin is an offence against the majesty and sovereignty of God. (2) It depreciated present blessing and neglected duty. (3) It deprived them of their beautiful home. II. GOD HAS APPOINTED RESTRICTING INFLUENCES, AND A FINAL DOOM FOR THE SINFUL. There are chains—bounds which the transgressors cannot overstep. Sin is apprehended by law, justice, and the moral sense. But all sin is on its way to a finality. (T. Davies, D.D.)

Ver. 7. Sodom and Gomorrah.—*The sin of Sodom and Gomorrah*.—1. Cities and countries suffer for the evil of the inhabitants. Carnal men are usually moved by carnal arguments, and tremble more to hear of the loss of their estates than of their souls; we are startled to hear of scarcity, and famine, and fires, and pestilences; all these are the fruits of sin. 2. Those cities were utterly destroyed, and accordingly is the destruction of Sodom put for an utter overthrow (Isa. xiii. 19; Zeph. ii. 9; Jer. xlviii. 18, l. 40; 2 Pet. ii. 6). Observe thence, that in judgments wicked men may be brought to an utter destruction. The synagogue of Satan may be utterly destroyed, but not the city of God; in the saddest miseries there is hope of God's children. 3. Fellowship in evil can neither excuse sin nor keep off wrath. It cannot excuse sin; nothing more usual than for men to say, they do as others do; if you do as others do you shall suffer as others do; example doth not lessen sin, but increase it, partly because their own act is an approbation of the act of others. Again, it doth not keep off wrath; multitudes and single persons are all one to avenging justice. Well, then, learn to live by rule and not by example, and propose the sins of others to your grief, not imitation: “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but reprove them rather”; their practice will never afford you excuse nor exemption. To walk with God is praiseworthy, though none do it besides thyself; and to walk with men in the way of sin is dangerous, though millions do it besides thee. 4. The lesser cities imitated the greater. Admah and

Zeboim followed the example of Sodom and Gomorrah. An error in the first concoction is seldom mended in the second. When the first sheet is done off, others are printed by the same stamps. Diodorus Siculus telleth us of a people in Ethiopia, that if their kings halted, they would maim themselves that they might halt likewise. The vices of them in place and power are authorised by their example and pass for virtues; if they be slight in the use of ordinances, it will be taken up as a piece of religion by inferiors to be so too. 5. From the first crime here specified, giving themselves over to fornication, that adulterous uncleanness doth much displease God. When they were given over to fornication they were given over to judgment. (1) This is a sin that doth not only defile the soul but the body (1 Cor. vi. 18). It is a wrong to the body, considered either as our "vessel" (1 Thess. iv. 4), or as "the temple of the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. vi. 19). If you consider it as our vessel or instrument for natural uses, you wrong it by uncleanness—namely, as it destroyeth the health of the body, quencheth the vigour of it, and blasteth the beauty, and so it is self-murder. If you consider it as the temple of the Holy Ghost, it is a dishonour to the body to make it a channel for lust to pass through. Shall we make a sty of a temple? (2) It brawneth the soul; the softness of all sensual pleasures hardeneth the heart, but this sin, being the consummate act of sensuality, much more (Hos. iv. 11). (3) Next to the body and soul there is the name, now it blotteth the name (Prov. vi. 33). (4) It blasteth the estate (Heb. xiii. 4). God will judge others, but surely these, and that remarkably in this life. (5) This doth exceedingly pervert the order of human societies; Solomon maketh it worse than theft (Prov. vi. 29–32). (6) It is a sin usually accompanied with impenitency—namely, as it weareth out remorse and every spark of good conscience (Prov. xxiii. 14, ii. 19; Eccles. vii. 26–28). Beware of all tendings that way; do not soak and steep the soul in pleasures. Guard the senses, cut off the provisions of the flesh, avoid occasions, be employed. 6. Again, from the other sin, and going after strange flesh, observe, sin is never at a stay; first, uncleanness, and then given over to uncleanness, and then strange flesh. When a stone runneth down hill it stayeth not till it cometh to the bottom. 7. The wicked Sodomites were not only burnt up by that temporal judgment, but cast into hell, which is here called "eternal fire." The scourges of conscience that we meet with here are too great price for the short pleasures of a brutish lust, much more "the worm that never dieth, the fire that shall never be quenched." 8. There is one note more, and that is from that clause, "are set forth for an example." Observe thence, that Sodom's destruction is the world's great example. You will say, What have we to do with Sodom, their sins being so unnatural, their judgments so unusual? (1) As to their sins, I inquire, Are there none of Sodom's sins amongst us? If not "going after strange flesh," yet "fornication"; if not fornication, yet "pride and idleness and fulness of bread"? We sin against more light, more love, &c. (2) As to the judgments, though God doth not nowadays smite a country with judgments immediately from heaven, yet His displeasure is no less against sin; and if not the same, a like judgment, one very grievous, may come upon us. (*T. Manton.*) *The extermination of sin:—*I. GOD'S HATRED OF SIN DEMONSTRATED BY THE DESTRUCTION OF SINNERS. The punishment of evil-doers forms a large portion of the sacred volume. Sin is never unpunished if not pardoned. This is a beneficent as well as just treatment. The safety of moral beings is thereby secured. II. NATIONAL SINS VISITED BY UNIVERSAL DESTRUCTION. III. SIN MUST BE EXTERMINATED. God does destroy sin by reconstructing, and He reconstructs the order of society by destroying. IV. THE WARNING IS THE STRONGEST. (*T. Davies, D.D.*)

Ver. 8. **These filthy dreamers defile the flesh.**—*Filthy dreamers:—*I. Some interpret this LITERALLY OF DREAMING IN SLEEP. A strong inducement hence for every one to keep their hearts with all diligence from those impure thoughts in the day-time, which may otherwise make them filthy dreamers in the night, and when they go to sleep to beseech God to keep the key of their imagination, that it may not run out to dreaming impurely. II. Others interpret it METAPHORICALLY, conceiving that the apostle, in calling these seducers dreamers in sleep, COMPARES THEM TO SUCH. 1. These seducers were spiritually overwhelmed in a deep, sound sleep of sin (Isa. xxix. 10; 1 Thess. v. 6). 2. These seducers are compared to dreamers in sleep in regard of their vain, false, empty imaginations. (1) Sinners delude themselves in dreaming of their persons. Dreaming that they are not so bad as others because they abstain from gross abominations (Luke xviii. 11). Dreaming that they are in a good and happy estate before God, being indeed miserable and bad (Rev. iii. 17;

Gal. vi. 3). (2) Sinners delude themselves in dreaming concerning their actions that they are good, because done with a good intention, not considering that a work may be good in a man's own eyes and the issues thereof the ways of death (2 Sam. vi. 7; Prov. xvi. 25). Lessons: 1. Spiritual judgments are the sorest. Insensibleness in sin and self-delusion were judgments which made these seducers miserable; they are judgments which seize upon the soul. 2. All the sinful sleepiness of saints differs much from that of the wicked (Cant. v. 2). 3. Self-soothing, delusion, flattering, are very dangerous and destructive, as being the foundation of the wickedness and woe of these seducers, these dreamers. 4. It is our wisdom to take heed of spiritual sleeping in sin. For which purpose—(1) Make much of a stirring ministry; (2) Labour for a fruitful improvement of sufferings; (3) Endeavour for a tender, trembling heart at the very beginning of the solicitations of sin; (4) Labour for faith in threatenings; (5) Vigorously and constantly exercise thyself in godliness; (6) Keep company with waking Christians. (*W. Jenkyn, M.A.*) *Filthy dreamers and defilers of the flesh and evil speakers*.—I. From that "FILTHY DREAMERS," note that the erroneous thoughts of wicked men are but a dream. 1. Wicked men are dreamers—(1) In regard of their state and condition, every carnal man is in a state of a "deep sleep" (Isa. xxix. 10), without any sense of danger. (2) In regard of the suitableness between their vain thoughts and a dream. A dream tickleth with a false delight, and deceiveth with a vain hope. (3) Tickleth with a false delight, they embrace the contentments and pleasures of the world instead of the true riches. (4) Deceiveth with a vain hope (Isa. xxix. 7, 8). Many flatter themselves with fair hopes till they awake in flames, but then all is gone. (5) Take heed, then, of being deceived by your own dreams and the fictions of your own brain; there are no dreams so foolish as those we dream waking. There are dreams in point of hope; and so—(a) Some wholly mistake in the object, and dream of an eternal happiness in temporal enjoyments (Psa. xlix. 11; Luke xii. 19; Rev. xviii. 9). (b) Others dream of attaining the end without using the means; they live in sin, and yet hope to die comfortably and go to heaven. Others mistake about the means, because they have a cold form; they are apt to be conceited of their spiritual condition and estate (Rev. iii. 17). If you would not dream in this kind, examine your hearts often; examination is like a rubbing of the eyes after sleep. II. From that "DEFILE THE FLESH," observe that dreams of error dispose to practices of sin and uncleanness, and impurity of religion is usually joined with uncleanness of body (Hosea iv. 12, 13). III. Again, observe THAT SIN IS A DEFILEMENT: it staineth and darkeneth the glory of a man (Matt. xv. 20). Desire to be washed, and that thoroughly (Psa. li. 2). IV. Again observe, THAT OF ALL SINS THE SIN OF UNCLEANNESS IS MOST DEFILEING. It defileth the whole man, but chiefly the body, and therefore it is said they defile the flesh. It staineth the soul with filthy thoughts (Matt. xv. 20), it staineth the name (Prov. vi. 33), but in a singular manner it polluteth the body (1 Cor. vi. 18). It wasteth the strength and beauty of the body (Prov. v. 9-11), hindereth our serviceableness. Are not your beauty, health, strength, concerns too good to be spent upon so vile an interest? V. From that "DESPISE DOMINION." Observe that errors, especially such as tend to sensuality, make men unruly. Error taketh off the dread of God, and sedition the dread of the magistrate, that so they may more freely defile the flesh. VI. Again, I observe from the same clause, THAT IT IS A SIN TO DESPISE DOMINIONS. For it is here charged upon these seducers. It is a sin, because it is against the injunctions of the word (Rom. xiii. 1; Titus iii. 1). Again, it is a sin, because dominion preserveth human societies. VII. The last expression is that "SPEAK EVIL OF DIGNITIES," or of glories, by which probably Church officers are intended, such being spoken against in that age (3 John 10). Note, there is a respect due to persons invested with Church power. This is established by God's ordinance, and therefore should not be set at nought. (*T. Manton.*) *Waking dreamers*.—Hence we may note the cause why so few entertain the doctrine of the gospel, so few forsake their sins and turn unto God, and that is because men are dreamers. As first, some plead that they were never book-learned, they could never write nor read, therefore they must be excused in their ignorance as not being bound to know the Word of God. Secondly, others dream that because they have lived thus long and yet had never any such cross as they see befall others, therefore they are most happy men, and God loveth them. Thirdly, others have learning and knowledge, and begin to dream that therefore they want nothing; they bless themselves in their naked knowledge, and never have care in their hearts to receive Christ. Fourthly, others are profane and dream that the Master will not come yet; God will not yet call them; they shall have time enough to repent in, for they crave

but one hour on their death-beds. Lastly, it is a common dream amongst men that the promise of eternal life is but a dream, and so many make but a dream of the whole Word of God and all religion. Even so men hold the doctrine of the gospel, but as a dream, seeing they can hold it in opinion, but never endeavour to reform their lives by it; but such dreams disappoint men commonly of salvation. The most powerful ministry shall little prevail so long as men come with their hearts full fraught with their carnal imaginations and with such heaviness of spirit. (*W. Perkins.*) **Unchastity**:—1. Sins of carnal uncleanness are peculiarly against the body or flesh of men (1 Cor. vi. 18). The body not only concurs, but suffers by this sin more than any other, both by dishonour and diseases. (1) Dishonour, in the staining and defiling that noble piece of workmanship, curiously wrought by the finger of God Himself. (2) By diseases, this lust being not only a conscience-wasting but a carcase-wasting enemy. Sensual men kill that which they pretend most to gratify. 2. Sins of unchastity are peculiarly defiling. All sin in general is called uncleanness, but fornication is particularly to be branded with that name. There is a peculiar opposition between fornication and sanctification (1 Thess. iv. 3). The saints of God should have a peculiar abhorrence of this sin (Eph. v. 3; 2 Cor. vii. 1). The body is the garment of the soul, and a clean heart will preserve a pure body. 3. The love of lust makes men erroneous and seducers. They who make no conscience of ordering their conversation will soon be heretical. These seducers who opposed the faith were unclean and flesh-defilers. If the light be too much in men's eyes, they will either shut their eyes or draw the curtains. Lusts will pervert the light which is brought in, making men instead of bringing their crooked lives to the straight rule, to bring the straight rule to their crooked lives; and instead of bringing their hearts to the Scripture, to bring the Scripture to their hearts. God in judgment gives up such who will not see to an inability to discern what they ought, and to a reprobate mind; they who will not be scholars of truth are by God justly delivered up to be masters of error. (*W. Jenkyn, M.A.*) **Despise dominion**.—*Rulers not to be despised*:—Rebellion of all sins sheweth the corruptions of our nature, yea, rebellion and contempt of government is unnatural, for God hath made a chiefly in all things, and everything keepeth his place. Among the angels there be Cherubim and Seraphim; among the planets the sun is the chief, and the rest borrow their light from him; among the fowls, the eagle; among the beasts, the lion; among the serpents, the basilisk; among the fishes, the whale; among the wethers there is a leader, a bell-wether; among the cranes there is one as a captain that goeth before the rest; in a flock there is *dux gregis*, a leader; in an hive of bees there is a master-bee; the very pismyres have there governor; and the grasshoppers go forth by bands. And hath not God made a chief, a ruler among men? God forbid, therefore, that we should despise government. Promotion and honour cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south, but it is God that lifteth up one and pulleth down another. And God hath famously revenged this sin, as ever any. Absalom rebelled against his father, but God's vengeance overtook him, for he was hanged. (*S. Otes.*) **Despising dominion**:—1. What we are to understand by "dominion." The word in the original is the same with that in 2 Pet. ii. 10, translated "government," and means the civil magistrate. 2. What is meant by "despising dominion." These seducers did not cast off governing so as to make it cease; that was not in their power; but in their judgment, desires, insinuations, they laboured to make it accounted void. 3. Upon what ground the apostle condemns them for despising dominions. (1) This was a sin against an ordinance of God (Prov. viii. 15; Rom. xiii. 1). (2) It was a sin against the welfare and happiness of the public. (3) By this despising of government they were in an especial manner their own enemies, and sinned against their own happiness (Prov. xxiv. 22; Eccl. x. 8). **Lessons**: 1. How provident is God for man's peace and welfare. 2. God is highly provoked by sin, when He suffers magistrates to be burdensome to a people, and dominion to be abused; when their deliverers and saviours become their destroyers (Prov. xxviii. 2). 3. God is much seen in causing men's subjection to magistrates. 4. The power given by God to magistrates should be improved for the Giver. 5. The enemies of godliness soon become opposers of civil dominion. They who fear not God, will not be afraid to "speak evil of dignities." 6. Christianity does not destroy but strengthen magistracy. 7. Lust opposes restraint, is an enemy to dominion, loves not to be bridled. (*W. Jenkyn, M.A.*)

Vers. 9, 10. Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil.—*Archangel versus devil*:—We can hardly suppose that the interview between Michael

and Satan was communicated to St. Jude by the Holy Ghost, because such a novel revelation would have rather startled his readers than illustrate the truth he was setting before them. To treat it as a fable without foundation in fact would have weakened the argument of the apostle. Some think that the reference is to Zech. iii. 1.—“And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan,” &c. But there was no reference then made to the burial of Moses, and the similarity in the expression is too slender a foundation to connect the two. Origen mentions an apocryphal book called *Ἀναλήψις τοῦ Μωϋσέως*, which was extant in his time. That the apostle quoted from that book is not improbable, although there is nothing in the narrative before us to warrant the belief. Then there is the other supposition that among the traditions held by the Jews there was one relative to a controversy between the two chiefs of the opposing angels about the burial of Moses. As these traditions were largely taught in those days, it may be that the apostle simply reads a lesson to the false teachers from their own teaching. They brought railing accusations against the apostles, which even an archangel dared not, as the higher and final judgment awaits all. The apostle therefore conveys but one lesson by his reference to the dispute about the body of Moses, viz., that the final judgment is reserved in God's own keeping. 1. The text teaches that there are two orders of spirits in conflict concerning matters affecting the human race. Not only angels are ministering to the necessities of the saints, and devils using influence to destroy them, but the corner of the veil is lifted up in the text, that we may mentally see the battlefield on which these powerful spirits meet to contend for their side. The fact administers to the strength of our faith. 2. The text teaches that controversy must be confined to its proper limits. Michael was right, but he did not go further than controversy. However certain one may feel that he is contending for the truth, he must not utter imprecations on the head of his adversary. 3. The text teaches that judgment belongs to the Lord alone. The term rebuke implies far more than correction or admonition: it means to censure. Here we take it to indicate that God only has the power of final decision. Omniscience, impartiality, and power belong to Him. 4. The text teaches also another valuable lesson, viz., that the strongest side of controversy is an appeal to God. Bring your adversary into the presence of his Maker and leave him in the Divine balance. (*T. Davies, M.A.*) *Aversion to religion and its source*:—The sentence immediately preceding represents the persons described in it as defiled with gross immoralities, as despising the dominion that would have restrained them, and treating in contemptuous language the most dignified of the powers which had been set up in defence of purity and good order. The text is meant to apply, more or less directly, to all these views. But you will not fail to notice that it begins with what in the previous statement is last mentioned, and exposes the crime of “evil-speaking,” when the malignancy of its revilings is turned against the sacred institutions of moral authority. And surely it may be allowed that this end is answered with a peculiar degree of force, owing to the extreme case of forbearance which the text sets before us. It represents two spirits of high order, but of opposite character, engaged in controversy. The one, in his designs, ever actuated by a base and malevolent principle. The other, the special messenger and servant of God, ever employed in advancing the purposes of truth and righteousness. Wrong is altogether on the one side. Right, without a sinister motive to tarnish it, is altogether on the other. And in setting these before us, the apostle would lead us to mark the quality of that resistance alone, which, even in these circumstances, the pure spirit felt himself justified in making. Was it distinguished by violence, by the opprobrious and furious language of rage? Was the accusation (so justly to be brought by the archangel) a railing accusation? The reverse in every respect. In accusing, he mixed not abuse with his just condemnation. His reverence for God and his regard to the solemnity and holiness of truth kept him back from it. His cause was good and required not adventitious support. His own nature was pure, and would have been essentially defiled had the evil passions in another been resisted by the indulging of similar passions in himself. Above all—God is the Judge “unto whom vengeance belongeth”—and therefore to God the appeal must be made. Hence, by every motive, the “archangel” abstained from bringing the “railing accusation against” his adversary. Now the apostle's peculiar argument, as introduced in application to the persons whom he had such cause for reprehending, stands thus:—If no boisterous or reviling language was employed in controversy even with a fallen and perverse spirit—the acknowledged foe of

God and goodness—it was said simply, yet still with dignity, “The Lord rebuke thee”—if thus the archangel committed himself to God and left the final decision to be passed by the supreme authority; in such a cause, and with such an adversary, if “Michael” thus proceeded, say how aggravated must be the guilt which “rails against” sacred things themselves and vilifies all whose influence is employed for their support? It has been found, in the greater number of instances, that where men carrying on any controversy are fully possessed of their subject, and have the clearest knowledge of its nature, they will have a collectedness proportioned to their knowledge. This remark may form the tie by which we may associate the tenth with the ninth verse. The persons who are there rebuked were “speaking evil of those things which they knew not.” Having their understandings darkened they saw not the beauties of righteousness. Becoming, through their immoral lives, obdurate to the sense of what was pure, they brought themselves to contemplate iniquity without aversion. Having their inclinations turned in a direction the opposite of what the law required them to follow, they gathered hostility to the curb of the commandment. By persisting in criminal courses they formed in themselves an utter disrelish of the habits of godliness. In this state they “spoke evil” against its sanctions. The dominion of civil power they stigmatised as tyranny. The dominion of the religious principle as the trick of priesthood. The dominion of conscience as prolonging the sway of superstition and perpetuating the influence of childish terrors. But they “spoke evil of those things which they knew not.” How otherwise, except in a state of the grossest ignorance, could they have ventured to deduce from the blessed doctrines of grace the occasions, the incentives, or the cloak for immorality? Is there one portion of the Christian plan of salvation that does not bear, with the mightiest influence of moral power, against the love and practice of iniquity? Can there be a purer law than what the gospel reveals for enforcing righteousness? Above all, what motives to righteousness are derived from the Cross of Christ! I ask, then, if in these circumstances it proceeds not from ignorance the most culpable, that any should venture to draw from the doctrine of Divine grace an inference which is even in the slightest measure favourable to sin?—And yet the persons whom St. Jude was confuting did so. Surely, therefore, they were “speaking evil of things they knew not,” or of things the nature and tendency of which they refused to acknowledge. But still, I must bring you back once more—and in doing so I would connect the last clause of ver. 10 with all that precedes it—to the real source of this perverseness. The origin of the whole, we must repeat, was moral pollution. The speaking evil of the sacred things, of which these men refused to acknowledge the sanction and the use, arose from their “corruption in those very things” with which they were familiarly and fully conversant. They knew (led as the inferior creatures are by instinctive propensities) the use of the appetites. “The natural man,” according to the language of St. Paul, is thoroughly qualified to “discern” that. But among all who are “unrenewed in the spirit of their minds,” and to whom consequently a spiritual discernment belongs not, how is it that the objects of this natural knowledge are most frequently employed? Are they not oftener abused than rightly employed? The desires and propensities of nature are wilfully corrupted. The lawful desire of personal good degenerates into selfishness. The allowable desire of human esteem swells into the insatiable longing after “the praise of men.” The sensualities of the world are chosen as the chief good. The vitiated heart grows impatient under restraint. By a thousand acts of hostility does the “carnal” mind show itself to be “enmity to God,” till the foe of the “Cross of Christ” chooses the lowest desires as his ruling divinities, glories in his shame, and is at last altogether sunk in earthly things. Thus it took place with the persons whom the apostle was called to withstand. Having corrupted themselves in what they knew the use of, by means of their natural senses, they were soon led to oppose those things of which they had no spiritual discernment, or for which, at least, they had no relish—and hence they were prepared to “despise the dominion of righteousness” and to “speak evil” with “ railing accusations” of the supporters of that dominion however dignified their office and venerable their authority. Would that the condemnation which the Epistle conveys were considered by the multitudes who still labour to bring contempt upon religion and morality, whose hatred to the Christian truth is even greater than their opposition, and whose invective is as coarse as their arguments are weak! Mark the bearings of their character—their likings and their aversions—in order that you may be convinced how utterly unworthy of reception are the objections which they utter against the purity and the majesty and the use-

fulness of Christian truth. Fix in your minds this principle—that aversion to so precious a system of moral “dominion” as Christianity is, arises, and must arise chiefly from “corruptions” of the heart. (*W. Muir, D.D.*) But these **speaking evil of those things which they know not.**—*Ignorant speech*:—1. None are so ready to speak as the ignorant. 2. Ignorance is the cause of opposing the ways of God. Did men either see the deformity of sin or the beauty of holiness, they would neither delight in the former nor dislike the latter. 3. How great is the sin of speaking evil of those things the worth whereof we do know! All sin against light borders on the sin against the Holy Ghost. 4. We should speak against known evils, and for what we know to be good. 5. Corrupt affections blar and darken the judgment. He who will be disobedient in heart shall soon have a dull head. 6. It is our duty to forbear speaking against anything which we understand not. (*W. Jenkyn, M.A.*) *Scepticism corrupting itself*:—There are few who are not desirous of arriving at an accurate conception of their personal appearance generally, and more specially of the lineaments which distinguish the face or countenance. When such a view as this is presented to our thoughts we may very appropriately note it as a matter of regret that there is not more anxiety to reach the means of forming correct notions of the true characteristics and condition of our immortal part, or imperishable souls. Beauty or deformity affecting the person or body is a very small matter compared with what beautifies or deforms the never-dying spirit. What special medium ought to be used for obtaining such portraiture is a problem easily solved, for Jehovah hath provided a looking-glass for the purpose; and that looking-glass is His own imperishable Word. 1. The charge as here preferred against the system lies in the two statements, that it leads men to speak evil of things which they know not; and to corrupt themselves in what they know in common, or naturally, with brute beasts. These were at least conjoined in the parties herein condemned; and we are safe in holding it as all but universally true that wherever there is a thorough spirit of infidelity there will be found in combination less or more of the evil speaking and the evil acting thus denounced. Many begin with indulgence in wild infidel speculations, and then proceed to the indulgence of wild infidel practices. Or, reversing this order, they give themselves up to less or more profligacy, and then systematically adopt atheistic theories, for the sake of helping to quiet the remonstrances of their own conscience. In the one case the mind is made the instrument of corrupting the body, not less than itself; and in the other the body, through its appetites and passions, is made the instrument of aiding to corrupt the mind. If the intellectual and moral faculties get debauched by the adoption of infidel sentiments, these may soon lend their aid, to a ruinous extent, in promoting the strength of the animal passions; and then the miserable victims may fully realise the striking sentiment of the text, in corrupting themselves in what they know naturally as brute beasts. On the other hand, if the gross animal or brutish passions take the lead, every faculty of the soul may be reduced to a state of utter degradation. It is said of the Lord Rochester, who was so well known for a time as a prominent sceptic and libertine, that as a prodigal son, after he had come to himself, he laid his hand upon the Bible and emphatically remarked, “The only grand objection to this book is a bad life.” A bad life is, indeed, blasphemy reduced to practice; but, as already intimated, a bad life is sure of conducting to the acceptance of more and more theoretical and systematic infidelity; and therefore, as a natural consequence, must lead its victims to speak more and more “evil of those things which they know not.” Hence in seeking to put you on your guard against the encroachments of anything like religious scepticism, we are more than justified in bidding you, were it for this reason alone, avoid all kinds of sinful indulgence—all whereby you may thus corrupt yourselves. II. Although it is admitted that there have been false teachers—teachers of very erroneous doctrines—and very wild speculators otherwise, against whom no heavy charge could be made as to immorality; it is nevertheless true of rejectors and impugnors generally of Revelation, that, going the length of speaking evil of those things they know not, they do not stop there, but proceed to corrupt themselves in what they know naturally as brute beasts. Let it be noted as a very striking proof of this that in the Middle Ages, as they are called, and towards the beginning of the Reformation, the morals of the popish clergy themselves were in the most corrupt state, when their false and ruinous teaching was as then the least unchecked. At the time when they took full and unlimited scope in teaching the Scripturally denounced devil-doctrine of forbidding to marry, they were never more than then

given up to licentiousness; so that whilst in setting themselves in opposition to God's Word, they were speaking evil of things they knew not, they were in what they knew naturally as brute beasts corrupting themselves, and to a fearful extent. By little short of daring challenges to high Heaven even, they profanely advocated, as a cover for their libertinism, that in priests or any other ecclesiastics concubinage was holier than marriage! It is often for the express purpose of reaching such acting, and seeming to have an excuse for it, that false or infidel sentiments are adopted, just as Mahomet—the false prophet—added an additional chapter to the Koran, when he meant to sin farther by adding another wife to those he already had. Much in this style Scriptureless speculators try to make a new sceptical chapter to themselves, that it may be used as a ladder whereby they may reach some forbidden fruit. Conscience, they find, requires some little bribing to quiet its remonstrances, in respect of the sensual course they wish to pursue; and thus far they prepare the way by putting a new chapter or a new verse into their self-revealed speculative Bible, or infidel chapter. We thus discern one of the causes leading to the ignorant speaking about the truths of God referred to in the text: and another, which is as fruitful of mischief, lies directly in pride of intellect, or the supreme conceit men are apt to have of their own supposed superior wisdom and discernment. The principle so much acted on through this species of intellectual conceit, that nothing can well be accepted or believed save it be thoroughly understood, if pushed to its full logical consequences, would leave little to be accepted at all, since there is less or more of mystery in everything, and which no human being can reach and comprehend. To the atheistic materialist matter is his god, but yet he does not understand this his own god. No wonder then, since that which he daily sees, and handles, and lives upon, gets after all so much beyond his comprehension, he should find something greatly transcending all his powers, in attempting to comprehend the nature of the uncreated and eternal existence of the Supreme. But what is more specially noticeable and worthy of our serious consideration is the fact that very often the loudest and most persistent declaimers against Revelation are not merely in much ignorance with regard to its general spirit, but even of the very letter of its contents. Sometimes what they *seem* to know of these has not been acquired by closely examining the sacred page itself, but from their taking up and retailing what infidel writers before them had stated in order to condemn and ridicule. It is of the highest importance to notice that the Scriptures very frequently allude in one form or another to man's tendency to fall into error and consequent danger, through the conceit he may have of himself or mental powers, and hence justly says, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." Nor is any one more liable to exemplify this than the mere sciolist, or superficially learned. It is even very frequently obtrusively illustrated by parties who may be said to have scarcely any learning or knowledge at all—for oft they pretend to be oracles of wisdom—and truly may the Spirit say of any such an one, as in speaking by Paul, "If a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." Mere natural or unassisted human reason will not, as thus so clearly stated, lead any one to receive the things of God. Left simply to its own resources, and without any superior controlling or guiding power, it is certain to proceed in speaking evil of them, but neither to intelligently or spiritually discern their true character, or receive them as principles of action. If, instead of Divine Revelation, or "the things of God," men take as their text-books such wretched infidel productions as Paine's "Age of Reason," we must look for the reproduction of Paine's ribaldry and profligacies; and hence the sad realisation of the black picture furnished in our text—speaking evil of those things which they know not, and what they know naturally as brute beasts, in those things corrupting themselves. (*J. Allan.*)

Abuse of natural knowledge:—There be three kinds of knowledge incident unto the creature. 1. Natural knowledge, arising from the instinct of nature common to man and beast, and consisting in the senses of sight, taste, touching, &c., by the benefit whereof the beast itself can discern what is food fit for itself, and what is not; what is profitable, and what is hurtful for it; unto which is joined a natural appetite, by the benefit of which the creature can choose or refuse his food and meat in season. 2. The second is reasonable knowledge, proper to man, and is nothing else but the light of understanding, whereby he reacheth far higher, and discerneth meat, drink, apparel, and rest, to be God's good gifts, and knoweth the civil use of them; with the which is joined election of will, whereby he can choose or refuse the civil or uncivil, honest or dishonest use

of them. 3. The third is spiritual knowledge, not proceeding either from natural instinct or reason itself, but from the enlightenment of the spirit of God, and it hath sundry fruits. First, it enableth men to know these things in their right causes, as that these gifts of meats, drinks, and such like proceed from God, not as he is God of nature only, but as by grace in Christ, so they become pledges of His special mercies. Secondly, this knowledge causeth men to know them in the due measure of their goodness and excellency, rightly discerning them from spiritual blessings, so as the heart shall not be set upon them in the first place, but upon the other as of far higher esteem. Thirdly, it instructeth men in the right use of them, namely, when it worketh this persuasion in their hearts, that till their persons please God, they can never use them well. What is the thing, then, condemned in these seducers? The sin condemned is, that in the use of the creatures of God they are not guided by reasonable, much less this spiritual knowledge; but only by nature, sense, and appetite, as the beast is. Secondly, from the reprehension we are taught to labour for spiritual knowledge, whereby we might be led into the right use of these temporal things; for then and not before shall we use them as pledges of God's mercy in Christ. Thirdly, in that they are said to be guided only as the beast which is without reason, that is, by nature, sense, and appetite; note the practice of the devil which is to keep men in their natural knowledge, and will not suffer them to attain to that which is spiritual; yea, and which is more, he corrupteth also that natural knowledge which men have. The second point is the sin itself, and property of it—"In those things they corrupt themselves." This sin of intemperance causeth men in the abuse of meat, drink, and apparel, to corrupt themselves; here, then, are two things to be spoken of, wherein the whole nature of intemperance is sufficiently comprised. First, of the abuse of the creatures; secondly, of his corruption that thus abuseth them. Concerning the former, the abuse of the creatures is four ways: first in excess, when men use them beyond their calling, or that which nature requireth. Secondly, in curiosity, when men are not content with ordinary meat, drink, apparel, but devise new fashions of apparel, and new kinds of ways of stirring up and whetting of appetite. Thirdly, in affection, when men so addict themselves to meats and drinks, as they cannot be without them. Fourthly, in time, when these good creatures are used unreasonably (Eccles. x. 16; Isa. v. 11). The second point is, how intemperate persons in these things corrupt themselves; namely, four ways: first, in regard of their bodies, upon which by their sin of intemperance they call sundry sicknesses, yea, and hasten their death. Secondly, they deface God's image, making themselves worse than the beasts themselves. Thirdly, they destroy their souls; for no drunkard or riotous person shall inherit heaven (1 Cor. 3). Fourthly, they overthrow their families in wasting their substance to the maintaining of their intemperance, and so bring ruin to the places where they live. (*W. Perkins.*) *The sin of ignorant railing:*—As fire lieth not long in the stubble or in the flax, but the flame breaketh out, so hatred lieth not long in these men's hearts, but breaketh out in evil speeches, and many times. They will speak evil of things they know not. As an image is not seen in water that is troubled, no more is truth in a mind that is malicious, but it sendeth forth with violence all manner of evil speakings. Yet the world is as full of evil speakers as Nilus of crocodiles, as Sodom of sulphur, and Egypt of lice. Can the wound be cured, so long as the iron remain in it? Can the iron be cold, so long as it is in the smith's forge? Can the river cease running so long as the fountain floweth? And can the tongue refrain from evil speaking so long as hatred boileth in the heart? And as the water turneth the wheel, so the heart the tongue. They rail in their ignorance on things which they know not. The birds have no such enemy as the owl; nor the mariner no such enemy as the mermaid; so the learned no such enemy as the ignorant. Saint Peter, speaking of the epicures and atheists of the world, saith, "They knew not, and that willingly." And Paul said of the Gentiles, that they walked "in the vanity of their mind, having their cogitation darkened, and being strangers from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them." As there be degrees in sin, so is there a gradation in ignorance. It is a sin to be ignorant in that we should know, but a greater to be ignorant in that we are bound to know. A man without knowledge is as a workman without his hands, as a painter without his eyes. Only the wise man is a right man; and the man of understanding is only wise. But to proceed, if it be a sin to rail in ignorance, how execrable is it when it is in knowledge! Then it is a double sin. But pride planted it, and envy watered it; they sinned in knowledge, not in ignorance; they

said that they knew God as well as God knew Himself. But, to return; most men rail in ignorance; they are like unto Herpasts Socrates, the fool, that having lost his eyes did not believe that she was blind, but thought the house to be dark. So we are blind, and yet will not see it; it is nothing to name the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the twelve Articles of Faith, the two sacraments, but to understand them. Men are not ignorant for want of teaching, but for want of learning; we will not learn. Nay, Jude chargeth them further, that they abused themselves, in that they knew not. Like the Doctors of Ephesus, of whom Paul reporteth thus: "They would be doctors of the law, and yet understand not what they speak, neither whereof they affirm." And also in that they knew; for, saith Jude, "Whatsoever things they know naturally, as beasts, which are without reason, in those things they corrupt themselves"; so that every way they are vile and miserable, as Apoc. iii. 17. Some things they knew naturally, as beasts that know sweet from sour, good from evil, meat from poison. Where let me distinguish of knowledge, that there is a natural knowledge and a spiritual knowledge; the first of these the apostle calleth the wisdom of the flesh; the second, the wisdom of the spirit. Lastly, he compareth them to beasts; for in many things the wicked are as beasts, if not worse; by creation little inferior to the angels; by conversation much inferior to brute beasts. Let us then no longer live beastly, lest we perish with the beast, but live Christianly, that so we may see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. (*S. Otes.*) *The condemnations of ignorance*:—I. TRUTH IS USUALLY SLANDERED OUT OF IGNORANCE; because men do not understand the ways and things of God, therefore they do condemn them. It is the devil's cunning to keep us at a distance from truths, and therefore burdeneth them with prejudices, that we may suspect rather than search, and condemn that out of ignorance which upon knowledge we could not choose but love and profess; and it is man's perverseness and pride to speak evil of things above his reach, and to disprove that which he has not attained unto or cannot understand. II. BLOCKISH AND STUPID MEN ARE MOST BOLD IN REPROACHING. A fool's wrath falleth very heavy, because it falleth with all its weight, there being nothing to restrain and stop it (*Prov. xxvii. 3*). What ado have we in the ministry with young heady professors, that have more heat than light! III. MEN OF CORRUPT MINDS ARE USUALLY SENSUAL; and sensual men are usually men of corrupt minds; an unsound heart is best sheltered under unsound doctrine, and carnal delights blunt and weaken the edge and intension of the mind, so that they are very liable to mistakes. Therefore, on the one side, we should labour to keep the mind right and sound in the faith; fish stink first at the head; when the judgment is poisoned, the taint is soon conveyed to the affections. On the other side, "add to your knowledge temperance" (*2 Pet. i. 6*). That is the best knowledge that endeth in temperance, or begets a holy moderation in the use of sensual pleasure; if we cannot govern our affections, we "know nothing as we ought to know"; nay, otherwise, your knowledge will be corrupted by your affections; many errors take their rise and beginning from evil manners and filthy lusts. IV. WICKED MEN, LEFT TO THEMSELVES, DO BUT ABUSE AND CORRUPT THAT NATURAL GOODNESS AND KNOWLEDGE WHICH THEY HAVE IN THEM. Natural abilities are soon depraved with evil habits. V. SIN WHERE IT REIGNETH TURNETH A MAN INTO A BRUTE BEAST (*Psa. xlix. 12*). If we had the head of a horse, or the face of a swine, or the hoofs of an ass, how should we be looked upon as monsters; but to have the hearts of the beasts is worse; to be like them in the inward man is more monstrous in the sight of God. The beasts know their stint and measure; a horse or a dog will not be drunk, &c. Sin doth not only make a beast of you, but a devil of you (*John vi. 70*). VI. IT IS A SIGN OF A MAN TURNED BEAST TO FOLLOW THE PASSIONS AND LUSTS OF CORRUPT NATURE. Why? For then the government of reason is renounced, and all is yielded up into the hands of lust and appetite. In men reason should have the chief governance, and exercise a coercion and restraint over our affections. I shall take occasion here to show you how many ways a man turneth beast. 1. By an addictedness to sensual pleasures and delights. 2. When, in the use of these delights, we keep neither modesty nor measure, this is but like swine to wallow in our own filthiness; a beast can do no more. 3. When men live by appetite rather than reason and conscience, feeding without fear, and nourishing the body, but taking no care to refresh the soul. VII. SENSUALITY DOETH BUT MAKE WAY FOR CORRUPTION: you may counterpoise the temptation to the sin with the punishment; usually secret sins and sweet sins meet with a heavy punishment; secret sins, that do not betray us to shame, may yet beget horror when we think of what

will ensue: and sweet sins, that entice our affections, to prevent them we may counterbalance one affection with another, delight with fear. (T. Manton.)

Ver. 11. **They have gone in the way of Cain, . . . Balaam, . . . Core.**—*Responsibility for irreligious speculations and sinful practices*:—The "woe" itself was undoubtedly to be proportioned to the extent of their criminality. One decided way of measuring the extent of their criminality was to be found in the evil effects of their speculations and practices. Murderers, in the legal sense of the word, they were not. It is on the consequences of their evil speculations and practices that they were so designated. By the unsoundness of doctrine and by the criminality of their practice, they had diffused around them a fatal taint. Licentiousness of principle and licentiousness of conduct entail a remediless "woe" both upon the body and the soul. It is true the plea might be offered that the fatal consequences had arisen, as it were, incidentally, without their being formally planned. But, according to the decision of the apostle, this circumstance alters not the case. On the contrary, that men are responsible for the effects of their conduct, even though they are directly pursuing other ends, he shows us, by referring to the remarkable history of Balaam. It might not be alleged that even Balaam, perverse as he was, had set himself out of rooted hatred to the Israelites, to plot their destruction. Still, however, for determining the measure of his guilt, it must be marked that his resolution was to enjoy the gratification of his covetousness at any expense. And thus it was exactly in regard to the persons whom St. Jude reprehends. They might be following some scheme of personal aggrandisement. It might only be in pursuing this scheme that they ceased to inculcate the doctrines of Christian self-denial and purity. Besides, to justify the "woe" pronounced, the apostle takes away every excuse for their conduct by showing that their resistance, both to the authority of religion and to the well-being of the Church, was parallel with the "gainsaying of Core." "Core" knew perfectly the origin of the lawgiver's authority—knew the meaning of the Mosaic ordinance and its sanctions, and the utility of obeying it—and yet he "gainsayed" the whole. How easily the application of all this might be made to the irreligious and ungodly of our own time! It applies to the bold speculators who, whatever be their general professions of regard for religion, undermine by false reasonings the foundations of Christianity. It applies to the band of the ambitious who, like Core, would destroy the peace of mankind in rendering themselves celebrated. It applies to the hordes of the covetous who, greedy for filthy lucre as Balaam, care not what a curse they inflict on others, if so be they may enrich themselves with the reward of iniquity. Let me request you, for the sake of illustration, to observe that serious responsibility which men of literary eminence have often incurred by directing their writings against the cause of religion and godliness. When genius degrades itself into the auxiliary of scepticism and licentiousness, it entails on the person who has successfully used it, the corresponding measures of criminality. Think on the mischievous effects which may flow even from a single copy of a profane and immoral writing. But shall the well-gifted sceptics whose genius has been employed to promote over the young and inexperienced the ascendancy of evil principle, escape responsibility for that long train of ills, the origin of which is traceable to their daring speculations? There is blood in their hands. They have destroyed souls. Suffer me, however, to warn you, lest we allow the view of their wickedness to absorb every apprehension of our culpability, and thus remain satisfied with expressing our displeasure at the evils which they have perpetrated; instead of examining our own hearts to learn how far we stand in need of the reproof. In our commonest intercourse we exercise an influence over one another which may operate for good or for evil. We may become the means either of promoting spiritual excellence and happiness, or of vitiating and so destroying the very life of the soul, in those with whom we associate. The consequences of our character and conduct in these respects, therefore, enter justly as items into the sum of our responsibility. The blessing or the "woe" must fall down on us, according as these consequences are beneficial or the reverse. Let me finish the discourse, however, with the pleasing thought, how much good may be done by us in the intercourse of our mutual relationships. Instead of destroying or even weakening the principle of Divine life in our brethren, we may become the effectual means of increasing its power and enlarging the sphere of its exercise. While the influence of irreligion and vice would tend to seal the ruin, the lessons and the example of pious and godly men are advancing the salvation of others. (W. Muir, D.D.)

The successors of Cain, Balaam, and Core:—I. Like the first murderer, THESE HERETICS WERE FIRED WITH MALICE AGAINST THE REAL AND FAITHFUL FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST. While we are often warned that the world is opposed to the true people of God, it may at the same time be said that no class of men regard them with feelings of such bitter disaffection as those who are false and heretical professors of religion. To the instinctive hostility of nature they add the sullen rancour of religious animosity. II. To run after the error of Balaam is TO TEACH DOCTRINES CALCULATED TO FOSTER THE DEPRAVED AFFECTIONS OF THE HEART—doctrines pleasing to flesh and blood, for personal and pecuniary ends. Such was the case with the seducers in the text, and such is the case with false teachers in every age. Having neither the knowledge nor the love of the truth in them, their main concern must necessarily be to turn their teaching to account in the way of advancing their temporal interests. With this view they study to accommodate their doctrines to the prejudices and private likings of human nature, being well aware that, without some dilutions and transmutations of the truth, they will not be so successful in their object. But of all the varied forms of error, the most attractive is that which has the twofold effect of soothing the conscience, and at the same time giving some scope and licence to sin. III. The apostle declares THAT THESE SEDUCERS WERE ALSO ANIMATED BY THE SPIRIT, AND DESTINED TO SUFFER THE DOOM OF THAT AMBITIOUS AND MISCHIEVOUS REBEL, CORE. Those who “deny the only Lord God” as they did, and who make light of the law of heaven, need not be expected to be very submissive to any authority established among men; and hence heretics have in every age been found to be seditious subjects and dangerous members of civil society. The very same qualities of character by which they are led to spurn at the will of the Supreme, will necessarily dispose them to resist and despise all other dominion. (*A. E. Gilvray, D.D.*) *False teachers:*—This short Epistle is chiefly directed against false teachers who were endeavouring to introduce pestilent doctrines into the Church, and to lead away its members from truth and godliness. It appears as though the apostle here tracked them through three different stages of guilt—“the way of Cain,” “the error of Balaam,” and “the gainsaying of Core.” I. THE WAY OF CAIN. The apostle is not to be supposed here as referring to the atrocious act of slaying his brother. Whosoever reason is set up above revelation, whether the one be altogether rejected to make way for the other, or its statements reduced and modified that they may not exceed the other, then is there an imitation of “the way of Cain.” And if there be what approaches at least very closely to a rejection of Scripture, may it not be contended that men have taken the first step in a course, of which utter destruction is the probable termination? It was not at once that Cain became a murderer; but when he had adopted his deistical creed, he had brought himself into the position of one whom Satan might attack with incalculable advantage, and we marvel not that, when fierce jealousy was excited, he raised his hand against his brother. And thus with those who follow him in setting up reason as a standard, by which all proof should be measured; they have no security, no defence against the setting light by all their better convictions, till they have confounded all moral distinctions and persuaded themselves into the most unlawful practices. II. THE ERROR OF BALAAM. It is evident that covetousness was a ruling passion with these troublers of the Church; the apostle expressly says that it was “for reward” that they “ran greedily after the error of Balaam,” so that their imitation of the prophet, who wished to curse Israel but was constrained to bless, must have been in the love of the wages of unrighteousness. Balaam knew what was right; Balaam knew the future consequence of what was wrong; but, swayed by present interest, he determined on doing the wrong, and sought only that, whilst doing it, he might by some equivocation keep his conscience at ease; he was not ignorant, he was not insensible, but he was bent on securing a present advantage, and his whole concern was that in doing this he might not fly openly in the face of an explicit command. And is this a rare or unusual case? What! does not the world swarm with men who are thoroughly conscious that they can gain what they wish only through disobeying God, who are not moved by this consciousness to the resisting the desire, but who look about to subterfuges and palliations, that they may secure what they long for, and yet have some apology to cloak the disobedience? Is it unusual to find an individual who, with his moral eyesight in a great degree opened to the nature and consequence of his conduct, resolves on persisting in that conduct in hope of obtaining a favourite object, but who all the while attempts some process of self-deceit, that he may hide the offence he knows he is committing?

III. THE GAINSAING OF CORE. This appears to be given as the final stage of depravity, the reaching which is the reaching destruction: "they perished in the gainsaying of Core." It was a gainsaying which was directed alike against the throne and the altar. And the two are commonly combined. We say not that an irreligious man must be also a disloyal; but we affirm that a disloyal is almost always an irreligious. We know not how it can be otherwise. We know not how a good Christian can fail to be a good subject, "submitting himself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." For our own part we will never believe that loyalty is merely an acquired principle, drilled into men by education and fostered by custom. We are persuaded, on the contrary, that we are born with a reverence of authority, that God placed it in us as a part of that moral cordage by which He would have society knit together. Whether or no they admire his personal character, whether or no they approve the acts of his government, most men, we are convinced, tacitly acknowledge the sacredness of a king, and are moved by awe of the office to manifest devotion to him who holds it. We regard the enthusiasm thus simultaneously called forth as expressive of a kind of irrepressible consciousness that a king is, in some sense, the vicegerent of Deity, as proving what we might almost call an innate persuasion that there is a majesty in him who wears a crown, which it is a species of sacrilege to refuse to acknowledge. The unbidding acclamations of a peasantry pass with us as echoes of a voice which is speaking irresistibly in their breasts, proclaiming that it is by God that princes reign, and that whom He delegates the world should honour. And if we may thus contend that loyalty is a natural sentiment, we aggravate most grievously the sin of disobedience to all those precepts of Scripture that set themselves against the gainsaying of authority. And who shall marvel that "the gainsaying of Core," inasmuch as it proved an utter contempt of all instituted authority, both in civil and spiritual things, provoked signally the anger of God? It is given as the description of the last stage of enormity. The man who could join this gainsaying must have thrown off all fear of his Maker; for how otherwise could he take part in a league whose professed object it was to strip of power the persons of Divine appointment and to give to the meanest of the people that right of officiating with which one order could prove themselves exclusively entrusted? Thus it was with these seducers in the days of St. Jude. They had gone in "the way of Cain," and run "after the error of Balaam"; but there was a great obstacle to their schemes; the authority of the apostles or of their appointed successors was held in reverence in the Church, and was directly opposed to their proceedings. Sooner or later they would have to undertake the overthrow of this authority, and thus add imitation of Core to that of Cain and of Balaam. But God would at length interpose, and, having suffered them to fill up the measure of their iniquities, would visit them with the weight of His indignation. They should work their own ruin. And thus would it come to pass that they who had to describe their career would have to follow up the announcement that "they had gone in the way of Cain, and run greedily after the error of Balaam for reward," by an account at once of a crime and its punishment—"and they perished in the gainsaying of Core." (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *The way of Cain*:—I. THE WAY OF CAIN IS THE WAY OF SINNERS IN GENERAL.

1. A way of ignorance. He murdered his brother because he hated him; he hated him because his sacrifice was accepted of the Lord, whilst his own was rejected; his sacrifice was rejected because he offered the wrong offering upon the altar; he gave the wrong offering because he was ignorant of his own state before God, and ignorant of God's requirements. He was willing to worship, but it must be a worship dictated by his taste, and not one in obedience to God's will. Cain's religion is now the most respectable and popular religion of the day. It involves no abasement in the dust; no humiliating confession of sinnership; no absolute dependence out of self. It flatters man's pride, exalts his reason, and just suits the carnal heart that wants a religion to make his respectability complete. Cain's religion is the curse of the day. It chloroforms men into insensibility and indifference. Had they none there would perhaps be more hope for them, for when sinners were appealed to they would feel they were addressed, but as it is they put themselves down as part of "the religious world," and perhaps a better name could hardly be found to describe them, for they have a religious worldliness, or if you prefer the title a worldly religiousness. 2. A way of worldliness. Hardened and despairing he goes out from the presence of the Lord, builds a city, and seeks to drown remorse in pleasure. He and his descendants busy themselves in trying to make this world a pleasant place of residence, and with the sound of the harp and

the organ the guilty man tries to drown the voice of his brother's blood. This is the way of Cain. This is just what the vast majority of mankind is doing. It is trying in the business and pleasures of the city to find its all—forget its God—and drown unpleasant thoughts. But remember, your burying yourself in this world's pleasures does not remove the brand of Cain from off your brow. 3. The way to hell. No scripture sheds one gleam of hope upon the way of Cain. Direct reference is only made twice to him in the New Testament, and in both instances he is held up as a warning, and nothing else. The first you will find in the first Epistle of John, the third chapter and twelfth verse—"Not as Cain who was of that wicked one"; and the second is found in our text and the verses following. Thus you see no hope is even hinted at. The end of the way of Cain is blackness of darkness for ever. II. ONE PARTICULAR IN CAIN'S WAY WHICH IS THE WAY OF MANY PROFESSORS. I mean his indifference about his murdered brother. "Where is Abel thy brother?" These were the words that arrested Cain's attention. May they arrest yours! I am glad to see you here this evening, but where is your brother? Christian young men, where have you left your brethren this evening? Where are those who are related to you by ties of blood? Where are those bound to you by friendship? Where are those who are your brethren in daily labour—those who work with you in the office, shop, warehouse, or docks? Where is he? You are here singing God's praises and listening to God's Word, but where did you leave him? Alas, in the way of Cain, I hear some of you reply, "I know not." Stop, sir! that answer will never do. Not know! I think I see Cain as he utters the words. A burning blush crimsoned his brow, and his downcast eyes and quivering face all give the lie to the assertion. He did know. Christian, such a miserable falsehood as Cain's is unworthy of you. You feel it as you try to tell it. You ought to know. Come, be bold, speak out the truth, though it condemns you. Then I will answer for you? Like Cain, you have left your brother in his blood. His soul is dead if his body lives. Indifference about souls is the crying sin of the Church. (*A. G. Brown.*) *The religion of nature and of culture*:—Adam begat a son in his own likeness—not God's—that was gone—but his own—and his own bore the imprint of the evil one, to whose subtle agency he had sinfully succumbed. Thus the first man born into the world was not only the child of Adam, but also, in some sense, the child of the devil, and demonstrably our brother, though it be not either politic or pleasant flatly to affirm it. Cain was not the abnormal monster that he is commonly supposed to be, but a representative man, a religious man, a polite and accomplished man, and in many respects a model man, with the exception of a single rash and unfortunate deed, perpetrated in a fit of passion. And yet, as "the way of Cain" is so severely deprecated in God's Word, let us study the way-marks that we may learn to beware of it. 1. It was a religion without an atonement. He regarded himself as God's creature; he recognised God's claims upon his gratitude; and accordingly he reared an altar dedicated to the Deity, and laid upon it votive offerings such as were not only æsthetically beautiful, but seemed to be ethically appropriate and sufficient. Hard by Cain's altar stands another, a simpler, ruder structure, on which no flowers breathe their fragrance, nor ripened fruits are found. It is only blood-besprinkled, and a slain lamb lies upon it. Strange offering this to a God of love, and stranger still is the attitude of Abel, as he stands beside his altar, with his head bowed as if in profoundest penitence. "By faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain," for his faith humbly grasped the great doctrine of the atonement. It was the lack of any conscious need of an atonement that broadly distinguished the way of Cain, and there be hundreds of thousands that to-day do follow him. Far be it from me to disparage any of the rich and generous fruits of the earth, that spring from germs indigenous in the soil of the human soul. Though fallen, there is much left of beauty and of native nobleness. There are such things as truth and honesty, and generosity, and natural affection, and broad philanthropy. There are such things outside the Church that go to show that human nature is not utterly depraved, nor is a world hopelessly cursed that holds the roots from which spring such fruits. And yet it is of infinite moment for us to remember that the offering to heaven of these alone will not suffice to make sure of heaven. For unfallen man these would be quite enough, but for guilty man there is needed an atonement. 2. The way of Cain was a heart without love. Religion does indeed address itself to our intelligence, and challenges the severest scrutiny of its character and claims, and yet it constantly recognises the sadly significant fact that the radical difficulty in the way of man's salvation is not so much in his head as his heart. Cain's offering was costly and beautiful, but there

was no heart in it, and no love back of it, and therefore it was that God sternly rejected both him and it. If love had been the animating motive, then the moment he discovered its defective character, he would with eager haste have sought to remedy the defect. Instead of that his brow was clouded, his countenance fallen, and his bosom writh. The slumbering demon within him was roused. The carnal enmity of his depraved nature flamed out, and like an exasperated serpent he was ready to strike with a mortal blow. We stand aghast in the presence of this first dread tragedy—that strikes us most just because it was the first. Cain is only the leader of a long and infamous historic line. “And wherefore slew he him?” the Scripture asks, and then it answers the question of its own propounding. “Because his own works were evil and his brother’s righteous.” And every age has borne witness to the prevalence of the very same spirit, and for the very same reason. True, the age of bodily butchery is now happily past, and the followers of Christ are no longer thrown to lions, immured in dungeons, or stretched upon the rack. The world has grown too decent for that, and the devil too shrewdly politic. And yet it is just as true to-day as ever that they who will live godly—meaning thereby uncompromising and fearless Christians—shall suffer persecution. There is still the old antipathy and enmity to the worshippers at the blood-besprinkled altar. 3. Another distinguishing feature of this still much trodden way is the substitution of culture for cleansing—culture of the mind for cleansing by the blood of Christ. God has abandoned me, thought the proto-murderer, but hope has not. The earth has indeed been cursed, but it shall yet be made a tolerable place to dwell in. I will fertilise it by toilsome tillage, and embellish it with choicest art. I will drown its wail of woe by concourse of melody and “notes of linked sweetness long drawn out.” By the power of cultivation I will redeem the world from the power of the curse. Accordingly Cain built a city that was doubtless a marvel of architectural beauty, while in his immediate family were to be found artificers in brass and iron, and the fast-flying fingers of cunning performers on the harp and the organ. Had he lived in our day he would doubtless have been a patron of the arts, a school director, a member of the city government, a founder or fosterer of great enterprises having for their object the instruction of the ignorant and the mitigation of human misery. Having no hope of heaven to lure him on, he was determined to make the most of earth. Now, far be it from me to despise or even to disparage such things. We hail them as the outcome of that enlightened enterprise or broad philanthropy which distinguishes all Christian lands. We rejoice in them not only for the sake of man, whose elevation and comfort they are adapted to promote, but for God’s sake, to whose glory they are destined to be so largely tributary. And yet all these mere human agencies are powerless to effect redemption. All this magnificent engineering of modern civilisation is, when taken by itself, as impotent to rescue man from sin and guilt as the rudest barbarism that ever degraded humanity. Knowledge is power indeed, but whether the power shall be beneficent or baneful will depend entirely on the principle that controls it. A rifle is a thing of power, but a dreadful thing in the hands of a bloodthirsty Modoc. So knowledge is power, and yet mere knowledge without religious principle “doth only make men clever devils.” Nay, verily, what the world wants is not so much culture as cleansing. Then culture comes indeed, but in its purest, noblest forms. Then there are gathered the richest fruits of the highest Christian civilisation—fruits indeed that are fruits of the ground, and yet not fruits of the ground alone, but the outcome of the blood, for the ground has been enriched by the blood of the Cross. (P. S. Henson, D.D.) *The way of Cain*:—The way of Cain is that course of life which Cain took up to himself in following the lusts of his own heart against the will of God. It is described in Gen. 4, of which way there be seven steps or degrees, but every one out of the right way. 1. The first step was hypocrisy: he worshipped God by offering sacrifice as Abel did, but his heart was not a believing heart as Abel’s was; his worship was outward and ceremonious, but not in spirit and truth, for his heart was an evil heart of unbelief. 2. The second his hatred of his own and natural brother, prosecuting him with his wrath and indignation. 3. The third his murder, whereby he slew his righteous brother. 4. The fourth his lying unto God, saying he knew not where his brother was. 5. The fifth his desperation, after that God had convicted him and pronounced sentence against him. 6. The sixth his security and carelessness; he regardeth not his sin nor the conscience of it, but busieth himself in building a city and calleth it after the name of his child, that, seeing his name was not written in heaven, he might yet preserve his name and memory in the earth. 7. The seventh and last, which was the highest

step of his way, was his profaneness; for from thenceforth he cast off and contemned all the care and practice of God's worship, which appeareth (Gen. iv. 26). (W. Perkins.)

Covetousness :—Covetousness is the root of all evil, the spawn of all sins, a common factor for most villainies of the world: the east wind that blusteth all the trees of virtue. And verily, if men would but consider three things: first, how uncertain; secondly, how unprofitable; thirdly, how hurtful these earthly things are which we so covet, our desire after them will soon be quenched. (S. Otes.)

The sin and punishment of rebellion :—I. AS RELATING TO THE FACT OF KORAH AND HIS COMPANY. 1. The nature of the faction which was raised by them. (1) The design that was laid for that, and all other circumstances of the story, we must have resort to the account that is given of it (Numb. xvi.), where we shall find that the bottom of the design was the sharing of the government among themselves. They intend to lay aside Moses, but this they knew to be a very difficult task, considering what wonders God had wrought by him in their deliverance out of Egypt, what wisdom he had hitherto showed in the conduct of them, what care for their preservation, what integrity in the management of his power, what reverence the people did bear towards him, and what solemn vows and promises they had made of obedience to him. But ambitious and factious men are never discouraged by such an appearance of difficulties. Groundless suspicions and unreasonable fears and jealousies will pass for arguments and demonstrations. Then they who can invent the most popular lies against the government are accounted the men of integrity, and they who most diligently spread the most infamous reports are the men of honesty, because they are farthest from being flatterers of the court. (2) The persons who were engaged in it. At first they were only some discontented Levites who murmured against Moses and Aaron, because they were not preferred to the priesthood, and of these Korah was the chief. Korah, being active and busy in his discontents, had the opportunity of drawing in some of the sons of Reuben, for they pitched their tents near each other, both on the south side of the tabernacle of the congregation; and these were discontented on the account of their tribe having lost the privilege of primogeniture. Thus whatever the pretences are, how fair and popular soever in the opposition men make to authority, ambition and private discontents are the true beginners of them; but these must be covered over with the deepest dissimulation, nothing must be talked of but a mighty zeal for religion and the public interest. (3) The colours and pretences under which these persons sought to justify the proceedings of the faction. (a) The asserting the rights and liberties of the people in opposition to the government of Moses. There were, then, two great principles among them by which they thought to defend themselves. (i) That liberty and a right to power is so inherent in the people that it cannot be taken from them. What means, then, this outcry for liberty? Is it that they would have no government at all among them, but that every one might have done what he pleased himself? If any man can imagine himself in such a state of confusion, which some improperly call a state of nature, let him consider whether the contentment he could take in his own liberty and power to defend himself would balance the fears he would have of the injury which others in the same state might be able to do him. It follows, then, that what liberty is inconsistent with all government must never be pleaded against one sort of it. But is there, then, so great a degree of liberty in one mode of government more than another that it should be thought reasonable to disturb government merely to alter the form of it? Would it have been so much better for the people of Israel to have been governed by the two hundred and fifty men here mentioned than by Moses? Would not they have required the same subjection and obedience to themselves, though their commands had been much more unreasonable than his? What security can there be that every one of these shall not be worse in all respects than him whom they were so willing to lay aside? So that the folly of these popular pretences is as great as the sin in being persuaded by them. (ii) Another principle which tends to the subverting government under a pretence of liberty is that, in case of usurpation upon the rights of the people, they may resume the exercise of power and punish the supreme magistrate himself if he be guilty of it. Than which there can be no principle imagined more destructive to civil societies and repugnant to the very nature of government. For it destroys all the obligations of oaths and compacts. (b) Another pretence of this rebellion of Korah was the freeing themselves from the encroachments upon their spiritual privileges which were made by the usurpations of Aaron and the priesthood. This served for a very popular pretence, for they knew no reason that one tribe should engross so much of the wealth of the

nation to themselves, and have nothing to do but to attend the service of God for it. This hath always been the quarrel at religion by those who seldom pretend to it but with a design to destroy it. II. THE JUDGMENT WHICH WAS INFLICTED UPON THEM FOR IT. They had provoked heaven by their sin, and disturbed the earth by their faction; and the earth, as if it were moved with indignation against them, trembled and shook, and then with a horrid noise it rends asunder and opens its mouth to swallow those in its bowels who were unfit to live upon the face of it. They had been dividing the people, and the earth, to their amazement and ruin, divides itself under their feet. By which we see God interprets striving against the authority appointed by Him to be a striving against Himself. This was the first formed sedition that we read of against Moses. The people had been murmuring before, but they wanted heads to manage them. Now all things concur to a most dangerous rebellion upon the most popular pretences of religion and liberty, and now God takes the first opportunity of declaring His hatred of such actions, that others might hear and fear and do no more so presumptuously. (*Abp. Stillingfleet.*)

Ver. 12. **Spots [R.V., hidden rocks] in your feasts of charity.**—*Unsuspected dangers*:—Hidden rocks are the seamen's worst dangers, and they generally prove the most fatal. They account for the disappearance of many a gallant barque and brave crew. They are not laid down on the chart. I. THE UNSUSPECTED DANGERS WHICH WRECK CHRISTIAN CHURCHES. The apostle means that there were men who, instead of keeping the unity and peace of the Christian community, were the means of wrecking both. The kind of men they are is described in verse 4. 1. They have crept into the Church surreptitiously, not being possessed of the spiritual qualifications they professed to have. 2. They perverted the gospel to evil ends. "They turned the grace of our God unto lasciviousness." They divorced religion from good morals and good life. 3. There was denial of essential Christian doctrine. "Denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ." II. THE UNSUSPECTED PERILS OF INDIVIDUAL SPIRITUAL HISTORY. "Hidden rocks." 1. "Nobody will know." The possibility of secret sin is one of the grave perils of youth and inexperience. 2. "Only this once." The tempter has never had a more successful plea to urge upon the unwary. But if for once, why not for always? 3. "It is not necessary to be so very particular." But thoroughness is one great element of safety. 4. "Never mind, another time will do as well." This is perhaps the most fatal of all. Procrastination of duties means the giving up of duties. Secret unfaithfulness becomes open apostasy. (*W. H. Davison.*) "*Hidden rocks in your love-feasts*" (R.V.):—The love-feast symbolised the brotherhood of Christians. It was a simple meal, in which all met as equals, and the rich supplied the necessities of the poor. It would seem as if these profligates—(1) brought with them luxurious food, thus destroying the Christian simplicity of the meal; and (2) brought this not for the benefit of all, but for their own private enjoyment, thus destroying the idea of Christian brotherhood and equality. The whole purpose of the love-feast was wrecked by these men. They were rocks in them. (*A. Plummer, D.D.*) **Feeding themselves without fear.**—*Eucharistic feeding without fear*:—May not these words be applied to the Eucharistic feeding of those who come to the most holy feast without searching of heart, without self-examination, trusting in their respectability, their apparent blamelessness in respect of gross sin and such things? (*M. F. Sadler, M.A.*) **Clouds they are without water.**—*Disappointing men*:—These men are ostentatious, but they do no good. It was perhaps expected that their admission to the Church would be a fresh gain to Christendom; but they are as disappointing as clouds that are carried past (*παρεφερόμεναι*) by winds without giving any rain: and in the East that is one of the most grievous among common disappointments. (*A. Plummer, D.D.*) *Clouds without water*:—It pleaseth the Spirit of God in many places of the Old Testament to compare prophets and teachers unto clouds, and their doctrine unto the dropping and distilling of the rain and sweet showers. So the Prophet Ezekiel is commanded to set his face towards the way of Teman, and "drop his word toward the south," and his prophecy towards the forest. My doctrine shall "drop as the rain," and my speech shall "distil as the dew, as the shower upon the herbs, and as the great rain upon the grass" (Deut. xxxii. 2). The word translated "prophecy" (Micah ii. 7, 11) signifieth properly to drop or distil. The reason of which comparison is rendered. Because as the rain falleth upon the earth and returneth not in vain, but moisteneth it, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to him that eateth (Isa. lv. 10, 11); so the word in

the mouth of the ministers returneth not void, but accomplisheth the Lord's will. The words then standing upon this similitude bear this sense: Though the property and use of clouds is to carry water and rain for the use of the earth, yet some clouds are without water; even so, though all teachers ought to be filled and fitted with store of wholesome doctrine, to pour it out for the use of the Church, yet these seducers are utterly destitute thereof. And, again, as those clouds without water are light, and fit for nothing than to be carried about with wind, so these are altogether variable and unconstant, carried about with every blast of strange doctrine. The former of these similitudes condemneth their sin of barrenness and unfruitfulness; the latter their sin of inconstancy and variableness. (*W. Perkins.*) **Trees whose fruit withereth.**—*Spiritual withering*:—1. Even corrupt trees bear some fruit, though but withered. Most men go to hell in the way of religious appearances (*Matt. vii. 22, 23*). 2. Withering and decaying in holiness is a distemper very unsuitable, and should be very hateful to every Christian. (1) In respect of God. Decays in our Christian course oppose His nature, in whom is no shadow of change. (2) In respect of ourselves. (a) Whatever professions have been made, it is certain there never was sincerity. (b) Spiritual withering renders all former profession unprofitable and in vain. (c) Spiritual withering makes our former profession and progress therein to injure us. (3) In respect of others. (a) They who remain strong and stable are much distressed by the decay of any. (b) The weak are much endangered to be carried away with others for company. (c) The wicked are confirmed in the sin into which the decayed Christian is fallen, and also much deride and reproach that way of truth and holiness which the unsteadfast have forsaken. 3. It is the duty of Christians to endeavour after spiritual fruitfulness (*Matt. iii. 8; Luke iii. 8; 2 Cor. ix. 10; Phil. i. 11; Jas. iii. 17; John xv. 2, 5, 16; Col. i. 10*). 4. The greatest flourishes and appearances of hypocrisy cannot reach the excellency of the least dram of sincerity. All a hypocrite can do amounts not to fruit. 5. Incurribleness in sin is a dismal condition. It is a woe to have a bad heart, but it is the depth of woe to have a heart that shall never be better. 6. It is our greatest wisdom, and ought to be our chiefest care, to be preserved from apostacy. To this end—(1) Be sure to have the truth of spiritual life in you. (2) Forecast the worst that can befall you. (3) Take heed of the smallest decay, a beginning to remit of thy holiness. 7. God at length discovers unsound, empty, and decaying Christians to be what they are. (*W. Jenkyn, M.A.*) **Fruit withering**:—I. **WHAT IS BACKSLIDING?** It is not everything that morbid conscientiousness may sometimes mistake for it. 1. It is not the loss of the first gushing emotions of early youth or even of early Christian life. 2. Nor is it the occasional loss of enjoyment or even of peace. The vessel may be going forward, even in a fog, and though "neither sun nor stars" appear, may be still obeying her helm and speeding to port. 3. Temptation, again, is not backsliding. This is one of our present tests. It is the furnace, but because the gold is in the crucible it does not follow there is alloy. No; backsliding is a loss, not of buoyant feeling, or of joy merely, or of freedom from assault, but of spiritual life and power; not of the adjuncts of this life, but of itself. When the eye loses its lustre, the cheek its bloom, the form its roundness, it is from a loss of vitality. The outward indications are but symptomatic, the failure is within. Backsliding is a loss of spiritual life, which, of course, affects the whole circle of spiritual experience, spiritual duties, spiritual influences, and in all senses makes the fruit to wither. Is it not, as thus understood, a most wretched state? It is foolish. What fools we are to lose such a condition as our former one, and to lapse into this; to leave the Father's house, with its abundance of provision and love, and to feed on "ashes" and "husks." How ungrateful, too. Think what has been done for us by the all-loving Saviour; in us, by His gracious Spirit. How opposed to the genius of the gospel, too! Christianity intends growth, advancement in each grace, in the entire Christian life, and this in order to perfection. We have perversely been realising just the opposite; crab-like, have gone backward instead of forward. II. **WHAT IS THE CAUSE OF BACKSLIDING?** The cause may be one of many, or all combined. 1. It may be that the tree itself is bad. Its surroundings favourable, it may yet fail from inherent defect. I need not say that this is the main cause with us. Alas! we are degenerate trees of a tainted stock. Sin, that destroyer of all good, dwells in us. "The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked." The stock itself is tainted, the "tree corrupt," and no wonder it fails to mature "good fruit." But has it not been engrafted? It has, but the old nature is not

eradicated. Subdued, striven against, wrestled with, it yet exists, and is the cause, the first great cause, of all the knots, excrescences, and withered fruit which mar the beauty of the tree. 2. Not only may the tree be bad, its soil may be defective. As the tree literally, so we spiritually, draw our sap from without. It has been the defect of this vital influence that has been another cause of our failure. Had it been supplied, drawn through the appointed medium, as it might and ought, it would have vanquished the noxious elements already existing, and produced vigour and health. And why has not this been done? Partly, perhaps, from a defect in our original training. Rejoicing in our new experience, one of glowing delight, "first love," we lived on day by day, sustained simply by emotion. This, then, seemed to suffice, for the well was deep. By a beneficent law of nature, however, it is ordained that strong emotion shall be but temporary, that intense heat shall evaporate into steam. When this ceased, we were at fault. We have learnt since that "our life is hid with Christ in God," that "He is our life," and is unchangeable and perennial. We may have failed to avail ourselves subsequently even of this, but at first we did not adequately know it. 3. Another cause of withering may be the surrounding atmosphere. How subtle this is, and how insidiously and yet injuriously it acts upon the growing trees. There is an atmosphere about us all spiritually, formed by our domestic and social position—the books we read, places we frequent, society we form, ministry we attend, and a thousand other things in our daily lives. This may be helpful; it may also be the reverse. 4. Besides this habitual atmosphere, there are also blights—states of the atmosphere when it is more fully than usual charged with poisonous influences or parasitic life. Prevailing tones of fashion and dress, sinful indulgence, habits of excess, sudden prosperity, worldly alliance, lax sense of obligation—how these sometimes come over the promising tree, and in a night or day destroy its beauty, cover it with deformity, wither its fruit! 5. Another cause of decay is lack of appropriate means. The tree needs not only a sound stock, good soil and atmosphere, but also proper attention. Digging, manure, water, pruning, are all requisite, and without these it will suffer, at length decay. That God works by means we know, and this in our best estate we practically recognised. How diligently these were plied at first. The Bible was our joy, and we had it "in our heart," that we might not sin against God. Prayer, too, what a reality it was! The Sabbath, how we loved it! And the sanctuary, it was truly Bethel, God's house. All these, and kindred ones, were means of spiritual culture to us. If these, any or all of them, have been neglected by us, come to be duties rather than privileges—no wonder that we have become withered, and that our fruit has decayed. 6. Fruit may wither because it is not used at the appropriate time. One reason why spiritual life in our Churches is so feeble and sickly a principle is because it lacks exercise. The backsliding Christian is ordinarily to be found amongst the "slothful and unprofitable servants." III. WHAT IS THE REMEDY? 1. Return. 2. Repent. 3. Resolve—to watch, pray, be diligent, advance. (*D. J. Viney*.) **Twice dead.**—"Twice dead"—Dean Alford refers to the double death in a tree, which is not only as it seems to the eye in common with other trees, in the apparent death of winter, but really dead; dead to appearance, and dead in reality. "*Plucked up by the roots*":—So incapable of ever reviving. (*J. Wesley*.)

Ver. 13. Raging waves of the sea.—*The character and doom of the wicked*:—The scope of the apostle in all these similitudes is to show that these seducers were nothing less than what they pretended to be: "clouds," but dry, barren clouds; "trees," but such as bore either none or rotten fruit; "waves," that seemed to mount up unto heaven, and to promise great matters, as if they would swallow up the whole earth, but being dashed against a rock, all this raging and swelling turneth into a little foam and froth. 1. From the scope observe that spiritual boasters will certainly come short of their great promises. All is but noise, such as is made by empty vessels. 2. But let us a little examine the force of the words. The whole similitude alludeth to what is said of wicked men in general (Isa. lvii. 20). Observe that they are waves, which noteth their inconstancy (Gen. xlix. 4). Water, you know, is movable, soon furled, and driven to and fro by the winds; so were these (Eph. iv. 14). Note thence that seducers are unsettled and uncertain in their opinions (2 Pet. iii. 16). Why? Because they are not rooted and grounded in their profession, but led by sudden affection and interests rather than judgment; they are unstable because unlearned; such as do not proceed upon clear and certain grounds. Well, then, discover them by their levity; you will never have comfort and certainty in following them who, like weathercocks, turn with every wind.

"Waves of the sea." There you have their restless activity, they are always tossed to and fro (Jer. xlix. 23). They are acted by Satan, who is a restless spirit. "Laging waves of the sea." There you have their turbulency; they fill all places with troubles and strifes. Why? Because they are urged by their own pride and vanity, and have lost all restraints of modesty, and are usually, as to their constitution, of violent and eager spirits. Well, then, be not borne down with impudence and rage; there may be daring attempts and much resolution in an ill cause. The next expression is "foaming out their own shame," as a raging sea casteth up mire and dirt; or it alluded to that scum and froth which the waves leave upon the rocks, and so it noteth the abominableness of their opinions and practices. So errors come in like a raging wave, as if they would bear all before them, but they go out like foam and froth, in scorn and infamy. Well, then, observe the fruitlessness of all Satan's attempts. We come now to the next similitude, "wandering stars." It may be taken two ways—properly or improperly. (1) Properly, for the stars which we call planets, or wandering, though indeed no stars wander less than they do; they have their name from the opinion and common judgment of sense, because they are not carried about the whole circuit of the heavens, but in a shorter orb and course. (2) Improperly; there are a second sort of wandering stars, which Aristotle calleth running and gliding stars; not stars indeed, but only dry exhalations inflamed, which glare much and deceive the eye with an appearance of light, but soon vanish and are quenched. Now these glancing, shooting stars do excellently express the quality of these seducers, who pretended great knowledge, being therefore called Gnostics, and gave out themselves for illuminate and profound doctors, but were various and uncertain in their motions, and soon extinguished and obscured. The guides of the Lord's people should be stars, but not wandering, gliding stars. These seducers pretended to be "stars," and great lights of the Church, but were indeed "wandering stars," and such as did seduce and cause to err. 1. Stars they should be—(1) In regard of the light of doctrine (Matt. v. 14). (2) In regard of the lustre of their conversations. It is said of all Christians (Phil. ii. 15) that they "should shine as lights in this world"; they are the bright part of the world, as the stars are the shining part of heaven; as the star directed the wise men to Christ, so they must shine to light others by their example to Him. Alas! we are but dim lights; we have our spots and eclipses, but this sets the world a-talking. 2. They must not be gliding, falling stars; that is charged upon these seducers. A false teacher and a falling star symboliseth in three respects—(1) It is but a counterfeit star; so is he an "angel of light" only in appearance (2 Cor. xi. 14). A true Christian should covet more to be than to seem to be; to be "light in the Lord" before he is a "light in the world." (2) In respect of the uncertainty of its motion. Falling stars are not moved with the heavens, but with the motion of the air, hither and thither, and so are no sure direction. So are they inconstant in the doctrines which they teach, running from opinion to opinion; vagabond lights, that seduce, not direct, as meteors mislead travellers out of the way. (3) In regard of the fatal issue. A wandering star falleth to the ground, and becometh a dark slime and jelly; so their pretences vanish at length, and they are found to be those that were never enlightened and fixed in the firmament of God; counterfeits cannot last long; we see stars shoot in the turn of an eye, and Satan's instruments fall from heaven like lightning. Well, then, for a guide to heaven, choose a star, but not a wandering star. New light is admired, but it should be suspected rather. True stars have influences; they do not only enlighten and fill you with notions, but enflame and stir you to practice. The last clause of the text is, "to whom is reserved blackness of darkness for ever." In this threatening three things are notable—(1) The dreadfulness of the punishment; (2) the sureness; (3) the suitableness of it. 1. The dreadfulness, in two circumstances—(1) The nature of it; (2) the duration of it. (a) The nature of it, "the blackness of darkness." It is a Hebraism for exceeding great darkness, called in the gospel "outer darkness," as being furthest from God, the fountain of life and glory, and so expressing that extreme misery, horror, and torment which is in hell. Well, then, let us not begin our hell ourselves, by shunning God's presence, by preferring carnal pleasures before the light of His countenance, by remaining in the night or darkness of ignorance or error, by darkening the glory of our holy profession through scandalous living, by sinning against conscience, and so providing food for the gnawing worm, or matter of despair to ourselves to all eternity. (b) The next thing is the duration, "the blackness of darkness for ever." The torment prepared for the wicked is everlasting (Mark ix. 44). This is the hell of hell, that,

as the torments there are without measure, so without end. Here they might have life and would not, and now would have death, and cannot (Rev. xx. 10). 2. So much for the terribleness of the judgment; now, secondly, let us consider the sureness of it: it is "reserved." Hell torment is sure, prepared, kept for the wicked (Matt. xxv.). Carnal men may lord it abroad for a while, and ruffle and shine in worldly pomp, but "the blackness of darkness is kept for them." 3. Observe the suitableness of the judgment to the sin; he saith "darkness," not fire. Clouds that darken the truth are justly punished with "the mists of darkness for ever" (2 Pet. ii. 17). They that would quench the true light are cast into eternal darkness. (T. Manton.) **Wandering stars.**—*Wandering stars*:—Dean Alford, with many other commentators, says, "These words, 'wandering stars,' mean comets, which astonish the world for a while and then pass away into darkness." The Bible takes up this thought about comets, or "wandering stars," and applies it to certain kinds of people. Let us trace some of the features of similarity. I. In the first place, SOME FOLK ARE VERY MUCH LIKE COMETS IN THAT THERE IS NOT MUCH SUBSTANCE IN THEM. II. Notice, THAT SOME PEOPLE ARE LIKE COMETS IN THAT THEY ARE EASILY SWAYED OUT OF THEIR ORBITS. The metaphor applies to unstable men, driven hither and thither by temptations, whose life presents the strongest kind of contrast to the safe, well-ordered life of Christians, more fixed, like the orbit of a planet. (a) Young friends, keep to your orbit of purpose. Have an aim and stick to it. Many a life goes to waste and ruin simply because, like an abandoned and drifting vessel, or a wandering star, no guiding purpose directs its course. (b) More important, young friends, keep to your orbit of right. Let no Jupiter attraction sway you out of it. III. Notice, again, THAT COMETS GROW BRIGHTER AS THEY GET NEAR THE SUN AND DARKER AS THEY GO AWAY FROM IT. So do we all grow more bright and beautiful as we get near to Christ, and darker as we go from Him. IV. Notice, lastly, THAT SOME COMETS ARE TRULY "WANDERING STARS." As unstable, disrupted ruins, they are hastening forward to a final darkness. Surely this is very suggestive of the sad ending of sin. To die in one's sins is the darkest of deaths. (G. B. F. Hallock.) **The blackness of darkness for ever.**—*"Outer darkness"*:—You have been out in a very dark night, when you could not see an inch before you, and the whole world seemed blotted out of existence. I dare say you thought that there could be no darkness deeper than that. And yet the darkest night that any one has ever seen is not the "blackness of darkness" to which the apostle alludes; for there is some light mixed with it—light which other creatures can see, such as cats and owls, though you cannot. The stars are shining all the time, and their rays are piercing through the universal gloom and lighting it up, so that it is not so dense as it would otherwise be. We know nothing of the "blackness of darkness"—darkness without light; darkness in blank, empty space. There is one spot in the visible universe that can in some measure enable us to realise the awful conception of Jude. When Sir William Herschel examined the southern part of the starry heavens on one occasion with his huge telescope, he noticed in the constellation of the Scorpion—the eighth sign of the Zodiac, into which the sun enters about the 23rd of October—a particular dark spot; and he was very much startled and said, "There is certainly a hole in the heavens there." There was in that spot a total absence of any star, or gleam of light such as elsewhere, in countless myriads, overspread the entire firmament. His son Sir John was some time afterwards at the Cape of Good Hope as Astronomer Royal, and with the same telescope, in the clear atmosphere of South Africa, he looked up at the same spot in the starry sky, and saw that his father was correct. He was, indeed, looking at a hole in the heavens, where no mortal eye with any instrument that the highest skill could devise could detect one solitary glimmer of far-off light. It is into outer darkness like that that lost souls are cast which have separated themselves from God and refused to obey His law of love and light. Human beings cannot bear darkness. There are some creatures that love it—that hide themselves under stones and in dark corners of the earth. But man was made for the light, and therefore dreads darkness more than anything else. God has given to us this instinctive fear of darkness because it is injurious to us, except during the short time that it is necessary to aid and deepen our sleep at night, which may be said to be a kind of death. He meant us to dread it and avoid it, and to live in the light. I said that in this world it is impossible to get out of the reach of light. In the natural world God has placed the orbit of our earth amid regions that are continually lit up with the light of suns and stars everywhere. And so too in the spiritual world God has placed your sphere and orbit in a region of light. The

Sun of Righteousness shines upon you always. You cannot get beyond the reach of God's light. Behind the gloom in which you bury yourself by conscious and wilful sin, He works to bring you out of the darkness into His own marvellous light. God wishes you in His own light to see light upon all the great things that concern your immortal welfare. He wishes you to walk in the light, for He knows that darkness is your greatest enemy; for darkness means the loss of power to use the organs of life, the loss of enjoyment in the bright and beautiful world which He has made for your happiness, and, if carried to an extreme, the loss of life itself. Have you ever seen a root, say a potato, or a dahlia root, sprouting in a dark cellar? What a brittle, feeble, monstrous growth does it produce; the semblance of a plant, without sap, or strength, or beauty—a white, death-like ghost! But even that feeble abortive effort to grow is caused by the small quantity of light that finds its way into the darkest cellar, and cannot be shut out. But supposing that you could exclude the light altogether, and make the place absolutely dark, then not only would the root of the plant make no effort to grow, but it would wither and die away altogether; it would lose the life that it had. Complete darkness is fatal to all life. And so, hiding yourself from the light of God that shines all around you, loving darkness rather than light, because your deeds are evil, you become like blind fishes—you lose some faculty or power of your soul. You make yourself blind to the things that belong to your peace. You deprive yourself of much that is fitted to bless and ennoble your life. But separating yourself from God altogether, you would lose the life itself of your soul. Your living soul would become a dead, inanimate thing, without a pulse of love or a glow of hope. It would be all darkness—not the darkness cast by the shadow of God's presence, but the utter, deathly darkness of the absence of God. You would wander out of the region of God's light, out of the Milky Way of God's gracious influences, into outer darkness, where Dante's terrible words would be realised to the full, "All hope abandon, ye who enter here." Does not the thought of that awful "blackness of darkness for ever" urge you to cry for the light, to come to the light, to ask God to lighten your eyes lest you sleep the sleep of death—to walk in the light while you have the light? (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*)

Vers. 14, 15. And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold the Lord cometh.—*Enoch, the herald of judgment*.—The first thing to be considered is, where or whence St. Jude obtained this prediction of Enoch—whether from immediate revelation, or from tradition, or from some book then extant in the Church. There is indeed an apocryphal book, "The Book of Enoch," which appears to have been often used by the early Fathers, and to have acquired a great celebrity in the first days of Christianity. For centuries this book was supposed to have been lost, and our only knowledge of it was derived from quotations in other writings. An Ethiopic version was at length discovered in Ethiopia, and brought to England by the well-known traveller, Bruce. In this book there are passages which answer very nearly to the prophecy recorded by St. Jude. It has therefore been a common supposition that the apostle derived from this book the prediction which he ascribes to the patriarch. But the likelihood is that the Book of Enoch was written after the Epistle of St. Jude, so that Jude could not have drawn the prophecy from the book; but, rather, the writer of the book inserted in it the prophecy that he might give to his forgery the appearance of truth. We may believe, therefore, that in all probability Jude was informed of the prediction by immediate revelation. But whatever the source whence the apostle derived it, we may be certain that the prophecy was actually delivered by Enoch. The prophecy may indeed have had a primary reference to the Flood; but it is evident, from the application of the prediction by St. Jude, that Enoch pointed at events, of which the Deluge and its accompaniments were but feeble types. We are expressly informed that Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years; so that whatever pre-eminence in piety was denoted by "walking with God," it is evident that Enoch possessed it from early days, and retained it to the last. He is thus an instance alike of youthful conversion and uniform consistency. Neither was he content, whilst having his conversation in heaven, to allow the wickedness of others to pass unrebuked. Here it is that his prophetic character comes in, and when you couple his preaching with his own translation, you may perceive that, by and through him, was information given to an antediluvian world on points which many have supposed left in impenetrable obscurity. These points are those of a future life, and a retributive economy, which shall

decide men's portions in another state of being. Thus was Enoch to the antediluvian world what Elijah was to those who lived beneath the law—a mighty demonstration of another state of being. Who had a right to question that the soul perished not with the body—nay, that even the body was not to lie for ever in the dust, when a patriarch had departed from the world, yielding not to death, and asking not a sepulchre? Already must Christ have virtually accomplished the prophecy, though it had not yet been delivered—"Oh! death, I will be thy plague; oh, grave, I will be thy destruction." Already must He have "opened the kingdom of heaven to believers," though He had not yet suffered their penalty, nor paid the price of their admission. It seems as though the whole scheme of redemption had been disclosed to mankind; yea, presented as already accomplished in what befel Enoch. The original curse was on body and soul; but when body and soul went up to glory there was given the most convincing demonstration that the curse would be counteracted, or, rather, that it was already removed. And now, if I would know how the gospel was preached to man, in its fulness, before the Flood, and would assure myself that those who perished in the Deluge, perished not without sufficient notice of redemption, and sufficient motive to the practice of piety, I turn my gaze on the ascending patriarch, and I feel that, as he stood upon the cloud and mounted heavenward, he proclaimed to the whole human family the reward of obedience in the restoration to immortality. And I need nothing further to convince me that, in the earliest days, as well as in later, men were instructed to expect eternal life through conformity to the known will of God. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

The judgment:—1. Christ's second coming is to judgment. When we frustrate the end of His coming as a Redeemer, we make way for the end of His coming as a Judge. 2. When Christ cometh to judgment, one great part of His work will be to convince sinners, and that openly, publicly. 3. Again observe, when Christ hath convinced, He will condemn, and when He hath condemned, He will execute. 4. From that "of all their ungodly deeds," &c., observe that the process of the last day chiefly lieth against the ungodly. Ungodliness doth chiefly provoke; for the chiefest part of the law provideth for our duty to God. The dignity of every command is known by the order of it. Now, in the first place, godliness is required, and then righteousness, or a care of moral duties. 5. Once more observe, these ungodly men are the rather judged because they commit sin with an ungodly mind; for so it is in the text, "ungodly deeds ungodly committed." A child of God may fall into wickedness, but he doth not commit it wickedly, with a full consent; men are not condemned for infirmities, but iniquities. A godly man doth not so much act sin as he suffereth by it. He doth not pour out his whole heart this way; there are constant dislikes in the soul, which are a restraint to him. 6. From the next clause, "and their hard speeches," observe, not only the deeds of ungodly men, but their speeches are brought into judgment. Words do not perish with the breath with which they are uttered; no, they remain upon record, and we are to give an account of them at the last day (*Matt. xii. 36; Jas. ii. 12*). 7. Once more from thence observe, that of all speeches men's "hard speeches" shall be produced at the day of judgment. Now, what are these hard speeches? I answer—Either such as have anger in them (*Prov. iv. 24*); or such as have pride in them, or contempt of others, as when we lessen their abilities, insult over their miseries (*Psa. lxxix. 26*); or triumph over their failings. Again, such as have bitterness and malice in them, as calumnies and reproaches (*Psa. lxxiv. 3, 4*). 8. The next note is, that of all hard speeches those are the worst which do most directly reflect upon the honour and glory of Christ; for so it is in the text, "hard speeches spoken against Him." Now, hard speeches against Christ are either blasphemies against either of His natures, or murmurings against His providence: "Your words have been stout against Me" (*Mal. iii. 13*). When we tax Providence, as if the Lord were blind, careless, unjust, or injurious in His dealings. So also when we speak against His ways, calling zeal fury, strictness a foolish preciseness, and godliness puritanism. O Christians! these hard speeches will cost dear, here or hereafter. (*T. Manton.*)

Ver. 16. These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts.—Church disturbers:—1. Insinulators. The whisper, the shrug of the shoulder, the half sentence containing a surmise of the other half, and the warning of some awful revelation to come respecting the servant of God and his character, mark these men in every age. They succeed to create distrust of the ministry, and dry up the fountain of Christian sympathy and prayer. 2. Fault-finders. Nothing is done to

plense them. They are on the alert to find out mistakes. They turn even the love feast into a scene of embitterment. 3. Libertines. The root of their character is a love of sin—some form of gross immorality. They hate the truth because it exposes their villainy and shame. 4. Pretenders. They are full of ostentation, fond of tall talk. To the ignorant, loud swelling words sound grandly, but to the wise, “the crackling of thorns under a pot.” 5. Dissemblers. They put on a smiling face, and speak smooth words to persons of rank, to secure their approbation and gain their support. They subject principles to appearances. Let the mantle of Jude fall on our ministers. (*T. Davies, M.A.*)

Vers. 17-19. Remember ye the words . . . spoken before of the apostles.—*Words to be remembered* :—1. Great should be the care of the ministers of Christ to warn the Church of approaching evils, especially of seducers. 2. It is our duty to acknowledge and commend the gifts and graces of God bestowed upon others with respect. 3. The consent between the penmen of Scripture is sweet and harmonious; they were all breathed upon by the same Spirit, and breathed forth the same truth and holiness. 4. Scripture is the best preservative against seduction. 5. They who are forewarned should be forearmed. (*W. Jenkyn, M.A.*) **Mockers in the last time.**—*Mockers* :—1. What is told to the Church in general, we must apprehend it as told to us. Paul telleth Timothy, and Peter telleth the distressed strangers, and Jude saith they told you. The Bible is a message sent from heaven to acquaint us with the mind of God; if we own the Divine authority of it, why do we regard it no more? 2. We should not be troubled at what is foretold; monsters expected are not wondered at; expectation forearmeth the mind against evil (John xvi. 4). We are the better prepared to entertain evils when we expect them before they come, and the evil to which the mind is accustomed seemeth the less. Again, we have an experience of God's truth in the prediction. Finally, it assureth us that the Lord hath a hand and a counsel in all our troubles, for He told us of them before. 3. The Scriptures speak much of the evil of the latter times; there is more knowledge and yet more sin and error. The latter days are as the bottom and sink that receive the dregs of foregoing ages, and as the world groweth old it is much given to dreams and dotage. 4. Among other sins that are found in the latter times, there will be many scoffers, partly because in times of controversy men will lose all awe—when truths are made questionable assent is weakened; partly because in times of liberty men will give vent to their thoughts. 5. Mockers and scoffers are usually the worst of sinners. Scorning cometh from custom in sinning, and maketh way for freedom in sinning. 6. Those that cast off the awe of the Lord's coming will certainly give up themselves to brutish lusts. 7. It argueth a state of wickedness to walk after our own lusts; that is, when sin and lust is our constant practice. (*T. Manton.*) *Mockers* :—By scoffing at things sacred, and ridiculing the notion that there is any harm in licentiousness, or anything estimable in holiness, they created a moral atmosphere in which men sinned with a light heart, because sin was made to look as if it were a matter of no moment, a thing to be indulged in without anxiety or remorse. It would be more reasonable and less reprehensible to make a mock at carnage or pestilence, and teach men to go with a light heart into a desolating war or plague-stricken neighbourhood. In such cases experience of the manifest horrors would soon cure the light-heartedness. But the horrible nature of sin is not so manifest, and with regard to that, experience teaches its lesson more slowly. It is like a poisoning of the blood rather than a wound in the flesh, and may have done incalculable mischief before any serious pain is felt, or any grave alarm excited. Hence it is quite easy for many to “walk after their own ungodly lusts” and at the same time “mock at sin” and its consequences. (*A. Plummer, D.D.*)

Ver. 19. These be they who separate themselves.—*Separatists* :—They “separate themselves” from sound faith by following corrupted speculations. They “separate themselves” from good works, inasmuch as they quit that faith which is the only genuine source of these works, and go astray after the miserable delusions of licentious indulgences. And in thus abandoning equally the right belief and the right conduct, they virtually “separate themselves” from the true Church. However they may still wear the name of Christian, they have no communion with Christ. In a word, they are “separatists” owing to their being “sensualists.” They love the indulgence of evil passions; and hence they hate the sacred influence that would restrain them. They are attached by habits or carelessness, of folly, or of sordid pursuits, to a life of irreligion; and hence they remain at a distance from

the holy power that would cut down all such ties, and introduce them to the habits of a new course. The faith of the gospel is too pure for them to adopt; and therefore if they assume the profession of its name, they must hold its principles under some corrupted form. The practice of the gospel is too pure for them to follow; and therefore if they still pretend to a compliance with its requirements, they comply under many abatements; and in fact do it under those mitigations to the strictness of duty, which actually amount to a dereliction of the Christian life. They "separate themselves" from the faith; because in practice they are "sensual." The root of all the evil, however, is their "not having the Spirit." (*W. Muir, D.D.*)

Separation from the Church.—1. Separation or dividing ourselves from the fellowship of God's Church is sinful, or a work of the flesh. The apostle describeth carnal persons, and of them he saith, "They separate themselves," and accordingly the apostle reckoneth "seditions, heresies," or sect-makings in the Church, among the works of the flesh (Gal. v. 20). Cain was the first separatist we read of. "He went out from the presence of the Lord" (Gen. iv. 19). God is everywhere: how from His presence? The meaning is, from the Church, where is the presence of His grace.

2. It is little for the honour of Christ that His body is crumbled into small bits and portions. A draft of wine is best preserved in the hogshead, and Christians in their societies; coals lying together keep in the hent; apostasy began in forsaking the assemblies (Heb. x. 23-25; 1 John ii. 19). Partly as to our outward peace and welfare: separation sets others against us, and us against them. Religion, being the highest bond, when it is once violated, the breach is the more irreconcilable. (*T. Manton.*)

Having not the Spirit.—*Sensual men*.—These two are contrary, "flesh and Spirit" (Gal. v. 17), and they that cherish the one do necessarily banish the other, and as they enlarge the one they straiten the other. The Spirit is a free spirit, and sensual persons are very slaves; the Spirit is a pure spirit, and they are unclean; the Spirit is active, and they are of a dull and stupid nature; the Spirit worketh intellectual and chaste delights, and they are altogether for base pleasures: such a perfect contrariety is there between them. 1. Sensual men have little of the enlightening of the Spirit; their palate is better than their understanding (Eph. v. 18). In marshy countries we do not expect a clear air; so sensual persons have seldom any clear thoughts of God: men given to pleasures can taste meats and drinks, but not doctrines. 2. Sensual men have little of the quickenings and efficacy of the Spirit; the more they dissolve and melt away their precious hours and spirits in pleasures, the more do they grow sapless, dead, and careless, and lose all tenderness of conscience and liveliness of affection; they quench the vigour of nature, much more do they quench the Spirit (Eph. iv. 19). 3. They have little of the comforts of the Spirit. The comforts of the Spirit arise from meditating on the works of God (Psa. civ. 34), or tasting His love (1 Pet. ii. 3), or contemplating our great hopes (2 Cor. iv. 18). Now carnal men can relish none of this; they cannot exercise love, or faith, or hope, that they may delight themselves in God, and have some lively tastes of eternal life. When the soul lieth under the dominion of carnal pleasures, it is incapable of thinking upon God and His works, or relishing inward consolation; love is preoccupied. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 20. Building up yourselves on your most holy faith.—*The Church and saints, as houses, must be edified or builded daily*.—This word "edify" signifieth "to build." This metaphor is not improperly applied to the saints, for building and edification is proper to houses. Now the Church and saints of God are as houses, and therefore may be said to be builded and edified. This teacheth us two things, first, that all Christians should be edifiers, builders; that is, should make themselves a seemly house for God to dwell in. We read what care David had to build a temple, but God would not suffer him; but now every man must build a temple for God, even his own soul. We read what cost Solomon bestowed upon the temple, but now God careth not for such temples made of stone; He will have a temple made of lively stones. All true Christians must be builders; but before they build they must know how to build, and the way to come to this knowledge is the Scripture. No carpenter will build a house without rule and square, and the rule and square of Christian building is the Word of God; by it our hearts and souls are squared, and made fit for God's house. If Solomon's workmen were one month in Libanus about the work of the temple, and two months at home about their own business, let us exceed them, let us employ two months about the Lord's building, and but one about our own business. Let us first seek the kingdom of God. And as we must edify and build houses for ourselves, so for our brethren also; so saith

the apostle. Exhort one another and edify one another, but especially we must edify our children; a father should especially build his son in religion and virtue. Secondly, this teacheth us that it is not enough to begin to build in faith and good works, but we must go on, go forward, increase in it. Our progress in religion is compared to building. Houses are edified from the foundation to the walls, from the walls to the roof. (*S. Otes.*) *Character building* :—I. EVERY MAN IS TRULY THE ARCHITECT OF HIS OWN CHARACTER. It is often said that a man is the architect of his own fortune. If a man build a fortune he has to do it with his own hands and his own brains. One thing is certain, nobody else is going to do it for him. Just so every man is the builder of his own character. Sometimes a fortune may be made suddenly, the result of an accident; but never is this true of character. II. WE MUST NOTICE THE IMPORTANT PARTS OF THIS STRUCTURE. 1. The foundation is essential. If it be ill laid no subsequent care, toil, or expense can avail. Human nature is a quicksand, in which are thrown all man's efforts, his works, his wisdom, his piety; but all of them put together cannot furnish a sure foundation for character. "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus." 2. This foundation Rock once secured, we are to be careful to build upon it—not near or about it, but upon it, and upon nothing else. Think of an architect carefully laying a foundation, and then building on one side of it. 3. The position of the superstructure is also important. This you are to build under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Every stone we lay must bear a relation to Christ and Him crucified. The centre of gravity must fall within the base. The great leaning tower of Pisa is a wonder to all who see it, because it does not fall, for it leans fifteen feet over the base. The centre of gravity is still ten feet within the base, hence it cannot fall. There are some characters that are leaning towers; they are so strange and eccentric in many things, so far out of plumb, that we wonder why they do not fall to utter destruction. Ah, here is the grand secret: the centre of the heart's gravity still falls within Christ. III. CHARACTER BUILDING IS A PROGRESSIVE WORK. In heathen mythology it is said that the goddess Minerva sprung from the head of Jupiter, at once full grown and glorious; but character, like a great edifice, is of slow growth. As the builder lays brick after brick, stone after stone, erects beam after beam, so, slowly and laboriously, this character work advances. There is not an act of our lives, however small, not a thought even, that does not add a stone to that edifice. IV. THE MATERIALS TO BE USED ARE IMPORTANT. It is not every quarry that can furnish materials for a cathedral. Character will stand longer than even stone, or gold, or silver. If a man is to build for the future he must select materials that will last. Gold, silver, precious stones—love, faith, hope, self-denial, and patience, these are the materials for a lasting character. V. WE MUST BUILD FOR ETERNITY. We must live in the house we build. Character, not circumstances, makes a man happy or miserable. If a man has a pure and holy character, do what you will you cannot make him unhappy. VI. WE BUILD FOR INSPECTION. How careful were the old cathedral builders that the most distant work should be as well done as that nearest the eye. Why? Because they were built, not for man's eye, but for the eye of God, who sees all. So in character building this should be our motto, Not for man, but for God, whose eye sees the most trifling act or thought. VII. WE MUST NOT MISTAKE THE SCAFFOLDING FOR THE BUILDING. We meet a friend and ask, How is your business, your health, your family?—this is all scaffolding. Instead, we should ask, How is your character getting on, the inner man?—then we should get at the heart of the thing. Scaffolding may be swept away by the storm, but character remains just as we form it, unchanged for ever. (*J. S. Holme, D.D.*) *The Christian life* :—I. THE CHRISTIAN GROWING IN HOLINESS. "Building up yourselves on your most holy faith." By the "faith" you are to understand the whole body of Christian doctrines. And this faith upon which we are to build the apostle describes as a "most holy faith." That which is to bear the superstructure of Christian hopes should be well proved. The faith of the gospel may well be called a "holy faith"—holy in its Author, holy in its design, holy in the precepts it inculcates, holy in the rewards it holds out. Yes, everything about this faith is holy. Holy is the law its doctrines are designed to vindicate. Holy is the offering provided by the righteous demands of God. Holy is the conversation required of those who should embrace its promises. Holy is the Agent who is ordained to make us meet for the presence of God. Such, then, is the faith upon which we are to build. The text further intimates that there must be a "building up"—that is, a progressive advancement—until it becomes a perfect building of God. II. THE CHRISTIAN PRAYING IN THE STRENGTH OF GOD. "Praying

in the Holy Ghost." III. THE CHRISTIAN WATCHING AGAINST THE ENEMIES OF HIS FAITH. "Keep yourselves in the love of God." IV. THE CHRISTIAN WAITING FOR HIS HOPE. "Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." (D. Moore, M.A.) *Building up*:—I. CHRISTIAN EDIFICATION. "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith." 1. A sure foundation. The gospel which they had received from faithful witnesses contains the fundamental truths for soul building. 2. A wise diligence. To build up a Christian character is man's noblest ideal. II. SPIRITUAL AID. "Praying in the Holy Spirit." 1. The Spirit reveals our wants. 2. The Spirit inspires us with faith. 3. The Spirit blends the labour and the blessing. The building is advanced by the twofold energy of God and man. 4. The Spirit also will bring in the final issue. (T. Davies, M.A.) *The spiritual building*:—I. BEFORE BUILDING. 1. Count the cost (Luke xiv. 28). 2. Prepare fit matter (2 Chron. ii. 8, 9; 1 Cor. iii. 12). 3. Prepare skilful and faithful builders. Some build a wall, but daub it with untempered mortar, which the shower and hail-stones throw down again (Ezek. xiii. 11). Some flattering builders there be that gild rotten posts and mud walls, and by flatteries cause people to err (Jer. xxiii.). Some that square their work by a false rule; not the Word, but some profounder school-learning. II. IN BUILDING. 1. Lay a good foundation, both for matter and manner. (1) The matter is Jesus Christ (1 Cor. iii. 11). (2) Then the manner of laying this foundation sure is to dig deep, as you know the foundation of a great house had need to be. Lay it in humility and godly sorrow, called in Heb. vi. 1 the foundation of repentance, because it can never be laid without a deep sense of sorrow for sin, giving us a clear sight what need we have of Christ. 2. The foundation thus laid. Lay all the materials skilfully upon the same foundation; for building is an artificial coupling of all materials by square upon the same foundation. So here—(1) There is use of many materials. In every mean house there must be somewhat of everything, some stone, timber, lime, lead, glass, iron, and in this building must be some degrees of all graces—some faith, hope, love, knowledge, and the rest. Faith as gates of brass, and door to let us in unto Christ and His Church for salvation; knowledge as windows to lighten the house, or else all would be dark; hope as the glass or casements to look out unto things believed, specially the life to come; love as the cement to knit all together; patience as the pillars, bearing all the weight of the house, &c. (2) These and the rest of the graces must be laid together (2 Pet. i. 5). (3) By line and square of the Word (Exod. xxv. 40). (4) All upon the same foundation—Christ. 3. Build up to the laying of the roof and ridge tiles, still striving to perfection (Heb. vi. 1; Eph. ii. 21). III. AFTER BUILDING. 1. As the Jews, having built an house, must dedicate it to the Lord, so do thou thine. Especially the temple and tabernacle were solemnly set apart for His service and sacrifices. Do thou also offer in this thy house the daily sacrifice of prayer, praise, alms which smell sweet (Phil. iv. 18). Let it be the house of prayer, a spiritual house, to offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ (1 Pet. ii. 5). Yea, offer thy soul and body a reasonable sacrifice, living and holy (Rom. xii. 1), which is the right dedication of thy house. 2. Furnish thy house with needful utensils. (T. Taylor, D.D.) *The principles and prospects of a servant of Christ*:—I. THE PRINCIPLES WHICH ARE HERE SUGGESTED TO US AS CONSTITUTING TRUE RELIGION. 1. True religion is here represented as a building, the foundation of which is laid in the faith of Christ. "Building up yourselves on your most holy faith." Whether it relate to personal or to social religion, this must be the foundation of the fabric, or the whole will fall. (1) One lays the foundation of his religion in what he calls reason; but which in fact is his own reasoning. The same inspired writer who in one sentence commends "understanding," in the next warns us against "leaning to our own understanding" (Prov. iii. 4, 5). To strengthen ourselves and one another in this way is to build up ourselves on our own conceits. (2) Another founds his religion on his good deeds. Good deeds undoubtedly form a part of the building, but the foundation is not the place for them. They are not the cause but the effects of faith. (3) A third builds his religion on impressions. It is not from the death of Christ for sinners, or any other gospel truth, that he derives his comfort; but from an impulse on his mind that his sins are forgiven, and that he is a favourite of God, which is certainly nowhere revealed in the Scriptures. We may build ourselves up in this way, but the building will fall. (4) A fourth founds his religion on faith, but it is not a "holy faith," either in respect of its nature or its effects. It is dead, being alone, or without fruit. The faith on which the first Christians built up themselves included repentance for sin. 2. That religion which has its foundation in the faith of Christ will increase by "praying in the Holy Ghost." We must not

live in the neglect of prayer. 3. We are given to understand that by means of building on our most holy faith, and praying in the Holy Ghost, we "keep ourselves in the love of God." The love of God is here to be understood, not of His love to us, but of ours to Him. 4. We are taught, that when we have done all, in looking for eternal life, we must keep our eye singly and solely on "the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ." II. THE PROSPECTS WHICH THESE PRINCIPLES FURNISH AS TO A BLESSED HEREAFTER. "Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

1. The first exercise of mercy which the Scriptures direct us to look for on our leaving the body is, an immediate reception into the presence of Christ, and the society of the spirits of just men made perfect. 2. I do not know whether I ought not to reckon under this particular the glorious progress of Christ's kingdom in this world. Why should we suspect whether our brethren who rest from their labours be from hence interested in this object? If there be joy in heaven among the angels over one sinner that repenteth, why not among the glorified saints. 3. Another stream of mercy for which we are directed to look, will attend the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and consist in the dead being raised and the living changed. By looking for this part of the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be reconciled to death even before we meet it. 4. But there is another stream of mercy beyond this, to which we are directed to look, and which pertains to the last judgment. (*A. Fuller.*) *Well-built Christians*.—I. THE FIRST THING IS TO SECURE A SOLID FOUNDATION. That foundation is not to be created; it is already provided—Christ Jesus. All else than this is crumbling clay or shifting sand. Shallow conversions make shallow Christians. I trust that you have dug deep, and laid your foundations well. The Eddystone lighthouse is not only built on a rock, it is built with iron bolts and clamps into the rock. So you must be built into Christ by a living union of your weakness to His strength, your ignorance to His omniscience, your poverty to His wealth of grace, your sinfulness to His perfect righteousness. The best part of a true Christian is the unseen part, as the vital part of a tree is its root. So the innermost graces that lie, as it were, in the very depths of a Christian soul next to Christ are the most precious and powerful and enduring portion of the man. II. BUT A BUILDING IS NOT DONE WHEN THE FOUNDATION IS LAID. Regeneration by the Holy Spirit is only the initial process, and then comes the command to build up yourselves on our most holy faith. God's quarry is rich in materials. It would be a good thing for our Churches if solid granite were in greater demand. Flashing marble is very ornamental for lintels and capitals. But in these times we need more firm granite of honesty, courage, truthfulness, and self-denial. Every now and then a Church is disfigured by an ugly crack or rent in its walls from the fact that a bit of friable pumice-stone was put in there in the shape of a swindling or frivolous professor. What is true of a Church as God's building is equally true of individual character; nothing should go into a Christian's character except what is taken from God's quarry. III. SOME CHRISTIANS ARE NOT BUILT UP SYMMETRICALLY. They are lopsided, and their painful deficiency is on the ethical side of their religion. They can sing in a prayer-meeting, and pray devoutly, and exhort fluently; but outside of the meeting they cannot always be trusted. What they lack is a rigid sense of right and a constant adherence to it. They need more conscience, a conscience to detect sin, and a granite-like principle to resist its seductions. The word of these Christians is not always to be relied on; in matters of business they do not always go by the air-line. Every wise builder makes constant use of his plumb-line. All the showy ornamentation that he can put on his edifice amounts to nothing if the walls are not perpendicular. Sometimes we see a flimsy structure whose bulging walls are shored up by props and skids to keep them from tumbling into the street. I am afraid that there are thousands of reputations in commerce, in politics, and even in the Church, that are shored up by various devices. It is a mere question of time how soon every character will fall in if it is not based on the rock and built according to Jesus Christ's plumb-line. It may go down in this world: it is sure to go down in the next. We ought to lay the plumb-line up against all our religious acts and services, even against our prayers. If failing to use the Divine plumb-line in character building is a great mistake, it is another mistake that the little everyday actions are made of small account. You could hardly make a worse blunder. Christian influence mainly depends on what you may regard as little things. It is the aggregate of a good man's or good woman's life that tells for the honour of our Lord and Saviour. It is by adding the brick of courage to the brick of faith, and to this the brick of temperance and the brick of patience, and the brick of brotherly love and the brick of honesty and of benevolence, that a noble

Christian character is reared. Nothing is of small account that involves your influence in a sharp-eyed world. Other people's eyes are upon you as well as your Master's eyes. The Athenian architects of the Parthenon finished the upper side of the matchless frieze as perfectly as the lower side, because the goddess Minerva saw that side. Every one of the five thousand statues in the cathedral of Milan is wrought as if God's eye were on the sculptor. Michael Angelo said that he "carved for eternity." Every true Christian is a habitation of God through His Spirit. Young friends, build for eternity. And let every one take heed how he buildeth; for the Architect-in-Chief will inspect each one's work on the great day of judgment. (T. L. Cuyler, D.D.)

The building up of Christian manhood.—I. FIRST OF ALL THE FAITH. "Building up yourselves on your most holy faith." I might say broadly, no splendid man was ever built up, no fine character was ever formed, but by a positive belief—a faith. And definite belief is the thing from which Christian manhood starts. Now, to build upon the "faith"—1. We must first have a clear notion of what the "faith" is. (1) That is, to begin with, we must distinguish between the faith and accretions to the faith; between the tree and the parasites that have entwined themselves about the tree; between the rock and the sand which has accumulated upon the rock. We may persuade ourselves that we are jealous of the honour of the faith, that we are its champions, whilst we are the champions of the very things that obscure, mar, limit, cripple it. A very few years ago one of the noblest cathedrals in England used to be habitually spoken of with contempt. Its nave columns were huge masses of commonplace material overlaid with plaster. But some one, one day, had the wisdom to dig into this plaster, and lo! beneath were noble columns of exquisite marble. Nobody said, that I know of, that it would be desecration to destroy this venerable plaster, and very soon it had vanished; and now you have the original columns, an honour to the genius that designed them. That is all that is going on in these days. Destruction, do you say? Nay, it is restoration, not destruction; it is the bringing back of the temple of Divine truth to its original design and proportions, the bringing out again of the lines of its pristine beauty. (2) Then, secondly, we must grip the faith, understand the faith, present it clearly and vividly to ourselves. To understand a thing does not necessarily mean to remove all mystery from it. You cannot build upon mist, you cannot grow strong on mere sentiment, you cannot foster Christian manhood upon vague emotionalism. If your faith is to have anything to do with the making of you, the first thing is to state it clearly and distinctly to yourself. 2. Again: To build upon the faith, we must be continually carrying it further. The circle of Christian truth is a wide one; the applications of every Christian fact are endless, the sweep of every Christian doctrine is infinite. And we must be carrying every Christian truth continually further; we must search all the ramifications of it. This implies first, that we must never cease from fresh, ever renewed, and expectant study of it. I have heard people speak of mountain scenery. I have asked them, "Do you know Snowdon?" "Oh yes!" "And, pray, how often have you ascended Snowdon? Or"—for there is something more important than merely to ascend to the summit; it is quite as necessary to live at the foot—"how long have you lived within sight of it?" "Oh, I saw the mountain once; spent a day in the neighbourhood once. I ascended it, too. Oh yes, I know Snowdon!" "Ascended it once, saw one aspect of it, and you know it! Why, you must live there to know it. You must watch the mountain in a hundred moods. You must see it when spring creeps up its sides, and when winter has set its throne of snow upon its summit; you must see it sleeping in a trance of summer heat, and hear the shouts of its children when the floods are out. Then you may say that you know it." So of the faith. We cannot sum up its doctrines, settle them, and have done with them. We must pitch our life before them. We must live out every experience in their presence. 3. The power to be passive is as requisite as the power to be active. There are subtle beauties, finer shades of meaning, in every gospel truth; you cannot force these, but they will disclose themselves, if you can wait and give them time. There is a story in every great picture which you cannot master in a hurry; you must lend yourself to it, give yourself up to it in active passiveness. And so there are glories here which you must sit down to see; quieter tones in the voice of Jesus which you will never hear until you cease from your hurry and distraction, until sometimes you give up even your work, your most Christian work. II. THE SPIRITUAL ATMOSPHERE IN WHICH YOU LIVE. That, in the next place, determines your progress in Christian manhood. "Praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God." 1. "Keep yourselves in the love of God." There are

many aspects in which the love of God is looked at in these Scriptures; and I think this is as remarkable as one of them—that to be “in the love of God,” to live in the constant sense of it, is one of the indispensable conditions of spiritual growth that Christian manhood is impossible without. The world is full of analogies of it. To begin with, we make nothing of the truths of the gospel; they never become more than opinions; they are never vitalised, unless you live in the love of God, and breathe it as the atmosphere of your life. You delight in your garden. Cultivate the taste. You go and look at your plants. You see that they have everything they need. They are set in the right soil, they have the due amount of moisture, they have sufficient heat. But you forget them; you let the fire go out, and you go in a week and find your favourites all dead. Or you remove them into a cellar. You give them everything, even heat, but you shut out the light from them, and you go and visit them by and by, and find that you have a collection of ghosts—pale, colourless caricatures of plants. Nay, if you want them to grow, and you would delight in their beauty, you must give them warmth and sunlight. And so of this. You can make very little of the Bible unless you keep yourselves in the warmth and light of God’s love. You take every rule of conduct in the Book, and you try to live them out one by one; you shut your lips and determine, exert all your force of will, keep yourself tied to the grim angel of duty; but you can make nothing of them. They simply stupefy you, and, dull and discouraged, you shrink into yourself. Love is a necessity to me. I have no courage to try to live without it. To preach law, to set clearly before myself the lines of duty, is not enough for me. I pine for love. I become a guest at a house, and there is a card hung up on your bedroom wall which practically says, “Life is ticketed off into a distinct number of rules in this house; we live by the clock here; meals are served with the regularity of the tides; the sun rises according to signals which it receives from this house”; and from that moment I am miserable. Omnipotent law, stern law, grim-faced, sublime law! But I am sick and tired of hearing of thee. Majestic, beautiful, terrible; if I were strong and heroic, and never made a mistake, the gospel concerning thee might be pleasant to hear. But I want something more to be preached to me to live, to be strong and courageous thereby; I want warmth, I want sunshine, I want the sense that God’s benediction is upon me, I want love. Everything then, the sternest command, the hardest duty, becomes food to your soul, and you grow and become robust thereby. The health of God, the deep peace of God, sinks into your soul, and there is nothing in life that can beat you. 2. “Praying in the Holy Ghost.” Prayer keeps the sense of God and heaven alive in the soul; it keeps up the bond of connection between earth and heaven. I go into a man’s house—this is not altogether fiction—and he begins to moan over the wretched climate of this land. The sun never appears. Dark and dull and depressing; there is no light by which a man may do his work. I look around me, and lo, every window is dust-covered, no sunlight can pierce it, and I say, “My dear sir, excuse me, but suppose you begin there; clean these windows to start with. The sun does shine sometimes, even in England; be ready when it shines to receive its glorious wealth of light.” And so here. I am ready to contend a great deal for prayer; I am ready to contend for some things which prayer effects that once I was not very sure about. But in any case, this I am sure of—it keeps the windows of the soul clean, it facilitates the entrance of God into the soul, it puts the soul in touch with all spiritual realities. If there be a God, He must reveal Himself to the soul that prays; if there be an eternal world, pray, and you must pray yourself into the midst of it. Come here. Stand amid the wealth of this glorious revelation. Would you understand it? Would you have the light of it fill your soul? Would you miss nothing of it? Would you have it irradiate your work and change the fashion of your countenance? Then “pray without ceasing.” III. OUR GROWTH DEPENDS UPON THE SOUL’S OUTLOOKS, THE INSPIRATIONS THAT LIE FOR US IN THE FUTURE. “Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” There is a famous essay which I am never tired of reading—Emerson’s “Prospects”—the outlooks of life. I went the other day to see a member of my congregation who is a great sufferer—a woman who is half her life—three-fourths of her life—a prisoner. I condoled with her, sympathised with her. “Come up into my little room,” she said. “There, sit in that window. When the torture begins, when I am worried and weary, when the fog gets into my brain and the fever into my bones, and I begin to burn and welter in my misery, I run away here. This outlook across the fields soothes me, heals me, and I am myself again.” I understand. I like to do my work with a window through which I can now and then look out before me. Then, I like to see the man

who insists upon having mental outlooks. No man's life need be utterly material. Work, but always work with outlooks towards the world of thought, with windows towards the world of genius, make the work shine with the light that comes from the loftiest range of human vision. So in a higher sense still. Life is often hard; the years become more and more exacting; but it is not a prison. The sorrows are many, the strain is sometimes terrible; but oh, the prospects! the window of life which Christ keeps open towards heaven! I rest there. There is not a vista that looks in that direction, but I am often there. Rest you also there this morning, and let some of the aches be smoothed out of you as you rest. Listen to the murmur of the river as it wanders through fields whose green never withers, and as you listen, the beauty, the calm, the deep peace, shall pass into your face. But now to close.

1. This prospect is ours of God's free mercy disclosed to us in Jesus Christ. We believe in the Divine mercy. 2. This is the last word: as the years move on, thought, anxiety, endeavour—everything gathers there—to make sure of that. Oh, we have had our dreams. We have been full of ambitions, we have swept all earthly prizes into our lot; but they have become infinitesimally small. I care for nothing but this—shall I attain unto the “eternal life”? I have been on sea. I have made more than one voyage. We had some weeks before us, and we were full of plans when we started. I even proposed new subjects of study to myself which were to be pursued during the voyage. But one day the cry went out, “We are getting near land.” Instantly there was a great bustle of preparation. The expedients devised to while away the voyage; books with which we had been busy, half finished—everything was put away. We thought of nothing but to be ready to land. Dreams of wealth, of fame—oh yes, we have had them. But they are nothing to-day; I dismiss them all. I am looking out wistfully for the shore; I want to be ready when the cry comes. Breezes from the land, laden with the fragrance of the sweet fields, are in my face. I strain my eyes. It is nigh at hand. Let me be. Perish everything, so that an “abundant entrance” be given me “into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” (*J. Morlais Jones*). *How is the doctrine of religion most holy?*—First, in itself, being without fault and error and having sundry excellences, being full of Divine wisdom and truth, and the only instrument whereby God's infinite wisdom and goodness is made known unto us. Secondly, in regard of the effect and operation, which is to make the creature, but especially man holy (*John xvii. 17*). It sanctifieth men instrumentally, in that it maketh them resemble God in many graces. Thirdly, it is most holy, because it sanctifieth all inferior creatures to the use of man, so as he may use them with good conscience (*1 Tim. iv. 4*). (*W. Perkins*). *The Church a house*:—1. The faithful are the house of God (*Heb. iii. 6*; *1 Tim. iii. 15*; *1 Pet. iv. 17*). (1) Christ is the foundation. The sole foundation (*1 Cor. iii. 11*). A strong foundation (*Matt. vii. 25*). (2) The Church is a house in respect of believers, who are the stones of which this house is built up; and these stones are naturally—(a) Rugged and unpolished, till they are hewn, smoothed, and made fit for the building (*Hos. vi. 5*). (b) Of several sizes—some greater, some less. (c) Though different in size, yet cemented and united one to another. (3) The Church is a house in respect of God. He dwells in it. He furnishes it with all necessities, yea, ornaments—His ordinances, graces, &c. He protects it. He repairs it. He cleanses it. 2. The Word of God is the foundation of a Christian. It is a foundation to bear a saint out in all his duties, comforts, belief of truths. (*W. Jenkyn, M.A.*) *The Holy Trinity*:—I. Let us consider this mystery as A RECEIVED TRUTH OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE. “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith.” Now the sum of that faith, we are told, is this, “that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in unity.” And the Catholic Church has always been very jealous of this fundamental dogma. She has never hidden it; never shrunk from the definite statement of it. With regard to the mysteriousness of the doctrine, the point is conceded. The question is, whether by a looser theology—by a charitable vagueness of expression, or by a scheme of definitions which should define nothing—we should ever be able to get rid of this mystery? A man must be an angel to understand even an angel's powers; and he must be himself infinite who could comprehend an infinite existence. II. Let us consider this great mystery as it throws light upon THE NATURE AND MORAL GOVERNMENT OF GOD. 1. This it does in that it exhibits God as sustaining towards us the most beneficent personal relations; thus removing the cloud which had been spread before the throne, and presenting the Godhead under a form which, as Burke well expresses it, “softens and humanises the whole idea of Divinity.” 2. But in relation to the clearing up of mystery in the Divine procedure, we claim it

as a further advantage of the doctrine we are considering, that it is specially revealed in conjunction with a scheme for the pardon and recovery of mankind. (*D. Moore, M.A.*) **Praying in the Holy Ghost.**—*The inspirer of prayer*:—Jude, a brother of our Lord, speaks of the prayer which transcends the normal religious capacity of human nature as one of the conditions through the observance of which the believer must keep himself in the love of God and in the steadfast expectancy of consummated redemption. The attachment of friend to friend is apt to be weakened, if not destroyed, where communication ceases. When some member of a family is away in a foreign land, the only antidote to the chilling effect of distance is correspondence, and correspondence which is free, vivacious, unconstrained. If the correspondence become stilted and formal only, it is about as hurtful to affection as complete silence. The heart must send its pulsations through every available channel of intercourse if love is to be kept alive. And that is true in the sphere of the religious life. No man can keep himself in the love of God without using all the lines of communication God has opened to him, and the prayer with which we keep ourselves in correspondence with God must be permeated by supernatural help and vitality. The Spirit of God helps prayer long before this ideal of praying in the Holy Ghost is completely realised in the daily experience. In the imperfect prayer which He does not as yet pervade with this supreme ascendancy, He is present, in some degree at least. The man who prays before he is the subject of a new life is unconscious of the Divine presence which stirs up his prayers and prompts his faint desires after better things. When a believer has learnt to pray in the Holy Ghost, he is awake to the nearness and active operation of a mystic Being who incites and energises his prayers and makes him inherently well-pleasing to God. In him who prays according to this evangelical standard, the Spirit stimulates the sense of need. Many are comparatively prayerless in their habits, because there is no sharp sense of need at the core of the life. The age itself is so interesting, and fortune pampers men with so many worldly benefits and luxuries, that they have scarcely any aspirations which need to be fulfilled in supernatural spheres. Their souls have not been harrowed with grief or made to ache with want; and if they pray at all, it is in imitation of prevailing customs only, or as a tribute to the semi-sacred memories of childhood. Where men pray without personal convictions and in imitation of current usage, desires will press to the forefront of their prayers which ought not to be there, or there in very subordinate positions only. "Ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." When their frivolous and shallow wishes seem to be gratified, such men cease to pray, and when crossed and baffled they drift into moods of mingled mortification and scepticism, and either tacitly assume or openly proclaim the uselessness of prayer. Our natural desires can no more mature into true prayer than the bits of coloured gauze in the milliner's shop, representing orange, peach, and cherry blossom, can set into fruit. Till the Spirit comes to us, we are shut up in the senses, and can no more feel the throb of the great currents which course through the spiritual world, than the creatures in the glass cases of an aquarium can feel the enthusiasms which ebb and flow in the veins of a great nation. There can be no right and enduring sense of need unless through the constant inspirations of the Spirit. But the unspiritual are not only shut up in the senses and the things of the senses, they have no keen realisation of the deepest needs of the world. They assume that a broad law of betterment is at work in human history, and if there is any exception to the law, every man is to blame for the drawbacks which stint and embitter his own life. The bitter cry of the outcast multitude finds no echo in their hearts. Human nature without the Holy Spirit of God is too narrow and self-occupied to find a place for the spiritual wants and woes of others in its supplications. Prayer languishes everywhere through this lack of desire, not only for ourselves, but for others likewise. Like the ship described by the "Ancient Mariner," it is becalmed in a sea of breathless stagnation, slime, and death. Prayer cannot move without desire. Things will be far otherwise when the Spirit comes to us, and not only prompts our prayers, but so encircles us with His presence and power, that the world, its maxims, chilling influences, and sordid traditions of conduct, can scarcely get near us or affect us in any way. If we live in the atmosphere created by the inspirations of the Spirit, self-knowledge will grow, and a more adequate interpretation of our own needs will arise within us, and our affections will be so fed from the fountains of the Divine unselfishness that we shall be acutely sensitive to the needs of the world, and shall pray agreeably to the counsels of Him whose name is Love. He whose soul is permeated by the presence and teaching of the Spirit will be kept from asking those things which are at variance

with the counsels of the Most High. Strange and sacred restraints are cast about the believer whom He actuates, and no petty, foolish, self-seeking prayers will be likely to pass the lips. Where the influences of the Spirit are wanting, every kind of mistake is possible. Things frivolous and even hurtful are insatiably desired, and the prayers presented bear the stamp of unregeneracy. Wherever the Spirit is honoured and discerned, He will prompt us to ask for what is supremely important, and will make us submissive to all the will of God. The nature possessed by those right and acceptable desires which are instilled into it by the Spirit will instinctively exclude what is false, foolish, and wrong from its prayers. Indeed, there will be no room for such things to unfold themselves. The Holy Ghost brings its subjects into active and happy sympathy with the Divine plans, and makes that sympathy to dominate every temper and act of devotion. By such prayer we shall keep ourselves in the love of God, for if we never find the heavens as brass, our faith in God's tenderness and fidelity cannot deteriorate. All such prayer will strengthen the tie uniting us to God. In the prayer offered under those influences which the Holy Ghost creates to compass and ensow the us in our access to God, there will be an answering sense of the efficacy of Christ's work. It is His special mission to glorify Christ, and He never forgets the absorbing end for which He was sent. He can perhaps fulfil this mission more impressively through those prayers of the saints which He helps and animates than by those accompaniments of conscience-arresting power vouchsafed in connection with the preaching of the gospel to the world. Just as great winds once carried to rocky islands and barren peninsulas the seeds out of which arose at last tossing forests of beauty and far-ranging zones of sweetness and fragrance, so the great Spirit brings into the poor, barren prayers of those who are touched by His breath a seed of new things, and diffuses there the beauty and the fragrance of Christ's efficacious redemptive act. Christ by taking away sin took away the incompetence of human prayer, and the Spirit makes us steadfastly conscious of the fact. No being purified by trust in that sacrifice can pray out of proportion to the rights it has secured. We are brought into participation with a priesthood that cannot be denied. This secret, undefinable persuasion of the unknown power inherent in Christ's sacrifice and mediation is a mark of those who pray in the Holy Ghost. The prayer upwining itself through that special atmosphere with which the Holy Ghost enwraps the obedient soul is characterised by a sense of filial confidence. The grace of assurance it is His joy to bring makes the widest possible difference in the tone and quality of the devotional life. The Spirit cannot come from the God of love to a contrite soul without bringing tokens, pledges, intimations of God's forgiving love. He gives us access into an unshadowed grace in which we may stand to the very end; and if we retain this unfailing witness, we shall always be on speaking terms with God. Never let us think of it as a superfluous luxury of the religious life rather than an essential privilege. It is given to open for us constant and intimate access to God, and is vital to the prevalence of our prayers. Where the Spirit of assurance is lacking, prayer is a voice in the outer court of the Gentiles, rather than the freedom of speech accorded to Abraham and Moses. But when the Spirit helps prayer, it is a cry in the circle lit up with the benignity of fatherhood. Prayer, falling short of this standard, is only a little above the level of pious mechanism, and cannot nourish the high affections of the soul towards God. Prayer in the Holy Ghost involves the mystic interchange and fellowship of love. Where prayer is presented under these supernatural conditions, there will be a true apprehension of the vast resourcefulness of God. The Pentecostal atmosphere is full of the Spirit's interpretation of the wisdom, power, generosity, intimate nearness of the Father; and prayer necessarily acquires a distinctive tone from that atmosphere out of which it arises. The fact that the Holy Spirit is more sensitive to our needs than we who are the subjects of them should satisfy us that He has also measured the help laid up for us in the deep counsels of God. As we pray, He shows God to us in all His amazing plenitudes, and makes His strength authoritatively ours. The man who prays without these inspirations is like one who, wrapped about with the ignorance of the stone age, stands upon the shore and yearns for some distant world of which he has dreamed. The plains there would supply his need of bread, the leaves and fruits of the forest would heal his maladies, and the metals hidden in the hills would defend his life and give him the material from which to construct a better civilisation. But he is not dwelling in an age charged with the spirit of scientific discovery and achievement. He cannot cross to this promised land and possess its good. So it is with the man who prays in the Holy Ghost. Not only does the wisdom of God interpret the secrets of redemption

to his heart, but the power of God brings him into a new world in which all things are possible. And thus does he keep himself in that love of God which means victory over all seen and unseen foes. We are all familiar with the effect of atmosphere upon the quality of work, and the ease with which it is accomplished. In some parts of the world, malaria and tropical heat speedily turn healthy and capable colonists into sickly loiterers and rickety "ne'er-do-weels." No race seems able to toil under the frightful conditions of climate which prevail on the Isthmus of Panama. And, on the other hand, some climates are so crisp and exhilarating that the laggard finds it difficult to do less than a fair day's work. Unknown ingredients in the air seem to accelerate the blood and spur to strenuous exertion. The qualities of the work done by poet, painter, musician, may almost be told in the terms of the atmospheric pressure prevailing at the time. Genius, just as much as the unopened flower bud, needs the bright, bracing day to bring out its splendour. And the soul requires, for the reaching out of its highest powers towards God, a refined and well-balanced element, which we can only describe as "climate" or "atmosphere." The difference between praying on the mere level of our natural perceptions and sympathies, and praying in a realm pervaded by the unfailing inspirations of the Spirit, is not unlike the difference between drudgery on a tropical swamp and movement on a glorious tableland. In the one case prayer is an effort, a burden, a vexation, and an idle penance; in the other, a joy, a sunrise, a melodious outrush of upper springs, glad spontaneity, life pulsating with the sense of power and victory. Under this covenant of more perfect help and privilege, ought not prayer to attain a surpassing prevalence? By praying under these Pentecostal conditions we may come to reach the apostolic mark of continual and unceasing prayer. Is not He who prompts and upholds the supplications of those receiving His baptism of fire present at all times, and unsleeping in His subtle ministries as the providence of the great Being whose attributes He shares? If we dwell in a circle of which He is the vitalising centre, our conscious and even unconscious movements of thought and feeling will be informed by strange stimulations. Acclimatised to these sacred conditions, the habit of prayer will be a second and a better nature to us. The stimulations of this unseen and ever patient Helper never fail, and so it is our privilege to "pray always and not to faint." This exhortation seems to imply the constancy of the laws under which the Spirit operates, and our power of so conforming those laws as to reach this lofty experience. It ought to be no little encouragement to us that this habit is spoken of as one of the conditions of our perseverance, and it must be therefore just as practicable for us to pray in the Holy Ghost as it is to keep ourselves in the love of God. To have this close communion with the Most High is not a distinction of pre-eminent saintship, but the privilege of all who abide in His love. He who would thus pray must cultivate tempers of daily spirituality, and to that end must shut out the world, the flesh, and the devil in their manifold disguises. Where the things which are adverse to God are thrust out the Spirit of God will surely come in. It is an axiom in ventilation that unless there be an outflow for the vitiated air it is quite useless having an inlet for that which is pure. The winds of God's life-giving Pentecost will steal into us if we give free exit to every giddy pleasure which makes the Bible an insipidity, to every darling pursuit which conflicts with the perfect love of God, to whatever deteriorates the intellect, the conscience, and the affections. One of the fair cities of the earth is begirt with pine forests, and has streaks of silver sea about it on every side. Nature lies quite close to its streets and squares, and exhales there day and night the sweetest airs and the most reviving zephyrs. But if one of the citizens should shut himself in an air-tight compartment with the diseased, even in that fair city of health the result would be inevitable. If, on the other hand, all doors and windows be open, the invisible tides of mystic sweetness and strength cannot fail to lave him. The Divine breath is always playing upon those who inhabit the true city of God. Let us make ourselves accessible to it at every point, and take heed that we do not shut ourselves in with the foul and deadly contagions of the world. The tone of our daily speech and thought and life will react upon our prayers. Let us live to keep ourselves ever fit for this high intercourse with God, as the enthusiast in art or poetry or music lives for his work. Never grieve the Spirit who holds in His hand your very power to pray. He can sever at will your communication with the throne of all grace and power. (T. G. Selby.) *Praying in the Spirit*:—1. Without the Spirit there is no praying. 2. How excellent and honourable a work is that of prayer! The whole Trinity has a work in this holy exercise. 3. As without the Spirit there is no prayer, so without prayer a man evidently shows himself to have

nothing of the Spirit. 4. Needs must the prayers of the saints be acceptable. They are by the Holy Ghost. 5. How good is God to His poor saints! He not only grants, but makes, their prayers. 6. It is our greatest wisdom to get and keep the Spirit. (1) It is obtained in the ministry of the gospel. (2) It is kept by following His motions and suggestions. 7. How happy are saints in all straits! They have the Spirit to help them to pray. (*W. Jenkyn, M.A.*) **Keep yourselves in the love of God.**—*The means of preserving us from sin, and of promoting in us holiness:*—On the one hand we are taught here a universal principle of religious obedience; and on the other hand we are taught here what the ways are for procuring and cherishing it. “Keep yourselves in the love of God.” Do so; and undoubtedly you will have no similarity of character with those men who, “having not the Spirit, are sensualists,” and in being so are “separatists” from the communion of true Christians. But how shall you be enabled to obey this injunction? By “building yourselves up on your most holy faith”—by praying in the Holy Ghost—and “by looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus unto eternal life. To have love to God, and to have this Divine affection in vigorous exercise, is to give security for the renunciation of all sin, and for the choice and accomplishment of all duty. It forms the very principle of action, which is applicable in every situation, and during all time. Can the devout affections be really the object of my careful cultivation, without at the same time being accompanied by the desire and the endeavour after universal holiness? Can I revere the majesty of God without the fear of offending against the dignity of His authority? Can I esteem the unrivalled beauty of His moral excellences without the anxious wish to resemble Him and to enjoy His approbation? The view of what is the native tendency of this Divine affection is indubitable. To give diligence that we may remain in the exercise of this holy affection is to give diligence that we may weaken, and finally dislodge, every opposing affection. If once there was produced in us an entire surrender of will and power, of fear and hope, to His most blessed direction—this would amount to the being actuated by the Divine “Spirit”; and so the “sensuality” that would “separate” us from the regard and obedience of Divine truth be entirely vanquished. But how shall we “keep ourselves” in the exercise of this purest and most efficient principle? The means of doing so are here enumerated: 1. In the first place, would we “keep ourselves in the love of God”?—let us “build ourselves up on our most holy faith”; that is in the grace of faith, and in its objects, the doctrines and promises of the gospel. The height of it indeed we shall never be able, through eternity itself, to form a perfect conception of. Let us heap together all those bright views, and glorious promises, which like so many sums in our shining treasure, should be added, for the purpose of giving us an idea of the riches of the Divine mercy. Let us become more deeply acquainted with, and more intensely interested in, the doctrines and the prospects of “our most holy faith,” and undoubtedly we shall be using one of the powerful, even as it is the appointed, means to “keep ourselves in the love of God.” 2. Would we succeed in these endeavours at laying our minds open to the truth, and to the efficacy of “our most holy faith”; would we overcome the aversions, and surmount the difficulties, that stand in the way of all our apprehensions, and that oppose the exercise of all our sensibilities, on its high spiritual objects; would we see the designs of Christianity, and feel them, and continue under their influence; let us follow the next admonition, and “pray in the Holy Ghost.” The Divine Spirit dictated the Scriptures; and therefore, when we pray for things agreeably to the tenor of the revealed will of God, we are said, in one sense, to pray under this influence. Now supposing that on Scripture principles, in firm though humble dependence on the grace of God, and with constancy, fervour, and spirituality, we are enabled to cherish the affections of Christian piety; do we not see that we are thereby employing the direct means of improving ourselves, both in acquaintance with the objects of faith, and in the exercise of the grace of faith? 3. In the third place, however, the devout affections we have continually to lament, are with us so cold, even at the warmest, and so wavering, even at the utmost steadiness to which we can bring them; and in all the exercises of our minds, whether in the belief or in the practice of religious truth, we have attained to so little that we can look back on with unmingled satisfaction, that we should have no encouragement, either in devotion or active duty, were our hopes of “eternal life” made to rest on the perfection of our own righteousness. Hence our only relief in remembering the unworthy past, and our only encouragement in endeavouring after something better for the time to come, depend on the privilege granted to us of “looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ,”

Sure, ample, blessed source of consolation and of hope! To this we flee, that the multitude of our sins may be blotted out, and thrown into perpetual forgetfulness. To this we repair, that the defects inherent even in our best duties, may be forgiven. Not to anticipate, with vividness, that future "life," in which devotion shall be elevated into the sublimest purities of spiritual worship, and where faith shall have every promise and prospect realised—how the mind would faint under its frequent insensibilities and manifold lapses! But the assurance that the difficulties are all hereafter to be overcome—that the "mercy of Christ" which pardons, will gratuitously bestow the "eternal life" which it has purchased; this is what incites to persevere, and what will lead effectually in the course of devotion and practical faith. (*W. Muir, D.D.*) *Keeping in the love of God*:—1. In perseverance there is a concurrence of our care and diligence (Phil. ii. 12, 13). The main work is God's (Phil. i. 6), and the same Jesus that is "Author" is also "Finisher" (Heb. xii. 2). The deeper radication of the habit, the defence of it, the growth and perfection of it, is all from God (1 Peter v. 10); but yet a concurrence there is of our care and endeavours. Well, then, let us not neglect the means. 2. Men that have grace had need look to the keeping of it. (1) We ourselves are prone to revolt (Jer. xiv. 10; Psa. xcvi. 10). (2) We are assaulted with continual temptations. An importunate suitor, by perseverance in his suit, may at length prevail. Long conversing with the world may taint the spirit. (3) A man of long standing is apt to grow secure and negligent, as if he were now past danger (Rev. iii. 17-19). (4) The worst is past, we have but a few years' service more, and we shall be happy for ever (Rom. xiii. 11). A little more and you will land safe at the expected haven; if we have a rough passage, it is a short one. 3. Of all graces, love needeth keeping. (1) Because of all graces it is most decaying (Matt. xxiv. 12; Rev. ii. 4). Flame is soon spent, graces that act most strongly require most influence, as being most subject to abatement. (2) Because love is a grace that we can ill spare; it is the spring and rise of all duties to God and man. 4. The next note is from the coupling of these two: "The love of God," and "looking for the mercy of Christ unto eternal life." See the like connection (2 Thess. iii. 5). (1) Love allayeth fear (1 John iv. 18). (2) Love quickeneth desire (2 Peter iii. 12). 5. From that "looking for the mercy," &c., observe that looking earnestly for eternal life is a good means of perseverance. (1) What this looking is. It implieth patience, but chiefly hope. (a) Patience in waiting God's leisure in the midst of present difficulties (Heb. x. 36; Luke viii. 15; 1 Thess. i. 3; Rom. viii. 25). (b) Hope. This looking or expectation is not that blind hope that is found in men ignorant and presumptuous, that regard not what they do. This hope which I press you to is a serious act, arising from grace aiming at its own perfection. Again, this looking is not some glances upon heaven, such as are found in worldly persons, who now and then have their good moods and sober thoughts; but alas! these sudden motions are not operative, they come but seldom, and leave no warmth upon the soul, as fruit is not ripened that hath but a glance of the sun. Again, it is not a loose hope or a probable conjecture; this hath no efficacy upon the soul. Thus negatively I have shown you what it is not, but now positively; it is an earnest, well-grounded expectation of blessedness to come. It bewrayeth itself—(c) By frequent and serious thoughts. Thoughts are the spies and messengers of hope; it sendeth them into the promised land to bring the soul tidings from thence. A carnal expectation filleth men with carnal musings and projects, as Luke xii. 18; James iv. 13). It is usual with men to forestall the pleasure of their hopes. Now, so it is also in heavenly things; men that expect them will be entertaining their spirits with the thoughts of them. (d) By lively longings (Rom. viii. 23). As the decays of nature do put them in mind of another world, they begin to lift up the head and look out (Rom. viii. 19). (e) By lively tastes and feelings. A believer hath eternal life (John xvii. 3). He beginneth it here. (2) Let me show you the influence it hath upon perseverance. (a) It sets us a-work to purge out sin (1 John iii. 3). (b) It withdraweth our hearts from present things (Phil. iii. 20). (c) It maketh us upright and sincere; looking asquint on secular rewards is the cause of all our declinings (Matt. vi. 2). (d) It supporteth us under those difficulties and afflictions which are wont to befall us in a course of godliness. (e) It helpeth us to resist temptations. 6. The next point is from that clause, "the mercy." The ground of our waiting and looking for eternal life is God's mercy, not for any works or merits of ours; we cannot challenge it as a debt: sin and death are as work and wages, but eternal life is a donative (Rom. vi. 23). 7. This mercy is called "the mercy of our Lord Jesus

Christ." Thence observe, that this mercy which we look for is dispensed by Jesus Christ; He purchased it, and He hath the managing of it in the whole economy of grace. (1) Get an interest in Christ, otherwise we cannot look for mercy in that great day (1 John ii. 28). (2) It maketh for the comfort of Christ's people and members. Our blessed hopes are founded upon the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in His hands to dispense them. From thence you may collect—(a) The fulness of this blessedness. An infinite merit purchased it, an infinite mercy bestoweth it. (b) The certainty of this blessedness. Christ hath the managing of it. He never discovered any backwardness to thy good nor inclination to thy ruin. 8. The last note is from that clause "unto eternal life." The great benefit which we have by Christ is eternal life. (1) There is life; all that you labour for is for life, that which you prize above other things is life. (2) It is an excellent life. The life of sense, which is the beasts', is better than that vegetative life which is in the plants, and the rational life which is in men is better than the sensitive, and the spiritual exceedeth the rational, and the glorious life the spiritual. (3) It is a happy life. (4) It is eternal life. This life is but a flower that is soon withered, a vapour that is soon blown over; but this is for ever and ever. Well, then, let this press you to keep yourselves in the love of God till this happy estate come about. (T. Manton.) *Self-keeping*:—"But ye, beloved." These three words, repeated within a few lines, come upon the reader with some unexpectedness. They tell us, what we may have forgotten since we read the "beloved" with which the Epistle opens, that the holy energy which pulses through this short letter, though sometimes it approaches to vehemence, is not the energy of a character that works to one side only. They tell us that the energy is one of sympathies, after all, and not of mere antipathies. His vehemence is to be traced to the depth and strength of His love. When this verse occurs, the turning-point of the Epistle has just been passed. The thunderstorm of invective, which the writer has been hurling against certain godless disturbers of the purity and peace of the Church, spends itself almost abruptly here, and the Epistle seems to gather to a close among the quiet sunset light of a sky that has been clarified by the storm. These last calm sentences are directly for the saints whom he loves. "But ye," says he, "see that ye make a contrast to all this vapid corruption. The contrast which already exists between your condition and theirs, your prospects and theirs—let it be carried forth into a contrast between your conduct and theirs, your habits and theirs." I. THE WORK OF SELF-KEEPING. 1. To keep an eye upon ourselves—an eye that is clear and true; to keep a hand upon ourselves—a hand that is steady and strong; to maintain the right attitude of mind and heart from hour to hour. Is this, then, a work for which a man himself is competent? Can a man keep himself? Our thoughts may easily alight upon passages which seem to conflict with Jude's words (1 Pet. i. 5, iv. 19; John xvii. 11, 15). In older days the Psalmist, in that hymn about keeping which the Christian Church has taken to its heart, seems persistently out of tune with the strain of Jude (Psa. cxxi. 3, 4, 5, 7). That, indeed, is the more usual language of Scripture concerning spiritual keeping. But neither is the language of the text without parallel (Prov. iv. 23; 1 John v. 18, 21). The two sets of passages make no discord. It is only the familiar, inexplicable mingling of the human and the Divine. It is only the working together—so incomprehensible, so practicable, so blessed—of man's weakness with God's almightiness. "Keep yourselves," for it is God that keepeth you. 2. God's love to us is the element within which the keeping of ourselves becomes real keeping, safe keeping, happy keeping. That is the over-arching firmament, with its infinitude, within which our keeping is kept. We ourselves are to abide within our own poor keeping; yes, and our own poor keeping is to abide within God's tender might of love. The flower is to be environed by the frail globe of glass—the frail globe is to be environed and penetrated by the sweet, warm sunlight that comes across the tracks of worlds to illumine our dark atmosphere with safety and life. (1) These men and women, as being Christians, were "in the love of God" in a sense which did not apply to those who were not Christians. (2) A man may be more, or may be less—consciously and efficiently—"in the love of God." Give me a living assurance that my God is caring tenderly for me, for this danger-haunted sinner that I am—and that His great saving love is actually around me like shielding sunlight, I shall then have heart and motive to look to my ways. If I am worth God's watching, I am worth my own. I will watch myself for Him. I will gird up my loins to keep myself, just because God is keeping me. 3. Note the harmony subsisting between this precept and this qualification of the precept.

Being "in the love of God" does not neutralise an atom of our utmost diligence in the task of self-keeping. If I feel that I am enclosed by the strong ramparts of a fortress-home, there is animating reason why I should guard myself from the lesser hazards that may still encompass me within that home; my keeping of myself is not at an end, but is only reduced to manageable dimensions. If I be on board a steam-liner, which holds her head before the wildest weather with undaunted majesty, and only fills the air above her bows with the smoke of billows she is shattering in the strong tremor of her power, I have still to care how I mount the companion-way, and pace the deck, and stow my valuables in my cabin. Indeed, it is only when I am secure from wreck or foundering, that all this minor care is of much account. "Keep yourselves—in the love of God." II. THE MEANS TO BE EMPLOYED IN SELF-KEEPING. 1. It is significant that the first sort of occupation here named as promotive of the work of keeping is so active an occupation as that of "building up themselves." In order to conserve, they must construct. They are beset by forces which are busy to disintegrate and destroy. A Christian character is not reared as a coral structure is—by instinct. It demands a sustained effort of intelligent will. The work is laboriously slow—slow, yet urgent. There is need we should bring to bear upon it something of the systematic steadiness which tells so marvellously in the meaner sphere of our worldly work—permitting to ourselves no half-heartedness in it; setting upon it the banded force of all the faculties of body and soul and spirit; pushing it on in frost and rain, and by light of torch when the daylight fails us. And there is danger, too, lest the durable qualities of our work should be imperfect. It would spare Christians many a pang of disappointment and much rebuilding of what had been built in their character, did they always make sure that they were building firmly and strictly after the plan of Christ. In any development of character which is slim and faulty, there can be no real contribution to the "keeping," the staid security, which Jude would instruct us to accomplish. In that character-structure of ours there must be settlement and stability, mass and strength, and the geometric beauty of symmetry; that is, there must be proportions well balanced upon a sufficient foundation. And what is that sufficient foundation? A sea-rock, indeed, but yet a rock—"our most holy faith." It is the truth of God in the gospel of His Son. 2. Prayer is an occupation, and a companion one to that of rearing a Christian character. Practically it is not very sound to dissociate the one occupation from the other, for prayer is not doing for us the whole that it might do unless it is breathing like an odour through all our changing activities. Yet there must be seasons when prayer is concentrated into specific labour of its own kind; then it is the most sacred manner of work, and the most productive. In this sense we can regard upbuilding and prayer as twin labourers, fitting to each other, like rampart and moat, towards the keeping of our souls. 3. We are to pray "in the Holy Ghost." The pregnant phrase wraps up a very solemnity of privilege. It is a great thing to pray in the mere presence of the Divine Spirit, or under His loving glance. It is a greater thing to pray with the vouchsafed assistance of this Divine One, as He moulds and energises our petitions. It is a greater thing still, and enters the region of permanent miracle, that we should pray with the Eternal Spirit in us, abiding in our meagre hearts, identifying Himself with us, and mingling His own intercessions with ours. We, and our prayer, and our praying—all are to be within *Him*—encompassed by His power, impregnated by His efficacy, informed by His light. He is to be in us while we pray, as the ocean is in the chambers of the tiny shell which has dropped into its depths. III. THE ENCOURAGEMENT TO BE SOUGHT IN SELF-KEEPING. "Looking for the mercy of our Lord," &c. Hard work and brighter hope; it is these together that make up the Christian life as God means it. When the two are most sharply set over against each other in the New Testament, it is that they may be mingled by us into one. God would not have His children to toil without heart. "Ever follow that which is good. Rejoice evermore." "Live soberly, righteously, and godly . . . looking for the happy hope." It is not enough to have rest when the toil is over; there must be spirit while the toil is going on. "Building up yourselves," "praying," and so "keeping yourselves." Is it a catalogue of labours? Well, there follows the complementary duty, as if he added, "*Cheering yourselves.*" Now, it is below the truth to say that while there may be other lines of activity in the world which are quite as arduous as that of the self-keeping of the Christian, there is not any line of activity which bears along it so magnificent a contingent of inspiring considerations. But there is a practical peculiarity in the case of the

Christian. It is a common thing for a man, when he throws his energies upon any pursuit, to be constantly animating himself by expectations that are exaggerated, and by data that are good only to disappoint him. The Christian, on the contrary, following the pursuit which God Himself has set along the highway to all blessed issues, is constantly underdoing his expectations—is habitually forgetting, or only half-believing, the splendid certainties by which his hope ought to be nerving his diligence. Thereby everything suffers. Thereby the reconstruction of character goes heavily, and prayer is dull; the self-custody of the soul is slack-handed and insecure. Hence the force of the great concluding exhortation of Jude: "There is your sublime task; take thought of your sublimer prospects, that you may hold on to your task with unflagging hearts and unstaying hands." On what, then, is it that our eye is to be set as the focus of all our encouragement in the grand task of our life? "Looking for—*mercy*." Still *mercy*—after all our hard work, our God-given work, in building, praying, keeping? Let us thank God that it is. Our work—it is blundering and inconstant; the worker—he is weak and unworthy: here, smiling around us out of the heaven which it makes so bright, is the Divine yet brotherly compassion of our Lord Jesus Christ. No other encouragement could be so complete as this. It is the sum of all tenderest things; the pledge of all that is most unimaginable in its gloriousness. (*J. A. K. Bain, M.A.*)

Keeping in the love of God:—I. BY BUILDING UPON CHRIST. "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith." Christ is the foundation; and "other foundation can no man lay." Others may think lightly of that stone; but to you it is the "only name given under heaven." You must go on, building upon Christ. And thus the Holy Spirit tells you (Col. ii. 6, 7). All this is the work of "faith." Faith lays your soul upon Christ, and faith keeps it there. He terms our faith "most holy." It is so from its nature, and from its tendency. It has to do with a "holy" God. It has to mix in "holy" services. It has to prepare us for a "holy" heaven. II. BY PRAYING IN THE HOLY GHOST. What believer does not know his need of the Holy Spirit, that he may pray aright. How motionless were the wheels in Ezekiel's vision, till the Spirit entered into them! How lifeless were the bones in the valley of vision, till the breath from the four winds came upon them! And how dead and formal are our devotions, when we neglect to seek God's Spirit to animate our frame! III. BY EXPECTING MERCY THROUGH CHRIST. "Looking also for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." We all need "mercy," because we have all sinned. IV. THE EFFECTS OF TRUE SPIRITUAL RELIGION. "Kept in the love of God." And what is this? Why, this is that happiness at which we all should aim. Think how great a privilege it must be "to have the love of God shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Ghost." How sweet to go to Him as your Father! to commune with Him as a friend, like Abraham! to see the Lord always before you, as did David! What, then, do each of you know of this security? Are all of you shut up in this tower of refuge? (*C. Clayton, M.A.*)

A safe sphere—love:—I. THE SPHERE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE—"In the love of God." The expression is beautiful and suggestive. The following thoughts amongst others—1. The primary thought of redemption—God loves us. 2. The demonstration of that love—Jesus loves us. 3. The proof of that love—we feel it. II. THE EXPECTATION OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE—"Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto life eternal." Hope has its objects future, and there are in the future of every believer—1. The consummation of the present. 2. The expansion of the future. There is in store more than the present can supply. (*T. Davies.*)

How to keep in the love of God:—I. CONSIDER THAT CENTRAL INJUNCTION—THE VERY KEystone OF THE ARCH OF A DEVOUT CHRISTIAN LIFE—"Keep yourselves in the love of God." God's love to us is regarded as a kind of sphere or region in which the Christian soul lives and moves and has its being. It is the sweet home of our hearts, and a fortress wherinto we may "continually resort," and our wisdom and security is to keep at home within the strong walls that defend us, compassed by the warmth and protection of the love which God has towards us. Then my text implies that Christian men may get outside of the love of God. No doubt "His tender mercies are over all His works." There are gifts of the Divine love which, like the sunshine in the heaven, come equally on the unfaithful and on the good. But all the best and noblest manifestations of that love cannot come to men irrespective of their moral character and their relation to Him. Then another question is suggested by my text. I asked, Can a man get out of the love of God? And I have to ask now, Can a man, then, keep always in it? We need not discuss, for the guidance of our own lives

and efforts, whether the entire realisation of the ideal is possible for us here. Enough for us to know that it is possible for Christian people to make their lives one long abiding in the love of God, both in regard of the actual reception of it and of the consciousness of that reception. The secret of all blessedness is to live in the love of God. Our sorrows and difficulties and trials will change their aspect if we walk in the peaceful enjoyment and conscious possession of His Divine heart. That is the true anæsthetic. No pain is intolerable when we are sure that God's loving hand is round about us. II. Further, notice THE SUBSIDIARY EXHORTATIONS WHICH POINT OUT THE MEANS OF OBEYING THIS CENTRAL COMMAND. The two clauses in my text which precede that main precept are more minute directions as to the way in which it is to be observed. We might almost read, "*By building yourselves on your most holy faith, and by praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God.*" The first means of securing our continual abiding in the conscious enjoyment of God's love to us is our continual effort at building up a noble character on the foundation of faith. What would you say of a man that had dug his foundations, and got in the first courses, and then left the bricks lying on the ground, and did no more? And that is what many people that call themselves Christians do, use their faith only as a shield against condemnation, and forget that if it is anything at all it works, and works by love. Then remember, too, that this building of a noble, God-pleasing character can only be erected on the foundation of faith by constant effort. You do not rear the fabric of a noble character all at a moment. No man reaches the extremity, either, of goodness or baseness by a leap; you must be content with bit-by-bit work. The Christian character is like a mosaic formed of tiny squares in all but infinite numbers, each one of them separately set and bedded in its place. Now, look at the second of the conditions laid down here by which that continual living within the charmed circle of the love of God is made possible. "*Praying in the Holy Ghost.*" Who that has ever honestly tried to cure himself of a fault, or to make his own some unfamiliar virtue opposed to his natural temperament, but has found that the cry "*O God! help me*" has come instinctively to his lips? The prayer which helps us to keep in the love of God is not the petulant and passionate utterance of our own wishes, but is the yielding of our desires to the impulses Divinely breathed upon us. Our own desires may be hot and vehement, but the desires that run parallel with the Divine will, and are breathed into us by God's own Spirit, are the desires which, in their meek submissiveness, are omnipotent with Him whose omnipotence is perfected in our weakness. III. Lastly, notice here THE EXPECTATION ATTENDANT ON THE OBEEDIENCE TO THE CENTRAL COMMANDMENT. "*Looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.*" After all our efforts, after all our prayers, we all of us build much wood, hay, stubble, in the building which we rear on the true foundation. And the best of us, looking back over our past, will most deeply feel that it is all so poor and stained that all we have to trust to is the forgiving mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. That mercy will be confidently anticipated for all the future, nearer, and more remote, in proportion as we keep ourselves for the present in the love of God. The more we feel in our hearts the experience that God loves us, the more sure we shall be that He will love us ever. The sunshine in which we walk will be reflected upon all the path before us, and will illuminate that else dusky and foreboding sky that lies beyond the dark grave. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Keeping ourselves in the love of God* :—I. If we would keep ourselves in the love of God, we MUST CAREFULLY SHUN EVERYTHING WHICH WOULD BE LIKELY TO DAMPEN THE FERVOUR OF OUR AFFECTION, or extinguish this holy fire. The love of God cannot live in the heart where any known sin is allowed to enjoy quiet shelter. II. If the Christian would keep himself in the love of God, HE MUST BE ATTENTIVE TO THE DUTIES OF PRAYER, AND THE STUDY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES. The neglect or the careless performance of either of these cannot but have the effect of cooling the ardour of godliness; and, in the end, of causing it to decay and perish. III. If we would keep ourselves in the love of God, we MUST IMITATE HIM IN DEEDS OF MERCY AND LOVING-KINDNESS. (*J. N. Norton, D.D.*) *The love of God* :—I. ILLUSTRATE THE IMPORT AND EXTENT OF THE PRECEPT—"Keep yourselves in the love of God." To form a right notion of this duty, we must remember that our love to God is not such a familiar affection of the mind as we bear towards our equals—such as one friend has for another. The man who loves God will honour and reverence Him. Like a dutiful child, he will be fearful of offending the most tender and beneficent Parent. To keep ourselves in the love of God likewise imports the most ardent and affectionate desire of being united to Him, as the supreme good and the chief happiness of man.

To keep ourselves in the love of God doth further imply, that we prefer His favour and service to everything that may come in competition with Him. In order to discover, therefore, whether our love to God be genuine, it will be necessary for us to consider what are the genuine effects which the genuine love of God is naturally calculated to produce on our minds and manners. It will produce a submission of our wills to the will of God; it will produce a love of the duties of religion; it will produce a sincere obedience to the Divine commandments; it will produce a quickness on our part in discovering our own frailties and imperfections; and lastly, it will produce an unfeigned charity to all mankind. II. SUGGEST SOME OF THOSE MOTIVES AND OBLIGATIONS WE LIE UNDER TO THE OBSERVANCE OF THIS PRECEPT. And in order to "keep ourselves in the love of God," in order to inflame our souls with this holy and devout affection, let us only consider, first, how glorious a being God is in Himself; and second, how good and gracious He hath been to us, His unworthy creatures. Conclusion: 1. Let us consider how numerous those blessings are which we have received, and which we every moment receive from Almighty God. 2. Let us consider how much we stand in need of a continual supply of those mercies which we enjoy. 3. Let us reflect how miserable our lives would become by the want of those good things of which we are now possessed. (*W. Macritchie.*) "*Keep yourselves in the love of God*" :—I. A STATE IMPLIED. "The love of God" here obviously means God's love to the believer, and the believer's love to God, for every true Christian is *in love to God*, and *in love from God*. 1. God's love to the believer. It is not only the complacency, which is the portion of angels—and the love of goodness, which pervades the universe; but the love of compassion, that pities—the love of sovereignty, that chooses—the love of grace, that calls and renews—the love of mercy, that pardons and redeems—the love of faithfulness, that fulfils every promise, perfects every grace, and surpasses every expectation—the love that knows neither beginning, change, nor end; and which, after having attended its object through earth's pilgrimage, will smooth and light his passage through the vale of death, and conduct him to a happy eternity. 2. The believer's love to God. This is our first great duty, and it is the foundation of all pure and undefiled religion, and of all the moral excellence and beauty which a created intelligence can possess. There is nothing in it of animal passion, but it is exclusively intellectual and spiritual; and though it subordinates the faculties and passions of the mind to its own movements, it is perfectly distinct from them. It is the feeling, conviction, and tendency of a redeemed created spirit towards an Infinite and Uncreated Spirit. It includes admiration of the natural and moral perfections of God; holy delight in thinking of Him, communing with Him, and feeling that we are near to Him; humble gratitude for all His mercies; and an earnest desire to be with Him in heaven. II. THE MEANS BY WHICH THIS SPIRITUAL STATE IS TO BE MAINTAINED AND PRESERVED. "Keep yourselves in the love of God." 1. This spiritual state is like a delicate flower, or exotic; without constant care and culture, it may soon be injured, and droop and fade. The soul of the believer may get into such a cold, wintry state—be so pervaded by the chilling frosts of indifference, and the disturbing elements of worldly-mindedness and conscious guilt, as to be totally unfit for the nourishment and growth of this celestial plant. 2. And the language of the text implies another thing, and that is, that Christians are themselves responsible for the preservation, or decay, of this spiritual state. Jude says, "*Keep yourselves in the love of God.*" It is true that in spiritual matters we can do nothing successfully without Divine aid and influence, but this is as true in the world of nature as it is in the kingdom of grace. The farmer can do nothing successfully without Divine aid and influence, and yet he would be thought very unreasonable to urge this as an evidence that no personal responsibility rests upon him for the state of his farm and crops. 3. But *how* are we to keep ourselves in the love of God? (1) By praying very earnestly to God, so to exert upon us His mighty power and grace, as to keep us in that love. (2) By carefully avoiding anything that would grieve and offend Him, and cause Him to withdraw the enjoyments of His love from us; and, on the other hand, by doing all we can to please Him, and to secure the continuance of His favour. (3) By preserving our love to Him from injury and decay, and by diligently using all appropriate means for its growth and perfection. (*W. Gregory.*) *Christians keeping themselves in the love of God* :—And there be many reasons to move us to keep ourselves in the love of God. 1. The first is His commandment "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God"; and again, "What doth the Lord thy God require of thee but to fear and love Him?" This our Saviour calleth "the great commandment." The Com-

mandor is great, the object is great, the use of the duty is great, and their reward is great that take care to do it. 2. A second reason to move us to keep ourselves in the love of God is in regard of equity. For seeing Almighty God doth love us, it is a matter of equity that we should requite love with love again. 3. Commodity should move us to keep ourselves in the love of God. For first, by this love, our faith produceth those good duties which we owe unto God. For faith is as one hand receiving love, as the other giving (Gal. v. 6). Again, by the love of God, we may know what state we are in. St. Augustine saith two loves make two cities; the love of God maketh Jerusalem, the love of the world Babylon; therefore let every man but examine himself, what he loves, and he shall see in what state he is, and to what city he belongs. Again, the love of God engenders in us the love of the godly for God, for he that loves the Father cannot but love His children (1 John iii. 14). Again, from the love of God ariseth much grace and goodness, as much water from one spring. Good works wither except they be nourished by this love. As the love of money is the root and nourisher of all evil, so the love of God is the mother and nurse of all good, of all pious offices to God, and Christian duties to man. 4. We ought to keep ourselves in the love of God because He is our gracious Father, and "of His own good will begat He us through the word of truth." Now if a child must love his father, of whom he hath received a part of his body, how much more ought he to love God, of whom he hath received his soul, and unto whose goodness he stands obliged both for soul and body? (S. Otes.)

Keeping the heart in the love of God:—I. DIRECTIONS. 1. Carefully shun all those circumstances and things which are known to have a tendency to damp the fervours of love, or to extinguish this holy fire. Above all, avoid every sinful indulgence. Fleshly lusts. Contention and strife. Pride and vainglory. 2. To keep ourselves in the love of God, we should often meditate on the superlative moral excellence of the Divine character, as displayed in His works and Word. 3. Every habit and affection is preserved in vigour and increased by frequent exercise. 4. The greatest hindrance to the exercise and increase of our love to God, is our blindness of mind and unbelief. In order, therefore, to preserve our souls in the lively exercise of the love of God, we must seek an increase of that faith which is "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen"—that faith which "sees Him that is invisible"—which "looks not at the things which are seen and temporal, but at the things which are not seen, which are eternal." II. MOTIVES. 1. By doing this we shall best glorify God upon earth. 2. The next motive which should influence us to perform faithfully the duty enjoined in the text, is, that this will be the most effectual method of promoting the welfare and salvation of our fellow creatures. 3. The more we keep ourselves in the love of God, the more meet shall we be for the heavenly inheritance, where perfect love reigns in every heart. Not only so, but the richer reward will be possessed. (A. Alexander, D.D.)

How to keep oneself in the love of God:—Answer 1. In general: one whom God loves and favours, must do as the favourite of a prince useth to do, to keep himself in his prince's love and favour. He will study what the will of his prince is, and will do all that he can to please him. This is a great art to study—to know what is the will and pleasure of God (Eph. v. 17) and to conform to it. The reason whereof is this—1. Because the will of God is the sovereign will to all the world, therefore to thine and mine: there is no controlling of it. 2. Because the will of God is a holy will; and we can never keep ourselves in the love of God but by what is agreeable to His holiness: and that is, when we ourselves are holy (1 Pet. i. 15, 16). Answer 2. But now more particularly: I. He that will keep himself in the love of God, must he himself love God. For love deserveth love, and love begetteth love. God's love worketh thus toward us, and therefore our love must work toward God. II. He that loves God loving him, is drawn to God by the attractive beams of Divine love. He that loves God loving him, is inflamed with God's love; as it is in a burning-glass. III. He that will keep himself in the love of God, must mind and meditate on four attributes and properties of God's love, which will have great influence upon his heart and love. 1. On the eternity of God's love to him. 2. On the freeness of God's love (Hos. xiv. 4). 3. On the immensity of God's love (Eph. iii. 17–19). 4. On the unchangeableness of God's love (Heb. vi. 17, 18; Jer. xxxi. 3; Rom. viii. 39). IV. He that will keep himself in the love of God, must keep himself free from the love of the world. Because the love of this world is contrary to the love of God, and therefore inconsistent with it (1 John ii. 15, 16). V. He that will love God, and keep himself in the love of God, must not be a self-lover. There is no greater enemy to the love of God than to love ourselves (2 Tim.

iii. 2). VI. If ye would keep yourselves in the love of God, be very shy of sin, both in the risings of it, and as to the temptations to it. 1. Sin is "enmity against God" in the abstract (Rom. viii. 7). 2. Sin is hateful to God (Prov. vi. 10; Psa. xcvi. 10). 3. Sin separates from God. VII. He that will keep himself in the love of God, must clear up his interest and union to Jesus Christ. VIII. An eighth way of keeping ourselves in the love of God, is by keeping God's commandments (John xv. 10, 14). IX. The way to keep ourselves in the love of God, is to walk closely with God in ways of strict holiness. This is a commendation and character upon record of God's chiefest favourites. Thus it was with Abraham (Gen. xvii. 1); thus it was with Enoch (Gen. v. 22); thus it was with Noah (Gen. vi. 9); thus it was with Caleb (Numb. xiv. 24); and thus David (Psa. lxxiii. 28). X. They keep themselves in the love of God who do not wave or abate their profession and practice of godliness in evil times, and do not balk the ways of God under severe providences and sharp trials. XI. Another means to keep ourselves in the love of God is to keep in our hearts a quick sense of the pardon of sin; of the wonderful love of the Lord to a poor sinful soul, to pardon great and many sins. XII. A further means to keep ourselves in the love of God, is not only to love the Lord, but to keep up our love to Him to the height. XIII. If we will keep ourselves in the love of God, let us labour to grow in grace, and to carry on the work of it in our souls to the highest perfection. XIV. A great means of keeping ourselves in the love of God is this, to "pray in the holy Ghost." XV. We keep ourselves in the love of God when we declare a public spirit for the cause of God in His Church against the enemies of it by being zealous for His glory and valiant for His truth in our station. XVI. A great means of keeping ourselves in the love of God is to be sincere and sound in the worship of God. XVII. A great means of keeping in the love of God is keeping up the communion of saints in all the parts and duties of it. XVIII. The last means I shall name is in the words immediately following my text ("Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life"), which, doubtless, the Holy Ghost points us to, as an effectual means to "keep ourselves in the love of God." 1. Because it is the highest act of God's love to us—to bestow eternal life on us. 2. The Lord, that hath provided eternal life for us, will have us always to walk in expectation of it (Gen. xlix. 18; Titus ii. 13). 3. We have no ground at all to expect eternal life from God without keeping ourselves in the love of God (Rom. viii. 23, compared with ver. 39). 4. We keep ourselves in God's love by being found in such a state and in such a way as leads to life, which is chiefly faith and obedience. 5. Now a son that is heir-apparent by adoption in Christ to such an estate of eternal life in heaven, he will not only be always in expectation of it, but will judge himself bound to study all the ways he can possibly do to please God, to keep in His love and favour, and withal fear and take heed of forfeiting the love of God. (*W. Cooper, M.A.*) *Keeping in the love of God:*—Some years ago I was holding a series of evangelistic meetings in a certain New England city, and was entertained at the house of a very dear friend. His accomplished and Christian wife had been ill for many weeks with rheumatic fever, but was now convalescent. Her illness had been very severe and long-continued. One distressing result had been a depression of spirits, and the clouding of her mind as to her Christian hope and her acceptance with God. One day I found her seated in a charming little parlour, with a large bay window toward the south. It was mid-winter, and the southern sun was streaming into that south window, making the flowers and plants beautiful in foliage and bloom, and filling all the room with light and genial warmth. My invalid friend was seated in the window, with her left shoulder lightly covered with a gauzy zephyr wool shawl, but otherwise bared to the rays of the sun. I fell into conversation with her once more concerning her spiritual state. She was still in utter darkness and distress of mind. I had quoted this precious text to her again and again, "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of Jesus Christ unto eternal life"; but apparently all to no purpose. Finally, I thought to turn that south vision to purpose, and make it preach a sermon to her. So I said, "Why do you come so often and sit so long in this south window?" "Why," she replied, "you must know why I sit here every day. You know how long I have been ill with the rheumatic fever, and that since the fever has left me I have been the further victim of the sharp and excruciating pain of inflammatory rheumatism in almost every part and joint of my body? But latterly I have been delivered from it, except in this left shoulder. So the doctor told me, about three weeks ago, that he could do nothing more, but suggested to me that I might come into this parlour in the mornings, when the sun was at his strength, and sit here in the south window,

with my shoulder bared to its warm rays, and see what a sun-bath would do for me. This is why I am here." "Well," said I, "and has the sun-bath done you any good?" "Oh, yes! Do you know, I had not taken my daily bath here for more than a week or ten days, until the last vestige of pain left me, and I am as well, apparently, as I ever was, so far as that is concerned; but it is so delicious just to sit in this sunshine, and feel its glad and genial warmth, that I come now every day for a little while, just for love of it." "Ah, my friend," I replied, "now you have been preaching my sermon. That is exactly what the apostle is exhorting you to do when he says, 'Keep yourselves in the love of God.' Your poor soul has grown cold, and is full of the rheumatism of doubt and distress. In vain you have tried to expel your doubts and fears. There is but one remedy. Go and sit in the south window of God's love, and let the warm, life-giving rays of His glad sunshine pour themselves into your heart, and you may be sure His love will chase out every doubt and fear, thaw away all coldness, and fill you with a joy and peace that will be more delicious to your soul than this material sunshine is to your poor body. And, moreover, after your doubts and fears have been dissipated, you will be glad of an hour every day. Yea, you will be glad of the privilege of sitting, or standing, or walking, or working all the day long in the 'love of God.'" This thought seemed to strike her very forcibly, and at last she exclaimed, "Oh, I see it all now! How stupid of me not to have seen it before! I have been trying, out of my cold and wicked heart, to bring forth something good to offer to God, and then to find peace and comfort in something I have done or felt. Just keep yourselves in the love of God," she went on in a kind of soliloquy, "and let that fill and quicken you. How simple! How beautiful! How I might have saved myself weeks and months of suffering, far worse than the pains of illness, if I had only known this, or at least acted upon it." (*G. F. Pentecost, D.D.*)

Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.—*Looking for mercy*.—I. THE GREATEST OF ALL SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS. "The mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ." Mercy. 1. Deeply needed. 2. Freely offered. 3. Experimentally enjoyed. 4. Rises in value as every other good declines. Mercy of the "Lord Jesus Christ." (1) It is the purchase of His agonies. (2) It is applied to the heart by the agency of His Spirit. (3) It is finally bestowed by His own hand. II. THE MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL EXERCISES. Looking. Supposes a belief in their reality, an aspiration after their enjoyment. A desirable state. 1. As a safeguard against dangerous errors. 2. As it damps the false lustre of the world. 3. As it is eminently conducive to holiness. 4. As it prepares the soul for heaven. III. THE MOST GLORIOUS OF ALL RESULTS. "Eternal life." (*The Study.*) *The believer's hope in the mercy of Christ*.—I. MERCY IS THE GROUND ON WHICH WE ARE TO LOOK FOR ETERNAL LIFE. Mercy, as attributed to God and Christ, is to be taken either—1. For that attribute whereby He is inclined to pity and help the miserable; His loving-kindness, grace, compassion, freely working to such as are in misery. Or—2. For the effects and fruits of this; His help afforded; suitable blessings actually granted. In this latter sense it is to be taken here (2 Tim. i. 18). II. HOW IT IS THE MERCY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. 1. He is the purchaser of it (1 John v. 11, 12). 2. In point of preparation (John xiv. 2). 3. In respect of actual donation (Matt. xxv. 34). III. HOW WELL IT DESERVES TO BE THUS EMPHATICALLY EXPRESSED, "THE MERCY." 1. As it is that mercy which saints were chosen to, and which God always had them in His eye and heart to bring them to the possession of. 2. As it is most free. This is the pure fountain from which it springs, "the gift of God." 3. As purchased with the most invaluable price. Not only the prayers and tears, but the precious blood of the Son of God. 4. "The mercy" promised as the crown and end of all others. "This is the promise that He hath promised us, eternal life" (1 John ii. 25), the grand comprehensive promise, into which all the foregoing mercies run as streams into the ocean. 5. "The mercy," as inconceivably great and full, unmixed and complete; to be measured only by the infinite perfections of that God who is to be enjoyed, and the vast capacities of the immortal soul to be filled up. 6. "The mercy," as most reasonable, and therein most sweet, upon account of foregoing misery. 7. "The mercy," as most suitable. 8. "The mercy," as reserved, and therein most sure. 9. "The mercy," as peculiar and distinguishing: the inheritance of a few (Luke xii. 32). 10. The mercy," as always to endure. Eternal life. It is life for its excellency, and eternal for its duration; a life free from all evil, and in the full possession of all good, of all that is desirable, all that is delightful. IV. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN LOOKING FOR IT? 1. That our minds and thoughts are much taken up about it. 2. It is keeping faith in exercise with reference to it. 3. It is a setting

our hearts upon it, and entertaining earnest desires after it. 4. It is a patient waiting till you are called hence to enter into that eternal life the mercy of Christ will assuredly bestow (Heb. vi. 12). 5. Serious diligence in preparing for it, and watchfulness that we do not come short, or be found unready. Application. 1. Is it mercy that bestows eternal life, how unreasonable is the sin of despair? 2. Is it the mercy of Christ, how destructive their folly who seek it anywhere else? (*D. Wilcox.*)

Vers. 22, 23. **And of some have compassion, making a difference.**—*Different degrees of sinners differently to be treated.*—There is one kind of argument necessary to be used to men of evil principle and debauched lives; to lovers of pleasure and haters of discipline and wise instruction; to men puffed up with accidental advantages of this present world, and that have never tasted the powers of the world to come; and another sort proper to be applied to those who know the will of God and approve the things that are more excellent, being convinced that the law is holy, but through the strength of their passions and the weakness of their resolutions they are frequently seduced by the deceitfulness of sin. There are some that ought to be rebuked sharply (Tit. i. 13); and others, whom when they are overtaken in a fault, they which are spiritual are directed to restore them in the spirit of meekness (Gal. vi. 1). There can be no better direction given us in this matter than in the words of the text: "Of some have compassion," &c. For so God Almighty Himself in the dispensations of His all-wise Providence draws some men with the tender mercies of a compassionate Father, and others He drives with the terrors of an incensed Judge. In the words we cannot but observe—1. That there is great difference in the degrees of sin and in the danger of sinners; and that, accordingly, there ought to be a proportionable difference in the manner of treating them. 2. That the difference which ought to be made in this case is this, that those who sin through infirmity are to be admonished with greater tenderness than those who sin presumptuously. 3. That presumptuous sinners who transgress habitually and, with a high hand, are to be looked upon as being in a condition near to desperate, as being already in the fire. 4. That even these persons we ought still to endeavour to save, by bringing them even yet to repentance. Firstly, some men there are who, for want of early instruction and good education, are utterly ignorant of all religious matters. Such persons want the very first principles of the doctrine of Christ. Secondly, others there are who deny all moral difference of actions, and take upon them by an extraordinary degree of reason and judgment to have gotten above the fears and obligations of religion. These are men of openly corrupt principles and debauched lives; despisers of true knowledge, and that cannot bear reproof. To such persons we must demonstrate, from the necessary notion of a first or self-existent Cause and from the structure and order of the world, that there is a supreme God, who made and governs all things; and from the necessary attributes of such a supreme and self-existent Cause we must prove that God, as He is all-powerful and all-wise, so He is also perfectly holy, just, and good. Thirdly, others we shall find who will profess to believe the Being of God and the natural obligations of religion; yet will deny the truth of all Divine revelation and have no regard to the authority of the gospel, which is the religion appointed for the reconciliation of sinners. To such persons as these we must endeavour to show the necessary difference between the natural duty of innocent creatures and a religion instituted for the salvation of sinners. Fourthly, among those who have gone still further than the former, and acknowledge not only the religion of nature, but also the gospel of Christ; yet how many are there who have corrupted this doctrine of truth with numberless vanities and superstitions? Against every one of these are proper remedies to be applied. Fifthly, even among those who maintain the truth in speculation, and contend for no errors in doctrine; many there are notoriously wicked in practice, and the truth which they hold is in the most shameful unrighteousness. The only way of applying to this sort of persons is to endeavour to awaken their stupefied consciences by representing to them the wrath of God, revealed from heaven, against all incorrigible sinners. Sixthly, others there are, on the contrary, who not only believe rightly, but also live well; and yet through indisposition of body and melancholy imaginations of mind they are always disconsolate and fearful of their own estate. These must be treated in a quite contrary method to the former, with all possible tenderness and compassion. (*S. Clarke, D.D.*) *Treating sinners with compassion and discretion:—*

1. Reproofs must be managed with compassion and holy grief. This is like God (Lam. iii. 33). There are tears in His eyes when He hath a rod in His hand. It is like Christ (Luke xix. 41). There are three grounds of this holy grief:—(1) The dishonour done to God (Psa. cxix. 136). Love will be affected with the wrong of the party loved. (2) The harm and destruction men bring upon themselves, that they have no care of their own souls (Jer. xiii. 17). (3) The proneness that is in our nature to the same sin (Gal. vi. 1). Bernard's good man would weep—he to-day and I to-morrow: there is no sin in their lives but was in your nature. Well, then, it checketh them that speak of others' sins by way of censure, but with delight or petulance of spirit; many reproofs are lost because there is more of passion than compassion in them. It is spiritual cruelty when you can turn a finger in your brother's wound without grief. 2. In reproving some must be handled gently: but who are those that must be handled gently? (1) With the most notorious it is good to begin mildly, that they may see our goodwill and desire of their salvation (2 Tim. ii. 25). Hasty spirits cannot brook the least opposition, and therefore are all a-fire presently. How did God deal with us in our natural condition? with what mildness? and "spake comfortably" to us, to allure us out of the devil's snare (Hosea ii. 14). (2) The persons whom we should treat with much compassion are these:—(a) The ignorant and seduced. Many well-meaning men may err; be not too severe with them, lest prejudice make them obstinate. (b) Those that slip of infirmity. Members must be "set in joint" tenderly (Gal. vi. 1). (c) The afflicted in conscience. We must not speak "to the grief of those whom God hath wounded" (2 Cor. ii. 7). (d) If they err in smaller matters. We must not deal with motes as with beams, and put the wicked and the scrupulous in the same rank, nor the gross heretic, and those that mistake in point of church order. While the judgment is sound in fundamentals, and the practice is reformed, we should use meekness till "God reveal the same thing" (Phil. iii. 15, 16). (e) The tractable and those of whom we have any hopes. Dashing storms wash away the seed, whereas gentle showers refresh the earth: men left without hope grow desperate. 3. In all censures and punishments there must be choice used and discretion. Prudence is the queen of graces. Different tempers require different remedies (Isa. xxviii. 27). God Himself putteth a difference: some are brought in with violence, others gently. This sheweth—(1) That ministers had need be wise, to know how to suit their doctrines, to distinguish between persons, actions, circumstances. (2) That ministers should give every one their portion. Terror to whom terror belongeth, and comfort to whom comfort belongeth. (3) It sheweth what care we should take to "know the state of our flock" (Prov. xxvii. 23), that we may know how to apply ourselves to them (Col. iv. 8). It also obligeth private Christians to consider each other's temper, gifts, frame of heart, that we may the better suit ourselves to do and receive good (Heb. x. 24, 25). (T. Manton.)

Discrimination in the exercise of religious reformation:—The exact nature of that discrimination in the exercise of religious wisdom which the apostle prescribes, will readily be seen if we only glance back at the circumstances of the persons to whom he referred. There were "some" among them who, through ignorance, through inattention, or through the power of a commanding example, might be betrayed into errors of opinion, and into impurities of practice; and who, in fact, might be victims to the artful leaders of the great heresy which St. Jude has condemned. There were the "others" however—those very artful leaders themselves—who were proud and insolent, overbearing and authoritative, in their wickedness; and for the sake of personal "advantage," who were firmly fixed in their corruptions of faith and manners. Surely to have "made no difference" between these would have been the most flagrant injustice. Undoubtedly it will be granted that in all cases the attempt that is projected for the conversion of men ought to have "compassion" as its source and unwearied mainspring. What other sentiments, indeed, can be tolerated for leading us to diffuse the knowledge and influence of religion? But, while observing this, you will at the same time readily see that the two things contrasted in the text, "compassion and fear," relate to the instruments by which we try to accomplish the ends of Christian benevolence. Though the affection be one, the means which are employed are varied. On one side then, in making this difference, some are to be treated "with compassion." Here is the "bruised reed," and we must be careful lest we "break" it. Here is "the smoking flax," and we must be careful lest we "quench" it. Ignorance by its darkness has produced confusion; we must endeavour to restore order by admitting the light

of truth. The principles are distorted, but through the bias of false education. Offences are committed, but chiefly through surprise and inadvertence. Wrong habits are indulged, but they were contracted not wilfully, and they are persevered in through carelessness. Hence correction must be administered in the spirit of meekness; reproof be regulated by time and circumstances; and everything be so conducted as to allure, rather than to terrify; and to lead, rather than by forcible methods to compel. On the contrary, however, the duty of "making the difference," ascertains that "others are to be saved with fear"—that is by using fear as the means—by employing it without scruple, or shrinking, or cautious tenderness; but employing it promptly, determinately, and even vehemently; urging on to the person who is in jeopardy, and extracting him, as out of the very midst of the destroying element. Instead of "the bruised reed" of a feeble resolution, there is now the hardened heart, which must be assailed with many a blow in order to dissolve its stubbornness. Instead of "the smoking flax" of a timid and fickle piety, there is now the very hatred of religion flaming out against truth and godliness, which must be suppressed and extinguished. Instead of unavoidable ignorance there is wilful blindness. Instead of the unfortunate notions of a false education, there are evil principles adopted by design and cherished with obstinacy. Instead of teachableness, there is contempt of instruction. Instead of offendings by inadvertence, there are transgressions of purpose. Instead of practices, wrong by oversight, there are habits pernicious by intention. Instead of lapses by surprise, there are sins by deliberation and fixed execution. Instead of occasional failings, there is perpetual and almost incorrigible guilt. For these reasons our subject of address can no longer continue its tone of mild persuasion. The awakening language is now requisite. The warning and the rebuke are now needed; and the tearing off the coverings—the breaking down of the pretended excuses—the driving through every fence and vain protection—and the sweeping forcibly away of all "those refuges of lies" which the unbelieving heart is wont to raise up against conviction. Thus encouragement and alarm, on the subject of religion, have a reference to opposite classes of persons. In preaching, one material part of duty consists of setting forth and expounding the blessed promises of revelation. Without our "making a difference," most assuredly we are not "dividing the word aright"; and this want of wisdom may prove itself in sad effects. The indiscriminate hopes may cause presumption. The undiscerning freeness may produce licentiousness. The premature healing of the wound may hinder for ever the perfected cure. The hasty consolation may stifle conviction. Again, in preaching, another material part of duty consists of setting forth and expounding the threatenings of revelation. There are the serious representations of the Divine government, which impress us with the thought—of a Judge, clothed in awful authority—of a tribunal, whence the sentence of life and death shall issue. But indiscriminate terrors might cause depression when there should be hope—might cloud the evidences of safety where these were beginning to brighten, and oppress with new darkness the diffident and the doubting. While you thus see the reasons for our "making a difference" in preaching, you will not fail to grant that equally strong reasons press on you the same duty in hearing. Now inquire whether you have "made the difference" that must be made ere the receiving of the promise can be salutary or even safe; or, on the contrary, if you may not be deceived with superficial views of your character. (*W. Muir, D.D.*)

Ministerial discriminations :—I need hardly tell you that, although it is only of one class that the minister is bidden to "have compassion," the meaning cannot be that he is not to compassionate any other class. He would be wanting in the sensibilities of a man, to say nothing of those which his very office is adapted to cherish, if he could be indifferent to the condition of a single transgressor. And hence it cannot be the design of St. Jude to divide sinners into classes, for one of which the minister is to feel compassion, but not for the other: he must be referring to the difference in treatment, rather than to a difference in sentiment. And yet whilst there is a great sense in which every sinner is to be an object of compassion, undoubtedly the characters and circumstances of some are more adapted to the exciting pity than those of others. Behold that young person whose family is irreligious, who, with perhaps a secret sense of the necessity of providing for the soul, is laughed out of all seriousness by those who ought to be urging him to piety. I could not treat that young person sternly; I could not fail in any intercourse with him to bear in mind his peculiar disadvantages. I could indeed weep over one who had so much against him in the saving of the soul. Or

behold, again, that man in distressed circumstances, on whom are pressing the cares of a large family, and who is tempted to gain the means of subsistence through practices which his conscience condemns—Sunday trading, for example. Could I go to that man in harshness and severity? I must not, indeed, spare his fault; I must not allow that difficulties are any excuse for his offence; but surely when I think on his peculiar temptations, and hear the cry of his young ones who are asking for bread, you will expect me to feel concern for the man, and to show it in the manner in which I reprove his misdoing. Oh! I know very well how easy it is for a man to deceive himself in the beginnings of sin, how many things commonly conspire to facilitate the entrance on an evil course, and to hide alike its peril and its wrongness. And whenever, therefore, we see a man just venturing his foot on a forbidden path, we would address him in the language of the text: language which would show that we make every allowance for what may be called the naturalness of his error, even as we would if we saw him entering a field the flowers round whose margin gave him no warning of the fatal marsh into which he would soon sink. Or once more—and here you have the exact case that appears to be contemplated by St. Jude—a man of no very strong intellect, and of no very great reading, is thrown into the society of sceptics, men perhaps of brilliant powers and of no inconsiderable acquirements. He will be no match for these apostles of infidelity. Towards a man thus seduced our prevailing feeling will be compassion—a feeling which you cannot expect to extend towards those who seduced him. So that if there be amongst you the man or the woman who can only please God by displeasing relations, or with whom close attention to religion seems likely to shut up the channels of subsistence, or who is unavoidably associated with those who half force him to be sceptical, or who is living upon what we may call the border-line where vice tries to pass for virtue, why, we would not class that individual with the reckless and the obdurate, who are sinning with a high hand, and “doing despite to the Spirit of grace.” Without disguising the nature of sin, of whatever degree or complexion, we may still show that we put a difference between sinners, just as the physician between patients, who may be all sick of diseases which tend directly to death, but who require, nevertheless, very different remedies. And there are gentle remedies which we would try with those cases we have endeavoured to describe. We feel for you—ah, that is little, very little. The Redeemer Himself feels for you. He knows your dangers and your difficulties—in how attractive a form temptation has come—how much you will have to give up, how much to encounter, if you come boldly out and embrace His discipleship. He bids me speak to you in tenderness. Go not away and say that Christianity is harsh and repulsive. You shall have our entreaties, if they will move you to run no further risks; you shall have our expostulations, our affectionate expostulations, if they will induce you to take the Saviour at His word. But it is time that we advanced to the consideration of the other part of the apostle's directions. There is to be stern treatment as well as gentle. “Others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire.” There can be no very great difficulty in deciding what the cases are which St. Jude may be supposed to have here had in view. They are the cases of hardened and reckless men, of the openly dissolute and profane—men living in habitual sin, and showing an unblushing contempt for the authority of God. The apostle refers to men who cannot possibly be in any doubt as to the wrongness of their conduct, who cannot plead ignorance in excuse, or the suddenness of temptation, or the pressure of circumstances, but who, out of a decided preference for iniquity, a settled determination to gratify their passions, or aggrandise their families, pursue a course against which conscience remonstrates, and of which they would not themselves venture to advance any justification. How am I to act towards such men? Must I show them that I pity them? Oh! yes, that I pity them; for if ever men were within a hair's-breadth of destruction, these are the men. But the pity must be mixed with indignation. What mean you by thus persisting in iniquity? Is the Bible a forgery? is death annihilation? is hell a phantom? is heaven a day-dream? What mean you, young persons, with your delay; elder persons, with your avarice; men of pleasure, with your licentiousness; men of business, with your underhand transactions; men of argument, with your sceptical theories? We may pity you, but at the same time we hardly know how to keep down a righteous scorn. There is no excuse to be offered for you, no extenuation. And what treatment does the apostle bid us try with such? “Others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire.” Oh! beautiful words, notwithstanding all their harshness! The apostle speaks, you see, of “saving” these men. Then

they may yet be saved. We are not to despair of any one amongst you. We have yet again to bring to you the message of pardon. We are sent to you once more with the touching words—"Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die?" But, then, whilst directed to make every effort to save you, and therefore assured that you are not past recovery, the terms are very peculiar in which the direction is conveyed. "Save with fear, pulling them out of the fire." The apostle considers you as already in the fire. So perilous is your condition, that he speaks of you as though you had taken the last step and plunged into perdition. And the expression goes even beyond this. It is of danger to the man who seeks to save, as well as of danger to the perishing man, that the apostle would admonish us. And here is a fact which well deserves the being seriously pondered. We may say generally, that if our wish to convert the sinful bring us into intercourse with the sinful, there is a risk of our learning their vices whilst labouring to communicate our principles. Association, under whatever circumstances, with dissolute men is full of peril. There is one more clause of the text which, though it may not perhaps actually convey any new sentiment, is so strong in its expression as well to deserve separate notice—"Hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." You would be very cautious in giving assistance to a man in the fire, fearing that you yourselves might be burned. You would be equally cautious in giving assistance to a man seized with the plague, fearing that yourselves might be infected. You should deal with them as with parties who cannot be approached without risk of contamination; who are not only radically diseased, but to whom there can belong nothing which may not be a vehicle for conveying disease; their very dress—language which is the dress of thought—manners, which are often a fascinating garb, being not unlikely ultimately to act as a conductor, so that secretly and stealthily you may get the poison into your own veins. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

Wise treatment of sinners:—First, generally we must use discretion, and make difference of men; we must be like surgeons and expert physicians, who do not lay one plaster to all sores, nor minister one potion to all patients; this is that wisdom that Christ requireth of His apostles (Matt. x. 16). Some are wild heifers, and must have a yoke; some are rude horses, and must have a snaffle; some are dull asses, and must have a whip and a spur; some are unruly, and must be admonished; some feeble, and must be comforted; and towards all we must use patience. The nurse, when the child hath a fall, will first help it up, after chide it, and if it fall again correct it; so must the nurse of souls first help a brother out of the mire of sin, then chide him for falling into the ditch, and if this will not serve, apply a sharper corrosive to his sore; yet let all this be done with discretion. Well, we must have compassion of some, for some sins are to be pitied. We must be so far from hating and rejoicing at their falls, that we ought rather to sorrow and to be grieved. What father is not grieved with the hurt of his children? What friend is not grieved at the loss of his friend? What shepherd delighteth in the wronging and scattering of his flock, and not in gathering it together? The compassionate Samaritan to the poor passenger may teach us to show mercy unto sinners. It is strange to see how we pity an ox or an ass fallen into a ditch, but not a brother drowned in sin; it is vile to set a house on fire, but it is vile also to pass by it and not to quench it when it is in our power. Again, as some men are to be pitied, so other some are to be reprov'd, and must have the judgments of God denounced against them, and must be terrified with menaces. A Christian must not be afraid to reprove sin. Noah reprov'd the old world; Lot, Sodom and Gomorrah; Samuel, Saul; Nathan, David the king. This also teacheth the people to suffer the word of exhortation; but flatterers are most esteemed of them, such as can sow pillows under their elbows and can preach pleasing things unto them. If a shepherd, after his whistle, sets his dog on his sheep, it is not to worry them, but to return them home; therefore let men suffer the word of exhortation. (*S. Otes.*)

Brands:—The method of treating the three classes on Christian grounds is here laid down, and is as applicable to-day as it then was. 1. The doubters. They are to be treated with consideration and kindness. Many who once were disputers are now firm believers of the truth. 2. Scoffers. There was a class, not the leaders of the schism, that had been led away, to whom warning must be administered. The suggestion is that the authority of the truth be used; not persuasion, but admonition, exhibiting the power of the truth. Let the arrow of conviction have its own barb, and let it fly. 3. The sensualists. They must be approached with fear or with caution. They were within the bounds of conviction, although very near the circumference. The lesson for the Church to learn is to

approach men according to their condition. Somebody in a hurry gave a tract on the sin of dancing to a man with two wooden legs. We fear that worse mistakes, if possible, are committed frequently. (*T. Davies, M.A.*) *Making a difference*:—Lekh Richmond was once conversing with another clergyman in the case of a poor man who had acted inconsistently with his religious profession. After some angry and severe remarks on the conduct of such persons, the gentleman with whom he was discussing the case concluded by saying, "I have no notion of such pretences; I will have nothing to do with him." "Nay, brother, let us be humble and moderate. Remember who has said, 'making a difference'; with opportunity on the one hand, and Satan at the other, and the grace of God at neither, where should you and I be?"

Ver. 23. Pulling them out of the fire.—*God's firemen*:—By this text we are reminded that there are points of resemblance between sin and fire. The writer has before his mind, not a harmless fire, in range or furnace, for utility and comfort, but a dangerous, spreading conflagration, which demands immediate attention, and which makes the energy implied in the text both seemly and appropriate. **I. SIN IS LIKE FIRE, BECAUSE IT IS MYSTERIOUS.** What is fire? Of what are its consuming properties composed? What weight, shape, or size is it? No man can answer these questions. Yet, with all the mystery, we have such palpable evidence that there is such a thing as fire that no sane man would dare to deny it. So sin is a mystery. How came it into existence in a world made and governed by a Being of almighty power and love? Yet no man, properly under the sway of reason, can allow the mystery to cause him to ignore or deny the fact of sin. We have seen the destructive work it has wrought in society, and alas! what is worse than all, every man has felt its scorching in his own heart. **II. SIN IS LIKE FIRE, BECAUSE IT EXISTS IN A TWOFOLD STATE—LATENT AND ACTIVE.** Fire, in its active state, renders our homes habitable in winter, illuminates our cities by night, flames out in the sweeping conflagration, drives our factories and railways, flashes into the lightning, and thunders in the earthquake. Fire, in its latent state, exists in every material object about us. So sin exists in an active and latent state. In its active state it flames out in Sabbath desecration, profanity, and reckless living. It blazes up before the public in the destruction of individual character; it flashes out in deeply laid schemes of political corruption and in gigantic plans of commercial dishonesty. Sin, in its latent state, is strikingly symbolised by latent fire. It slumbers in the heart of universal humanity; it exists in "every man that comes into the world." The virtue of some people is nothing more than vice sleeping; all it wants is contact with some tempting circumstance to awake it into vigour. As savages light their fire by rubbing pieces of wood together, so men stir up the latent fire of depravity by mutual contact. There is sufficient latent fire around us to burn up the globe; and there is sufficient latent sin in human nature to turn this world into a hell. Latent sin in the heart of a child is somewhat like latent fire in nature. At first it does no particular damage, and scarcely indicates its presence. Through the friction of temper, the whispers of self-love, and the gusts of provocation, however, it soon begins its destructive work, though the seriousness of its doings may not be even suspected. Thus it is that sin begins its withering, debilitating business in the human heart. Like latent fire in a forest, it soon begins to destroy the roots and fibres of the moral nature. There are persons all about us, the very fibres and roots of whose character are all charred and wasted by this latent fire of sin, and they are ready to topple over into disgrace and ruin as soon as a gale of temptation comes in the right direction. **III. SIN IS LIKE FIRE, BECAUSE OF ITS POWER TO ATTRACT.** How a child loves to toy with fire! how oblivious to the possible consequences! What multitudes are attracted by a conflagration; what haste they make, and what dangers they run! So there is a marvellous power in sin to lure and fascinate, especially to the young to decoy them from the path of innocence and purity into the fiery pathways of sin and death. **IV. SIN IS LIKE FIRE, BECAUSE IT IS REMORSELESSLY INDIFFERENT AS TO WHAT IT DESTROYS.** The most splendid mansions, the most costly furniture, the most valuable paintings, the rarest gems of art, all, all are consumed as ruthlessly as the meagre contents of the beggar's hovel. So with sin. The man of broadest nature and noblest parts is the most tempting mark for Satan. No conflagration is so disastrous and dreadful as the burning down of a man. I have seen the poor wretch weep and groan under the periodical consciousness of the awful destiny before

him. I have watched the progress of the fire, and seen self-control give way, and self-respect give way, and regard for the good opinion of others give way, and love of wife and children give way, and hope, the longest and strongest rafter in the structure, give way, and the whole man collapse—a heap of ghastly, smouldering ruins; a disgrace to his family, and a curse to the community where he lived. V. SIN IS LIKE FIRE, BECAUSE IT TURNS EVERYTHING INTO ITS OWN ESSENCE. Not only will fire turn ordinary fuel into fire, but also princely mansions; the most precious gems and diamonds, when brought in contact with fire, are at once transformed into its own nature. There is hardly any object in nature, even the hardest granite, that fire cannot turn into fire. So it is with sin. Its uniform tendency is to make everything like itself over which it gains control—that is, a curse. When Archimedes, in order to wreak vengeance upon the Romans, brought down the genial rays of the sun by his magic glass and burned up their ships, he only dramatised the universal fact that sin ever strives to turn the greatest blessings of God into the greatest curse. VI. SIN IS LIKE FIRE, BECAUSE IT CAN BE RESISTED AND PUT OUT, AND MUST BE, OR IT WILL DESTROY EVERYTHING WITHIN ITS REACH. You cannot set fire to the forest and accomplish the desire of burning down just one acre. So no man can kindle the fire of sin in the forest of his appetites and passions and forecast correctly the extent of the burning. Sin is like fire, then, because it must be resisted and put out, or it will destroy everything combustible within its reach. Fire, properly resisted, can be put out. So, thank God, the fire of sin can be put out, and God has His firemen to do it. (*T. Kelly.*)

The danger of sinners:—A poor, guilty, secure sinner is like a drunken man that is fallen into the fire. 1. In point of security. He is ready to be burned, but he feels it not. 2. In point of danger. Sinners are compared to a “brand in the burning” (Zech. iii. 2; Amos iv. 11). They are in the suburbs of hell, the fire is already kindled. 3. In point of impotency and inability to help themselves. Minister! art thou sensible of the danger of souls? Christian! art thou sensible of the danger of thy carnal neighbours? (*T. Manton.*)

Zeal in saving others:—There was a medical student at Edinburgh who was half through his course of four years, and he worked very hard and had lived an entirely selfish life. One day he said, “Here are four of the best years of my life, and I have never done a hand’s turn to make better or to help any other fellow.” He then found another medical student who had come from the same part of the country as himself. He had gone to the bad. His people had given him up. He was drinking himself to death. For months he had not read a book. This first man had not seen him for months, but he went out to hunt him up. He found the man still drunk, and said to him, “These are poor lodgings for you. I want to take you to my rooms.” The other man said, “I am in debt.” “Well, I will pay your bill,” replied number one. They gathered up the luggage and number one led the way to his room. Next morning number one said, “Look here, I have a little contract. We will mess here together for the next few months. I have written out here four articles, which we will both sign. The first is, neither of us to go out alone. The second is, if either of us have to go out alone, twenty minutes to be allowed to go to the Commons and back, overtime to be accounted for. The third, one hour to be set aside every night for pleasure, anything but study; and the fourth, that by-gones shall be by-gones.” Things went well for a month. One night number two threw down his Anatomy and said, “I cannot stand this any longer. I want to have a ‘bust.’” “Very well,” replied the other, “‘bust’ here. What do you want?” “I want some drink.” Number one got some drink, and number two had his “bust” there, and was thus tided over the hour. That hour comes to every man who is trying to reform. He must treat himself like a convalescent. If there is a man who is beginning to live a better life, let him remember for the next three months that he is a convalescent. He must not go into a draught or he will take cold. He must not read the books he read last week. Number two wanted another “bust,” and he got it, but he did not leave the room. And so the months passed: One night number two said to number one, “I notice you reading a book. I see you read the Bible, and you never talk to me about religion.” Talk about religion! What was the use of talking religion when the man was living the life of Christ before him? and living is the one thing that is of value in religion. Number one said, “If you choose we will read together.” He read a couple of verses, but number two stopped him and said, “That is enough now.” Number one passed out after the two years. He did not have a brilliant record; he was only a fairly commonplace man. Number two, on the other hand, who had been picked up out

of the gutter, passed out with special honour. The last I heard of them, number one was filling an appointment in London, and number two was known as the "Christian Doctor." Do you think that when number one looks back upon his college course he will not see standing above it all the face of that one man whom he saved? (*Prof. H. Drummond.*) *Self-salvation not the only concern of Christians*:—A man who has been shipwrecked with a thousand others happens to get upon the shore, and the others are all down in the surf. He goes up into a fisherman's cabin and sits down to warm himself. This fisherman says, "Oh, this won't do. Come out and help me to get these others out of the surf." "Oh, no!" says the man; "it's my business now to warm myself." "But," says the fisherman, "these men are dying; are you not going to give them help?" "Oh, no! I've got ashore myself, and I must warm myself!" That is what people are doing in the Church to-day. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *Soul-saving—a method amusing yet effective*:—Some of his methods of catching men and bringing them to decision were highly amusing. While he was conducting revival services at Newark, a youth put his head inside the door to hear what was going on. This lad had a shock of curly hair that arrested Mr. Marsden's attention. Presently he walked down the aisle to the door, and spoke kindly to the lad, and invited him to come in. As he seemed timid and inclined to run away, the preacher laid hold of a handful of curls and held him fast. Then he told him how the Lord Jesus Christ wanted to make a man of him, and the devil wanted to make a fool of him; and urged him to come and seek for mercy. He pleaded with the lad, and gently pulled his curls, till the lad followed his hair and marched up the aisle to the communion rail. The preacher held him by the hair till he had safely deposited him among the penitents. The youth was converted, and became a minister in one of the sister churches, and often tells his friends that "Isaac Marsden brought him to Christ by the hair of his head." (*John Taylor's "Reminiscences of Isaac Marsden."*) *A passion for the saving of souls*:—But what we need most is a keener appreciation of our relationship to the souls of those with whom we have to do—a profounder interest in their spiritual well-being—a stronger anxiety that men may be saved. It is written of the sainted Alleine, author of the "Alarm to the Unconverted," that "he was infinitely and insatiably greedy of the conversion of souls." Bunyan said, "I could not be satisfied unless some fruits did appear in my work." Brainerd, on more than one occasion, said, "I care not where or how I live, or what hardships I go through, so that I can but gain souls to Christ." Doddridge, writing to a friend, said, "I long for the conversion of souls more sensibly than anything besides." Matthew Henry wrote, "I would think it a greater happiness to gain one soul to Christ than mountains of silver and gold to myself." The sainted Fletcher said to Samuel Bradburn, when as a young man he called to see him as the Vicar of Madeley, "If you should live to preach the gospel forty years, and be the instrument of saving only one soul, it will be worth all your labours." Whitfield seldom preached without weeping under the solemn impression of the value of souls. He said one day in his sermon, "How can I help weeping when you will not weep for yourselves, though your immortal souls are on the verge of destruction!" Dr. Lyman Beecher, when dying, said to a minister standing by his couch, "The greatest of all things is not theology; it is not controversy; it is to save souls." (*J. H. Hitchen.*) *Pulling men out of the fire*:—On one occasion Charles Simeon was summoned to the dying bed of a brother. Entering the room, his relative extended his hand to him, and with deep emotion said, "I am dying; and you never warned me of the state I was in, and of the danger to which I was exposed by neglecting the salvation of my soul!" "Nay, my brother," replied Mr. Simeon, "I took every reasonable opportunity of bringing the subject of religion before your mind, and frequently alluded to it in my letters." "Yes," exclaimed the dying man, "you did; but that was not enough. You never came to me, closed the door, and took me by the collar of my coat, and told me that I was unconverted, and that if I died in that state I should be lost. And now I am dying; and but for God's grace I might have been for ever undone!" It is said that this affecting scene made an ineffaceable impression on Mr. Simeon's mind. *Earnest to save souls*:—The traveller who crosses the Alps by the St. Bernard, Simplon, or Splügen Pass, finds situated near the summit a friendly hospice. Knocking timidly at the door, it is promptly opened by a good-natured monk, who bids him welcome; warming his half-frozen limbs before the blazing fire, and chatting merrily with half a dozen priests, he thinks what easy lives these men lead. Suddenly the clouds gather, the wind howls, the blinding snow-

flakes fall; and starting up, calling their faithful dogs around them, these brave fellows go forth in the teeth of the tempest. Why and where are they going? To seek and succour belated travellers who may be out in the storm. Why not wait till they come and knock at the door as I did? Wait, man! Why, they would have to wait till doomsday. God help any poor creatures out on such a night! They must have lost their way. Half buried beneath the snow, they are beginning to sleep the sleep that knows no waking. So if the masses are to be aroused, the perishing rescued, we must do more than merely sit week by week in our comfortably cushioned, brilliantly lit, and cosily warmed sanctuaries. We must do more than merely stand at the church doors, waiting to welcome those who, with timid faith and dawning love, desire to be admitted to our fellowship. There are many who will never knock at the door; they are too far gone for that. They are sleeping, dying; they need to be shaken and roused. And men are wanted who will trudge forth over snow and ice; who, like the Master, will go out "to seek and to save that which was lost." (*E. G. Gange.*) **Hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.**—*Sin to be carefully shunned.*—Personal holiness, the concern for which called forth this admonition, is uniformly the object of Christian doctrine and Christian precept. To profess faith in Christianity is to choose a life of purity; for in our professing it we are said, according to a strong figure, "to put on Christ Jesus." I. BE WARNED AGAINST THE INFLUENCE OF EVERY DEGREE OF FAMILIARITY WITH WHAT IS SINFUL. To come so frequently in the way of sin as to see men engaged day after day, and thus to grow familiar with the view of what is criminal, may indeed easily be calculated in the amount of its evil influence. The perception of the odiousness of iniquity is thereby weakened—the sensibility of conscience is diminished—partial attention, indifference, and callousness to vice often follow in quick succession. II. For the same important end it is suggested that these words of the apostle may warn you, not only against the vices of the world themselves, BUT LIKEWISE AGAINST WHATEVER IS ALLIED TO THEM. It is, you will observe, not the disease merely, but even the "garment" infected with it, which you are to turn from. That is, everything that may prove an incitement, or an accessory, or by remote and indirect ways an introduction to sin, is to be shunned for the very reasons which urge you to flee from the sin itself. The doing so is cutting off the possibility, by removing the occasions, of guilt. It is as a person extinguishing the little spark which his taper has thrown off among the combustible materials of his dwelling. It is as a person closing up every chink and aperture in his embankment against the stream. It is as a person not suffering himself to touch even a shred of raiment which has lain in the vicinity of the plague. The wisdom which these illustrations recommend does reflect, it must be owned, somewhat hardly upon many of the indulgences in common life. These indulgences are allowed and entered into, because you cannot prove that there is anything decidedly sinful in them. There is an amusement which no law, either human or Divine, can be brought to condemn. And if there be nothing criminal in it, am I not free, every one asks, to partake of it? But the person who, following the principles of Christianity, is sincerely desirous of advancing his moral improvement will deem it necessary to ascertain first what is its tendency, whither it leads, what shall be its effects on his peculiar condition or temperament. Is it the forerunner, or the means, or the attendant of aught that is wrong? To say absolutely that we are to enter into no situation where we may dread the exercise of any evil influence upon the principles and habits of the religious character would certainly be prescribing what cannot be practised. We should have, as the apostle expresses himself, "to go out of the world." But still is it not true that there is frequently an uncalled-for, a premature, a rash, and hence a hazardous, intercourse with the world? Are not situations entered upon without due forethought? Are not objects pursued after with avidity, the utility or hurtfulness of which has never been seriously considered? Where the wonder, then, that the garment which no care is exerted to retain pure should, in the very centre of pollution, become spotted? III. To the duty of shunning evil there is another which it is incumbent on us to add, the strong language of the text intimating that INIQUITY IS TO BE THE OBJECT OF OUR EXPRESSED AVERSION. We are to hate it, and to show that we do so. Hence, if ever there is made in our hearing the attack against our blessed religion, whether through the grave objections of philosophy or the sarcasms of profane wit—if ever those immoral maxims which, for the easier diffusion, are coloured over with the fallacious names of liberality are inculcated in our presence—if ever the character and ordinances of

our God and Saviour are lightly spoken of, or those works which His Spirit is sent to destroy are approved and defended before us, let us feel how urgent is the call to make that "confession before men," which is to be followed with the acknowledgment of our fidelity "before the Father and His holy angels." In these circumstances, however, we cannot make that confession without showing "hatred" to what opposes the high subject of our confession. And "hatred," when turned against sin and all the appearances of sin, is the only lawful form under which that passion may be cherished. Nothing is so worthy of our hatred. Ought sin ever to be seen by us, then, without moving aversion and stirring up a holy resentment within us? IV. But here let us be admonished, while we cherish and on every fit occasion express the feeling of zeal against iniquity, to MAKE IT EVER APPEAR THAT OUR "HATRED" IS ALL THE WHILE TO THE SIN, AND NOT TO THE SINNER. Him we compassionate; and we are not to leave him in doubt that he is the object of our sympathy. And let us remember that there is no hope of giving efficacy to our remonstrances against sin, nor of recommending the good cause for the support of which we offer ourselves, nor of honouring the name of Jesus by our testimony to His gospel, as long as we render it hard to separate our zeal for religion from the appearance of a proud struggle for our own superiority. Pride, contempt, and overbearing haughtiness make the sinner feel that you are hostile to his person. He is stirred up, as it were, to the defence of his own interests. Charity is the subduing part of religious zeal. I repeat it therefore, Let there be hatred at the very garment spotted by sin. But show that you have none to the unhappy person who wears it. (*W. Muir, D.D.*) *Abstinence from sin*:—In these words the apostle speaks figuratively. He wishes to exhort to abstinence from all and every kind of sin. And to make his exhortation the more easily remembered and the more deeply impressed, he clothes it in metaphor. The religion which preceded Christianity was the Jewish, established amongst a peculiar people for certain wise and intelligible reasons. In this dispensation God taught His people more by signs than words, by ceremonies than by precepts. Time will not permit to speak of all the figurative instruction of the Jewish religion. But, in connection with our text, I may speak of the figurative distinctions of clean and unclean. Under this dispensation, then, there were many things considered unclean. Certain animals—as, for instance, swine—came within this evil distinction; and persons with certain diseases, such as leprosy or an issue of blood, were prohibited all intercourse with their fellows during the time the disease lay upon them; and a corpse was considered unclean; and those who might happen to touch it, or to come in contact with persons already unclean through disease or other causes, were themselves for a season unclean. Now, this calling of some things clean and unclean was designed to notify unequivocally the broad immutable distinction between sin and holiness, their utter, unending contrariety. But our text has a more especial reference to the uncleanness of leprosy. Leprosy in the East was a very loathsome disease, and fitly symbolises sin. And such was the virulence of his malady that none might approach or touch him; for there was uncleanness, not only in his personal touch, but in his garments. The garments became "spotted by the flesh"; they partook of the infection, and brought beneath a ban the unfortunate who might touch them. There appears to have been also an independent plague, peculiarly affecting raiment. Now God commanded His priests to destroy those leprous garments (Lev. xiii. 47-52). Do we, then, arrive at an understanding of the apostle's figure? Does it not suggest a Christian precept of a like significance, but written in plain, unfigurative language? To hate "the garment spotted by the flesh" is to keep sin at the farthest distance; to avoid those things into which it can by subtilty infuse its fatal poison; things which, though lawful and innocent, may prove by remote possibility the occasion of falling to ourselves and to others. It is to keep far within the border-line which separates holiness from sin; not to venture out among the outposts, lest there be a sudden surprise, but to remain entrenched within the citadel, within which is safety. (*R. L. Joyce, B.A.*) *Purity of character*:—Over the beauty of the plum and the apricot there grows a bloom and beauty more exquisite than the fruit itself—a soft, delicate flush that overspreads its blushing cheek. Now, if you strike your hand over that, and it is once gone, it is gone for ever, for it never grows but once. The flower that hangs in the morning impearled with dew—arrayed as no queenly woman ever was arrayed in jewels—once shake it so that the beads roll off, and you may sprinkle water over it as you please, yet it can never be made again what it was when the dew fell silently upon it from heaven. On a frosty morning you

may see the panes of glass covered with landscapes—mountains, lakes, and trees blended in a beautiful, fantastic picture. Now lay your hand upon the glass, and by the scratch of your finger or by the warmth of your palm all the delicate tracery will be obliterated. So there is in youth a beauty and purity of character which, when once touched and defiled, can never be restored. Such is the consequence of crime. Its effects cannot be eradicated; it can only be forgiven.

Vers. 24, 25. Now unto Him that is able to keep you.—*Jude's doxology*:—It is well to be called full often to adoring praise, and the specific statement of the reason for praise is helpful to fervour of gratitude. Our great danger is falling and faultiness. Our great safety is Divine ability and faithfulness, by which we are kept from stumbling so as to dishonour our Lord. **I. LET US ADORE HIM WHO CAN KEEP US FROM FALLING.** 1. We need keeping from falling, in the sense of preservation from—(1) Error of doctrine. (2) Error of spirit: such as want of love, or want of discernment, or unbelief, or credulity, or fanaticism, or conceit. (3) Outward sin. Alas, how low may the best fall! (4) Neglect of duty: ignorance, idleness, want of thought. (5) Backsliding. 2. None but the Lord can keep us from falling. (1) No place guarantees security: the church, the closet, the communion-table—all are invaded by temptation. (2) No rules and regulations will secure us from stumbling. Stereotyped habits may only conceal deadly sins. (3) No experience can eradicate evil, or protect us from it. 3. The Lord can do it. He is "able to keep," and He is "the only wise God, our Saviour." His wisdom is part of His ability. (1) By teaching us so that we fall not into sins by ignorance. (2) By warning us: this may be done by our noting the falls of others, or by inward monitions, or by the Word. (3) By providence, affliction, &c., which remove occasions of sinning. (4) By a bitter sense of sin, which makes us dread it as a burnt child dreads the fire. (5) By His Holy Spirit, renewing in us desires after holiness. 4. The Lord will do it. "The only God our Saviour." From final falls, and even from stumblings, His Divine power can and will keep us. **II. LET US ADORE HIM WHO WILL PRESENT US IN HIS COURTS FAULTLESS.** 1. None can stand in those courts who are covered with fault. 2. None can deliver us from former guilt, or keep us from daily faultiness in the future, but the Saviour Himself. 3. He can do it as our Saviour. 4. He will do it. **III. LET US ADORE HIM WITH HIGHEST ASCRPTIONS OF PRAISE.** 1. Presenting our praise through Jesus, who is Himself our Lord. 2. Wishing Him glory, majesty, dominion and power. 3. Ascribing these to Him as to the past, for He is "before all time." 4. Ascribing them to Him "now." 5. Ascribing them to Him "for ever." 6. Adding to this adoration, and to the adoration of all His saints, our own fervent "Amen." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Religious perseverance*:—That we may persevere, diligently and yet humbly, in the path of religious obedience, it is requisite that we look, with the feelings of dependence and trust, to Him from whose power and wisdom alone we can derive ability to persevere. **I. Then, RELIGIOUS PERSEVERANCE MAY BE SET FORTH UNDER A TWOFOLD VIEW, AS THE CONTINUING FREE FROM ALL SIN, AND ADVANCING TO THE PERFECTION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.** "To be kept from falling" denotes the one, and "to be presented faultless in the presence of the Divine glory with exceeding joy" intimates the other. "Falling," when used with reference to the Christian course, expresses in the most alarming sense of which it is susceptible, the sin of apostasy. It then describes the rejection of all the evidences which have been provided, both in the history of the gospel and in the experience of its efficacy, to satisfy us of its Divine origin. Apart from this extreme instance, however, there are degrees to be marked on the general subject, all of which are exceedingly dangerous. There may not be the bold and unqualified rejection of Christianity. There may, on the other hand, be the retaining of its name, as the religion which we profess, and in which we believe. And yet we have "fallen" from its principles, if we indulge in any sinful affection, or persist in any vicious habit. Religion is abandoned whenever vice begins. Now to be preserved from these—from the sins of the unbeliever, of the insincere, of the worldly-minded, and of the careless or lukewarm—to be preserved from all these is implied in our being "kept from falling." Separation from sin, however, is the prelude to advancement in the excellences of righteousness. Beginning at that point, the course of Christian perseverance is turned to the heavenly perfection. But it is not on earth that righteousness shall attain the destined height of its excellence. That world where no iniquity has entered, is in all these respects alone the scene of perfection. Not only is every corruption removed, but the inclination, yea, the remotest tendency to evil is taken away. This perfection of purity leads to the

perfection of honour. The soul is introduced to the "presence of the Divine glory." From these views, how naturally does there follow the conception of perfect happiness! The purity which the "being presented faultless" describes, and the honour which an admission to the "presence of the Divine glory" implies, must be the forerunners and the accompaniments of "joy," yea, of "an exceeding joy." This is the end of the Christian course. This is the perfection in righteousness to which the earliest separation from sin was pointing. II. Let us ask the question, ARE WE SUFFICIENT OF OURSELVES TO ACCOMPLISH THIS HIGH END? Have we the wisdom or the ability to "keep ourselves from falling," and to attain to the blamelessness of celestial purity? Does our experience give us any ground to trust in the ampleness of our natural resources for accomplishing such duties? What opportunity of improvement have we ever employed, or what power have we ever exercised, in such a manner as may encourage self-confidence? On the contrary, how many and how flagrant the instances which show us, that in the course prescribed we are irresolute, ready to falter, and prone, under the direction of corrupted guides, to forsake it! III. Hence, feeling that we have not ability sufficient to secure our own perseverance, WE ARE PREPARED, HUMBLY AND GRATEFULLY TO RECEIVE THAT AID WHICH THE GOSPEL UNFOLDS TO US. God "is able." He made us. He knows therefore our frame. Every principle of our constitution he is ultimately acquainted with. He has all channels laid open, for gaining access to the most secret spring of action that is within us. He sees the motives that will best affect us, and how and when these ought to be touched. He is prepared to act in all circumstances, and to suit his dispensations to every variety of state, and peculiarity of want. God "is able"; yea, in the strict and full meaning of the word, He "alone is able." But as power were unavailing for any good purpose without wisdom, the apostle reminds us that "God is" also "wise." Those arrangements which Divine power carries into effect, are the results of perfect wisdom. The best means are turned to the production of the best end. When we reflect on our condition in this world of guilt and suffering, when we think how every day, every new incident, every connection we form, introduces us into untried circumstances, the full effects of which upon our welfare we have no means of anticipating; shall we not see how great the privilege, amid this state of darkness and imbecility, to be allowed to lean for direction and assistance on Him with whom is the foresight of every evil! There are circumstances of trial, however, from which it is not expedient to deliver us. A new privilege therefore is suited to this new situation. The hour of trial comes; and with it the superintendence and the aid corresponding to the emergency. Therefore the hour of trial improves, in place of injuring us;—forms us to the exercise of greater power, rather than enfeebles us;—prepares us for new conquests instead of overcoming us. We are "kept from falling"; and in being thus preserved, we receive the earnest pledge of "being at last presented faultless in the presence of the Divine glory with exceeding joy." Are we now kept from falling? Are we hereafter to be presented faultless? Unto Him who alone is able—unto Him who only is wise—belongs the praise of our present steadfastness, and shall belong the praise of our after perfection. (*W. Muir, D.D.*) *The stability and perfection of true religion*:—I. ALL THE SAINTS ARE "KEPT BY THE POWER OF GOD, THROUGH FAITH UNTO SALVATION." II. THE SAINTS ARE, AT DEATH, PRESENTED BEFORE THE LORD IN NEVER-ENDING GLORY. III. ALL THE SAINTS SHALL BE INTRODUCED TO THEIR GOD IN HEAVEN, IN A GLORIOUS STATE, HOLY AND WITHOUT BLEMISH. They shall be presented "faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." 1. The place, in which the saints find final repose, is heaven. 2. The character of the saints in heaven is faultless. We shall never fully understand the extent of the evil consequent upon the transgression of the first covenant, until we are completely delivered from its effects. 3. The enjoyment of the saints in heaven, is complete. They enter into the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. (*A. McLeod, D.D.*) *Christ able to keep and save*:—I. WE ARE IN DANGER OF FALLING. By "falling" he means sinning. The original word signifies stumbling, and may be applied to any false step we make in our Christian course, whatever its nature and termination. We are prone of ourselves to fall. What God said of His people of old, "they love to wander," He might say of us. And we are assailed continually from without. As though to make His old servants feel their danger, almost all the falls which God tells us of in His Word are those of long tried men. Noah falls after six hundred years' experience. Lot falls when an old man. And David, who passed so safely through the snares of youth, falls in mature age. II. THE GREAT GOD OUR SAVIOUR IS ABLE TO KEEP US. Conceive of a vessel with its planks loose, its sails rent, and its pilot ignorant and half blind; and

then place it among shoals and rocks, with a storm raging—there is a picture of the Christian's condition in the world. That wretched vessel, you would say, is a doomed one: it will inevitably be lost. But suppose you are told that there is an invisible Being watching over it and determined to preserve it; one who can turn it about just as He will, and do what He will with those stormy winds and foaming billows, make those waves roll as He pleases, or, if He pleases, not roll at all—what should you say then? "That vessel is safe." And what would you do? You would delight in looking at it amidst its perils, for you would delight in contemplating the power which is so wonderfully preserving it. So with the believer. "He shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand." God is magnifying His power through that man's weakness, and that man's dangers and temptations. Again let me say, we need high thoughts of God; high thoughts of His mercy to lead us at first into His ways—our sinfulness makes that necessary; and then high thoughts of His power to lead us cheerfully on in His ways—our many dangers render this needful.

III. THE LORD JESUS HAS HIGH DESIGNS CONCERNING US, WHICH HE IS ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH. We should have thought it a great thing to have been presented to Christ in the day of His humiliation; to have sat by His side with John, or at His feet with Mary; but He says here, "I will present you to Myself in the day of My glory. To do you honour, I will welcome you in all My splendour." And we are to be faultless before His glorious presence. A thing sometimes appears pure and white, but bring it into the daylight or put it down on the new-fallen snow, it appears so no longer. Not so here. We shall bear the daylight; our whiteness shall bear the snow. Think of that, when sin is tormenting you. How complete in the end will be your deliverance from it! Every fragment and trace of it will be gone. And yet further—Christ will do this "with exceeding joy." "He will give us joy," you will say, "as He does it. We shall shout for joy as He calls us to Himself." But this, I conceive, is not the apostle's meaning. He is not thinking of our joy, but of Christ's. Ours will be nothing to His.

IV. IN KEEPING HIS PEOPLE AND ACCOMPLISHING HIS GLORIOUS DESIGNS CONCERNING THEM, GOD MANIFESTS HIS WISDOM. "The only wise God." Some of us rarely think of God's wisdom as doing anything now to keep or save us. It planned the glorious scheme of our salvation, we think, and then retired, leaving mercy and grace to execute it. Or if we do carry our thoughts farther than God's mercy and grace, we take in perhaps only His faithfulness. But all the perfections of Jehovah are at work for us. Not one of them does He suffer to be unemployed. Our hope therefore ought to rest on all His attributes. It would be a stronger hope if it did so. Mercy must ever be its mainstay, but here are two supports placed under it quite unconnected with mercy—power and wisdom. And observe how beautifully they are coupled together. Power to keep us would be nothing without wisdom to direct it—it would not know how to help us; and wisdom would be nothing without power—it might see what was needed for us, but there it must stop, it could not accomplish it. (C. Bradley, M.A.)

And to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.—*The saints preserved and presented*.—I. PRESERVATION IMPLIES DANGER. We have no need to be reminded that God is able to keep us from falling, if we are surrounded by no peril. Although we have been called from on high, although we have received spiritual gifts, a new heart and a new motive to action, we must not expect that the work is accomplished, and that we may resign ourselves to the indolent and selfish enjoyment of privilege. We are in a state of probation, and are, therefore, of necessity, exposed to adverse influences, and to numberless enemies which war against the soul. Watchfulness must be exercised, and strength must be imparted, in order to keep us in the right way. Danger to the believer may arise from three sources: from the unfriendly interposition of evil spirits; from the traitorous suggestions of his own heart; and from the allurements, or the intimidation of the outside world. To whom, then, in our peril shall we look for help? Where dwells the mind which will succour us, and the generosity which will wield the weapons of our defence? Shall we ask among the ministering hosts who watch and adore before the throne, if haply some strong angel, kind in his heavenly strength, might undertake our cause? Nay, for he never fell; he knows nothing of the plague of a nature shrunken foully from its fair original; he knows nothing of the bitterness of sin. Our deliverer must have sympathy of condition, and, in some sort, of experience. Then shall we look among our fellows for a companion? Shall we go seeking among the ages for a hero who shall combine all qualifications of fitness—strength mightier than of Hercules, beauty more winsome than of Apollo, all the eloquence of the golden mouthed, all the honeyed philosophy of the

Bee of Attica, all the research that is most scholarly, and all the piety that is devotest, and shall we bid him do battle for us, and guard us through our every life-path with his tutelary ministry? Ah! the champion comes not at our call. The ages have not found him. Our champion must have power as well as sympathy, invisible and exhaustless resources of power. We have a triple enemy—the world, and the flesh, and the devil; and Christ is able to keep us from falling, because, in the mystery of His incarnate life, He met and overcame the fiercest opposition of them all. Then comes another question, a question which it is important for us to ask ourselves, because, perhaps, some of our hearts may be doubting. He is able to keep us from falling; but will He take the trouble? Well, a comforting expectation of this willingness to keep us from falling may be gathered from His general character, and from the dealings with which He has heretofore dealt with the “hapless sons of clay.” That kind Master who was very tender to all His disciples, but who sent a special messenger to Peter about His resurrection, lest the poor bruised heart should be broken by the very semblance of unkindness—He is not likely to withhold His help or to give it upbraidingly. Thou mayest trust Him, timid one; He will not always chide! He knows thy frame, and remembers that thou art dust. II. BUT THE TEXT GIVES US YET A STRONGER REASON OF ENCOURAGEMENT, BECAUSE IT PRESENTS A REASON: it satisfies our intellect as well as warms our heart. It presents a reason why Christ will thus keep us from falling. Think of it in your moments of bitterness; Christ’s glory is involved in your preservation from destruction. Cleave to Him; He will not let you perish; He wants you; you are necessary to Him to swell His retinue in the great court-day of the universe, when He shall lay down the sceptre. He would like to have a grand pageant then. What! do you think the Captain of our salvation will be content with a drawn battle? Do you think that the numbers on either side shall be so nearly equal, that it will be a matter of doubt which has really gotten the victory? Not so; He shall conquer, and the universe shall see that He has conquered; for, at His side there shall be a multitude which no man can number. Nor do I imagine that this victory is to be gained by doubtful means. Some people tell us that as nearly half the human race die in infancy, the scale will be turned by these. Not so; not by stratagem, but by valour; in fair and open fight shall He save, and conquer His enemies. Christ has died, and He shall not die in vain, and an innumerable company risen to man’s estate, tainted not only with hereditary but with personal transgression, and snatched in their manliness from the spoiler, shall stand with robes of purity and palms of triumph, and by Christ be presented spotless unto God, “Unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory.” I want you to anticipate this for yourselves. But even then many faults may cleave to you, the clouded brain, the erroneous judgment, the mourned infirmity, the faith overcast, the thousand ways in which the dull material cramps the nobler soul. But you are to be faultless then; not sinless only, but faultless; nay, get the great thought out in all its length, and breadth, and depth, and height—“Faultless before the presence of His glory.” The light shines upon the holiest upon earth only as a revelation of impurity; the light shines upon the meanest in heaven only to enhance his perfection of beauty. (W. M. Punshon, D.D.) *Presented faultless*:—When Christ presenteth the elect He will present them “faultless,” that is, both in respect of justification and sanctification. This was intended before the world was (Eph. i. 4), but is not accomplished till then. Now we are humbled with many infirmities and sins (Col. i. 22). The work is undertaken by Christ, and He will carry it on till it be complete. 1. The work must be begun here; the foundation is laid as soon as we are converted unto God (1 Cor. vi. 11). 2. This work increaseth daily more and more (1 Thes. v. 23, 24). We are not faultless; but Christ will not rest till we be faultless, He is sanctifying further and further; He will pursue the work close till it be done. 3. It is so carried on for the present that our justification and sanctification may help one another; the benefit of justification would be much lessened if our sanctification were complete, and our sanctification is carried on the more kindly because the benefit of justification needeth so often to be renewed and applied to us; if our inherent righteousness were more perfect, imputed righteousness would be less set by. 4. At the last day all is fully accomplished (Col. i. 22). Well, then, let us wait upon God with encouragement, and press on to perfection upon these hopes. (T. Manton.) *God’s greatest power and praise*:—I. THE STRONG GRASP THAT IS ABLE TO HOLD US UP. “The only God.” There is one in whom is strength, to whom is to be the praise, and on whom ought to be fastened

all our confidence. And here is the blessing of a true religious trust, that it does not need to go wandering and seeking for many supports and stays, but can concentrate all confidence on the single arm which is able to sustain. Then, further, note that in this doxology the designation "Saviour" is applied to God Himself, teaching us that, though Christ be indeed eminently the Saviour, He is so in full harmony with the Father's will, and that in all the process of our redemption we are not to think of Him as more gracious, or tender, or full of saving love and power than the Father, whose will He executes, whose image He is. Then note, still further, that the words "from falling" might be more accurately rendered "from stumbling." It is much to keep us from falling; it is more to keep us from stumbling. Mark the emphasis of the language of my text. "He is able to keep you from falling." There is no absolute promise or assurance that He will, but there is the broad declaration of the ability. That is to say, something else is needed than the Divine power if I am to be kept from falling. And what is that else except my grasp of the power, my opening of my heart to its entrance, my clutching His hand with my hand? God is able, but that the possibility shall become an actuality with us, there is needed our faith.

II. THE GREAT END TO WHICH THIS UPHOLDING LEADS. "Faultless—before His presence—with exceeding joy." As to the first, it indicates moral purity. Here the nature may be one field of black, broken only by narrow and short streaks of contradictory light; but yonder all the foulness may be discharged from it, and sin lie behind us, an alien power that has nothing in us. And then, as the purity makes the enjoyment of His presence possible, so the purity and the presence make the third thing possible. "With exceeding joy." The joy comes from cleansing, from communion, from the leaving behind of weariness and struggles. Change and monotony, danger and fear, sin and fightings, partings and death, are all done with.

III. THE ETERNITY OF THE PRAISE THAT COMES FROM SUCH AN ISSUE. All His work is the making visible and the enshrining in act of that four-sided glory of His character. Glory and majesty, dominion and power, are shown in all that He has done. But this ascription of these to God in the present connection teaches us that, upon all the rest of the manifestations of these perfections, God sets the shining summit and topstone in this—that He takes men, being such as we are, and by slow education and patient inspiration, and wise providences and merciful forbearance, moulds and cleanses and quickens, and lifts at last to perfect purity, communion, and gladness. That is the greatest thing that God has ever done. And, says my text, if in the process of redemption God has especially magnified His own majestic nature, and done a mightier thing than when He flung flaming worlds like sparks off an anvil to revolve with music in the heavens, then the first duty of all Christian men is to offer to Him in the depths of their grateful hearts, and in words and deeds of self-surrendered and God-blessed lives, the praise which such a manifestation demands. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

The grand final presentation:—I. THAT NOTHING LOWER THAN THE INFINITE AND EXHAUSTLESS POWER OF THE REDEEMER, IS EQUAL TO OUR PRESERVATION IN THIS WORLD OF TEMPTATION AND SIN. II. THAT THERE IS A CERTAIN ATTITUDE AND EXERCISE OF MIND WHICH MAY BE SAID TO BE INDISPENSABLE TO OUR INSURING THIS SUSTAINING AND PERSEVERING POWER. III. THAT THE SAVIOUR HAVING PRESERVED US HERE BY THE EXERCISE OF HIS DIVINE POWER, WILL WITH PECULIAR JOY PRESENT US HEREAFTER TO HIS FATHER, IN THE POSSESSION OF A SPOTLESS AND PERFECT NATURE. IV. THAT OUR PRESERVATION HERE, AND OUR PRESENTATION HEREAFTER, BRINGING INTO VIEW THE HIGHEST MANIFESTATIONS OF THE DIVINE PERFECTIONS AND CONDUCT, WILL THUS LAY THE BASIS FOR THE MOST SUBLIME AND SERAPHIC ASCRIPTIONS OF PRAISE. (*R. Ferguson, LL.D.*)

A sublime doxology:—I. THE DANGER IMPLIED. When we consider the number, power, malice, and subtlety of his foes, it is wonderful that a Christian can expect a complete victory. 1. He has to wrestle. 2. He often has to walk in slippery places. 3. He is the subject of great weakness. 4. There are many obstacles in his path. II. THE PRESERVATION OF WHICH THE BELIEVER IS THE SUBJECT. 1. The power of God is engaged to keep His saints. 2. The promises of God abound with sacred engagements to this end. 3. The merit of the Redeemer's work and the virtue of His intercession avail on this behalf. 4. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is an earnest of the inheritance. 5. Means of grace and dealings of Providence are subservient. III. THE FINAL PRESENTATION. 1. The solemnity and grandeur of the occasion. 2. The glorious condition of each of its objects. 3. The sublime felicity of which they shall be the subjects. 4. The individual interest they shall have in these grand proceedings. (*Preacher's Portfolio.*) God the

keeper:—I can only counsel you, it is God must keep you. (*J. Trapp*.) *God's help goes along with our own effort*:—Learn a parable of the draught-horse on a broken road; it is a parable my father taught me when I was little more than the height of his knee, and one that has served me in good stead since, as I warrant it will serve you. As the horse draws its load along the broken path, the driver walks by its side. When there is an ugly deep rut in the path, he gently turns the horse aside from it. When a large stone has fallen on the road, he removes it out of the way of the wheels. When there is a stiff bit of ascent to meet, he pats the horse and puts it to its mettle, but when the way is level and clear, he leaves the horse pretty much to its own devices. All that is useful—all that is kind—all that is helpful; but please to remember, it is the horse itself that has always got to draw the load! And it will never be any otherwise with you, as you go through this world. Parents, teachers, friends, wise counsellors may do much to guide you, may do much to help you over difficulties, or remove them out of your way, but you yourself will always have to draw the load; and if you do not qualify yourself to do that aright, then there is nothing outside yourself can help you. (*J. Reid Howett*.) *God's power in salvation*:—Out of a sinful man to make a saint is more than to make a world out of nothing; and to keep sinful men from stumbling is more than to keep the stars in their courses. There is a free and rebellious will to be won and retained in the one case, whereas there is nothing but absolute and unresisting obedience in the other. (*A. Plummer, D.D.*) *Presented faultless*:—A criminal, condemned by our law to die, can only be spared by the Queen empowering the Home Secretary to reprieve or pardon. Even then to remove the stain that must always rest upon that person's character is utterly beyond the power of them both. How different with Jesus. His power is unlimited. He not only is able to forgive sins, but He can cleanse away every trace of guilt, and present us faultless unto God. (*Hy. Thompson*.) **To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty.**—*Praise*:—1. Praising God is a work very suitable to all saints. 2. After all exertions for obtaining any good, God must be acknowledged the Author of that good. 3. It is our duty to praise God for future blessings, for what we have in hope as well as for what we have in hand. 4. Spiritual blessings principally deserve our praises. 5. In our addresses to God we should have such apprehensions and use such expressions concerning Him as may most strengthen our faith. 6. Our speeches concerning Christ must be with highest honour and reverence. 7. Praise should conclude that work which prayer began. 8. The concluding thanksgivings which are affixed to writings are only to be given to God (Rom. xvi. 27; 2 Tim. iv. 18; Heb. xiii. 21.) (*W. Jenkyn, M.A.*) *The wisdom, glory, and sovereignty of God*:—I. In what sense God may be said to be "the only wise God." For answer to this, we may take notice, that there are some perfections of God that are incommunicable to the creature, as His independency and eternity—these God only possesseth; but there are other perfections which are communicable—as knowledge, and wisdom, and goodness, and justice, and power, and the like; yet these the Scriptures do peculiarly attribute to God, that they belong to God in such a peculiar and Divine manner as doth shut out the creature from any claim to them, in that degree and perfection wherein God possesseth them. This being premised in general, God may be said to be only wise in two respects: 1. God only is originally and independently wise. He derives it from none, and all derive it from Him (Rom. xi. 33, 34). 2. He is eminently and transcendently so: and this follows from the former, because God is the fountain of wisdom, therefore it is most eminently in Him (Psa. xciv. 9, 10). II. I shall prove that this perfection belongs to God. 1. From the dictates of natural reason. The contrary is an imperfection; therefore wisdom belongs to God. And the denial of this perfection to God would argue many other imperfections; it would be a universal blemish to the Divine nature, and would darken all His other perfections. 2. From Scripture, "He is wise in heart" (Job ix. 4); "He is mighty in strength and wisdom" (xxxvi. 5); "Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever, for wisdom and might are His" (Dan. ii. 20). Hither we may refer those texts which attribute wisdom to God in a singular and peculiar manner (Rom. xvi. 27); and those which speak of God as the fountain of it, who communicates and bestows it upon His creatures (Dan. ii. 21; James i. 5); and those texts which speak of the wisdom of God in the creation of the world (Psa. civ. 24; Jer. x. 12); in the providence and government of the world (Dan. ii. 30); and in many other places in the redemption of mankind. Therefore Christ is called "the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. i. 24), and the dispensation

of the gospel, "the hidden wisdom of God, and the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. iii. 10). If then God be only wise, the original and only fountain of it, from thence we learn—1. To go to Him for it (James i. 2). 2. If God be only wise in such an eminent and transcendent degree, then let us be humble. There is no cause of boasting, seeing "we have nothing but what we have received." To pride ourselves in our own wisdom, is the way to have our folly made manifest. 3. We should labour to partake of the wisdom of God, so far as it is communicable. The greatest wisdom that we are capable of is to distinguish between good and evil; "to be wise to that which is good," as the apostle speaks (Rom. xvi. 19); that is, to provide for the future in time, to make provision for eternity, to think of our latter end, to fear God and obey Him, to be pure and peaceable, to receive instruction, and to win souls. 4. If God be only wise, then put your trust and confidence in Him. 5. Let us adore the wisdom of God, and say with St. Paul (1 Tim. i. 17), "To the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever, Amen"; and with Daniel, "Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever, for wisdom and might are His." Having premised thus much for the clearing of these words, I shall briefly consider, first, God's glory and majesty, and then His dominion and sovereignty. First, God's glory and majesty. By majesty, we may understand the greatness, or eminent excellency of the Divine nature, which results from His perfections, and whereby the Divine nature is set and placed infinitely above all other beings; I say, the eminent excellency of the Divine nature, which results from His perfections, more especially from those great perfections, His goodness, and wisdom, and power, and holiness. And His glory is a manifestation of this excellency, and a just acknowledgment and due opinion of it. Hence it is, that in Scripture, God is said to be "glorious in power," and "glorious in holiness," and His goodness is called His glory; and here, in the text, glory and majesty are ascribed to Him upon the account of His wisdom and goodness. That these belong to God, I shall prove—1. From the acknowledgment of natural light. The heathens did constantly ascribe greatness to God, and that as resulting chiefly from His goodness, as appears by their frequent conjunction of these two attributes, goodness and greatness. 2. From Scripture. It were endless to produce all those texts wherein greatness and glory are ascribed to God. I shall mention two or three: "The Lord is a great God" (Deut. x. 17); He is called "the King of glory" (Psa. xxiv. 10); He is said to be "clothed with majesty and honour" (Psa. civ. 1). "The whole earth is full of His glory." Hither belong all those doxologies in the Old and New Testament wherein greatness, and glory, and majesty are ascribed to God. From all which we may learn—1. What it is that makes a person great and glorious, and what is the way to majesty, viz., real worth and excellency, and particularly that kind of excellency which creatures are capable of in a very eminent degree, and that is goodness; this is that which advanceth a person, and gives him a pre-eminence above all others; this casts a lustre upon him, and makes his face to shine. 2. Let us give God the glory which is due to His name: "Ascribe ye greatness to our God" (Deut. xxxii. 3). "Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and power" (Psa. xxix. 1). The glory and majesty of God call for our esteem and honour, our fear and reverence of Him. Thus we should glorify God in our spirits, by an inward esteem and reverence of His majesty. 3. We should take heed of robbing God of His glory, by giving it to any creature, by ascribing those titles, or that worship, to any creature, which is due to God alone. I come now to speak of the sovereignty and dominion of God; in which I shall show what we are to understand by the sovereignty and dominion of God. By these we mean the full and absolute right, and title, and authority which God hath to and over all His creatures, as His creatures, and made by Him. And this right results from the effects of that goodness, and power, and wisdom, whereby all things are and were made; from whence there doth accrue to God a sovereign right and title to all His creatures, and a full and absolute authority over them; that is, such a right and authority which doth not depend upon any superior, nor is subject and accountable to any, for anything that He does to any of His creatures. I. Wherein it doth not consist. 1. Not in a right to gratify and delight Himself in the extreme misery of innocent and undeserving creatures: I say, not in a right; for the right that God hath in His creatures is founded in the benefits He hath conferred upon them, and the obligations they have to Him upon that account. 2. The sovereignty of God doth not consist in imposing laws upon His creatures which are impossible either to be understood or observed by them. For this would not only be contrary to the dignity of the Divine nature, but contradict the nature of a reasonable creature,

which, in reason, cannot be obliged by any power to impossibilities. 3. The sovereignty of God doth not consist in a liberty to tempt men to evil, or by any inevitable decree to necessitate them to sin, or effectually to procure the sins of men, and to punish them for them. For as this would be contrary to the holiness, and justice, and goodness of God, so to the nature of a reasonable creature, who cannot be guilty or deserve punishment for what it cannot help. II. Wherein the sovereignty of God doth consist. 1. In a right to dispose of, and deal with, His creatures in any way that doth not contradict the essential perfections of God, and the natural conditions of the creature. 2. In a right to impose what laws He pleaseth upon His creatures, whether natural and reasonable; or positive, of trial of obedience, provided they contradict not the nature of God, or of the creature. 3. In a right to inflict due and deserved punishment in a case of provocation. 4. In a right to afflict any of His creatures, so the evil He inflicts be short of the benefits He hath conferred on them. This is universally acknowledged by the heathens, that God is "the Lord and Sovereign of the world, and of all creatures," and this the Scripture doth everywhere attribute to Him, calling Him "Lord of all, King of kings, and Lord of lords"; to which we may refer all those doxologies in which power, and dominion, and authority are ascribed to God. I infer, first, negatively: We cannot, from the sovereignty of God, infer a right to do anything that is unsuitable to the perfection of His nature; and consequently, that we are to rest satisfied with such a notion of dominion and sovereignty in God as doth not plainly and directly contradict all the notions that we have of justice and goodness. Secondly, positively: We may infer from the sovereignty and dominion of God—1. That we ought to own and acknowledge God for our lord and sovereign, who, by creating us, and giving us all that we have, did create to Himself a right in us. 2. That we owe to Him the utmost possibility of our love, to "love Him with all our heart, and soul, and strength"; because the souls that we have He gave us; and when we render these to Him, we do but give Him of His own. 3. We owe to Him all imaginable subjection, and observance, and obedience; and are with all diligence, to the utmost of our endeavours, to conform ourselves to His will, and to those laws which He hath imposed upon us. 4. In case of offence and disobedience, we are, without murmuring, to submit to what He shall inflict upon us, "to accept of the punishment of our iniquity," and "patiently to bear the indignation of the Lord," because we have sinned against Him, who is our Lord and Sovereign. (*Abp. Tillotson.*) *The only wise God our Saviour*:—1. Wisdom is ascribed to God. God's wisdom is a distinct notion from His knowledge. He doth not only know all things, but hath ordered and disposed them with much counsel. (1) Much of His wisdom is seen in creation. There His wisdom is discovered in the excellent order of all His works (Psa. civ. 24; 1 Cor. i. 21). Their mutual correspondence and fitness for the several ends and services for which they were appointed. (2) God's wisdom is much seen in the sustentation and governing of all things (Eph. i. 11). There is nothing so confused but if you look upon it in its results and final tendency, there is beauty and order in it; the tumults of the world, the prosperity of the wicked, carnal men think them the disgrace and blemish of providence, whereas they are the ornament of it (Psa. xcii. 5). (3) In the methods of His grace; so I call all the transactions of God about the salvation of sinners from first to last; the rejection of the Jews, and calling of the Gentiles (Rom. xi. 33). The various dispensations used in the Church, before the law, under the law, and time of the gospel, these are called the "manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. iii. 10), the "hidden wisdom of God in a mystery," and "without controversy a great mystery" (1 Tim. iii. 16). Again, the various acts of love whereby God subdueth sinners to Himself. Once more, the overruling of all events to further the eternal blessedness of the saints (Rom. viii. 28). 2. God is "only" wise (1 Tim. i. 17; Rom. xvi. 27). (1) Originally and independently wise, not by communication from another, but of Himself. (2) God is essentially wise, and so only wise. The perfections of the creature are like the gilding which may be laid on upon vessels of wood or stone, the matter is one thing and the varnish or ornament is another; but the perfections of God are like a vessel made of pure beaten gold, where the matter and the splendour or adorning is the same. (3) God is infinitely wise, and so only wise. As the candle giveth no light when the sun shineth, our wisdom is bounded within narrow limits, and extendeth but to a few things, but God's to all things. 3. Christ Jesus our Saviour is worthy to be accounted the only wise God. Christ is wise as He is God, and as He is man. (1) As He is God, so is He called "the wisdom of the Father" (1 Cor.

i. 24), and represented to the ancient Church under this title; as Prov. i. 20. Wisdom is there spoken of as a person, and the descriptions there used are proper to Jesus Christ. (2) As He is man, He received the habits of all created knowledge and wisdom, as all other graces, without measure (John iii.); and so it is said (Col. ii. 3), "In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Well, then, since Christ hath brought down wisdom to us in our own nature, let us be more studious to get it into our hearts. As Mediator, He is fitted to make us wise to salvation, and appointed by God to be wisdom to us (1 Cor. i. 30). 4. Once more note, from the other title that is here given to Christ, "our Saviour." Those that have had any benefit by Christ will be very much affected with His praise. There is a double ground of exalting Christ—a sight of His excellency, and a sense of His benefits; and there is a double notion by which our honouring of Christ is set forth—praise and blessing. Praise hath respect to His excellency, and blessing to His benefits (Eph. i. 3). (*T. Manton.*) *The ascription of praise to God*:—1. Can we bestow anything upon God? or wish any real worth and excellency to be superadded to Him? I answer—No. The meaning is, that those which are in God already may be—(1) More sensibly manifested (Isa. lxiv. 2). It is a great satisfaction to God's people when anything of God is discovered; they value it above their own benefit and safety (Psa. cxv. i.). They prefer the glory of mercy and truth before their deliverance. (2) More seriously and frequently acknowledged. It is a great pleasure to the saints to see others praise God (Psa. cvii. 8). (3) More deeply esteemed, that God may be more in request, more in the hearts of men and angels. Good men are loath to go to heaven alone, they would travel thither by troops and in company. 2. But let us more particularly take a view of this ascription; and so first what is ascribed, "glory, majesty, dominion, and power." "Glory" is excellency discovered with praise and approbation, and noteth that high honour and esteem that is due to Christ. "Majesty" implieth such greatness and excellency as maketh one honoured and preferred above all, therefore a style usually given to kings; but to none so due as unto Christ, who is "King of kings, and Lord of lords." "Dominion" implieth the sovereignty of Christ over all things, especially over the people whom He hath purchased with His blood. "Power" signifieth that all-sufficiency in God whereby He is able to do all things according to the good pleasure of His will. (1) A gracious heart hath such a sense of God's worth and perfection, that it would have all things that are honourable and glorious ascribed to Him; therefore are divers words here used. When we have done our utmost we come short; for God's name is "exalted above all blessing, and above all praise" (Neh. ix. 5). Yet it is good to do as much as we can. (2) When we think of God, it is a relief to the soul to consider of His glory, majesty, dominion, and power; for this is that which the apostle would have to be manifested, acknowledged, and esteemed in God, as the ground of our respect to Him. It encourageth us in our service. We need not think shame of His service, to whom glory, and power, and majesty, and dominion belongeth. It hearteneth us against dangers. Surely the great and glorious God will bear us out in His work. It increaseth our awe and reverence. Shall we serve God in such slight fashion as we would not serve the governor? (Mal. i. 8). It inviteth our prayers. To whom should we go in our necessities but to Him that hath dominion over all things, and power to dispose of them for the glory of His majesty? It increaseth our dependence. God is glorious, and will maintain the honour of His name, and truth of His promises. 3. The next consideration in this ascription is the duration, "now and ever." Thence note: The saints have such large desires for God's glory, that they would have Him glorified everlastingly, and without ceasing. They desire the present age may not only glorify God, but the future. When they are dead and gone the Lord remaineth; and they would not have Him remain without honour. They do not take death so bitterly, if there be any hopes that God will have a people to praise Him. And their great comfort now is the expectation of a "great congregation," gathered from the four winds, united to Christ, presented to God, that they may remain with Him, and glorify Him for evermore. They prize their own salvation upon this ground, that they shall live for ever to glorify God for ever (Eph. iii. 21; Psa. xli. 13, and cvi. 48). Now this they do, partly from their love to God's glory, which they prize above their own salvation (Rom. ix. 3); partly in thankfulness to God for His everlasting love to them. 4. The last thing in this inscription is the particle, "amen," which signifieth a hearty consent to God's promise, and a steady belief that it will continue to all generations. This word is often put at the end of prayers and doxologies in Scripture (Rev. v. 13, 14; Rom. xvi.

27; Phil. iv. 20, &c.); and sometimes it is doubled for the greater vehemency (Psa. li. 13, lxxii. 19, lxxxix. 52); and anciently it was audibly pronounced by the people in public assemblies at the conclusion of prayers (1 Cor. xiv. 16), and since that Jerome telleth us that the amen was so heartily sounded out by the church, that it seemed like a crack of thunder. (1) Certainly it is good to conclude holy exercises with some vigour and warmth. Natural motion is swifter in the end and close; so should our spiritual affections be more vehement as we draw to a conclusion, and when the prayer is done, put out the efficacy of our faith and holy desires in a strong "Amen," that it may be to you according to the requests of your hearts, and you may come away from the throne of grace as those that have had some feeling of God's love in your consciences, and are persuaded that He will accept you, and do you good in Jesus Christ. (2) There should be an "amen" to our praises as well as to our prayers, that we may express our zeal and affection to God's glory as well as to our own profit. Our hallelujahs should sound as loud as our supplications, and we should as heartily consent to God's praises as to our own requests. (3) In desiring the glory of God to all ages, we should express both our faith and love—faith in determining that it shall be, and love in desiring that it may be so with all our hearts. Both are implied in the word "amen"; it will be so whatever changes happen in the world. God will be glorious. The scene is often shifted, and furnished with new actors, but still God hath those that praise Him, and will have to all eternity. Well, then, let your faith subscribe, and put to its seal, "To the glory of God in Christ"; and let earnest love interpose, "Lord, let it be so; yea, Lord, let it be so." Heartily desire it, and with the whole strength of your souls; set to your seals without fear, it is a request that cannot miscarry, and follow it with your hearty acclamations. (*T. Manton.*)

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